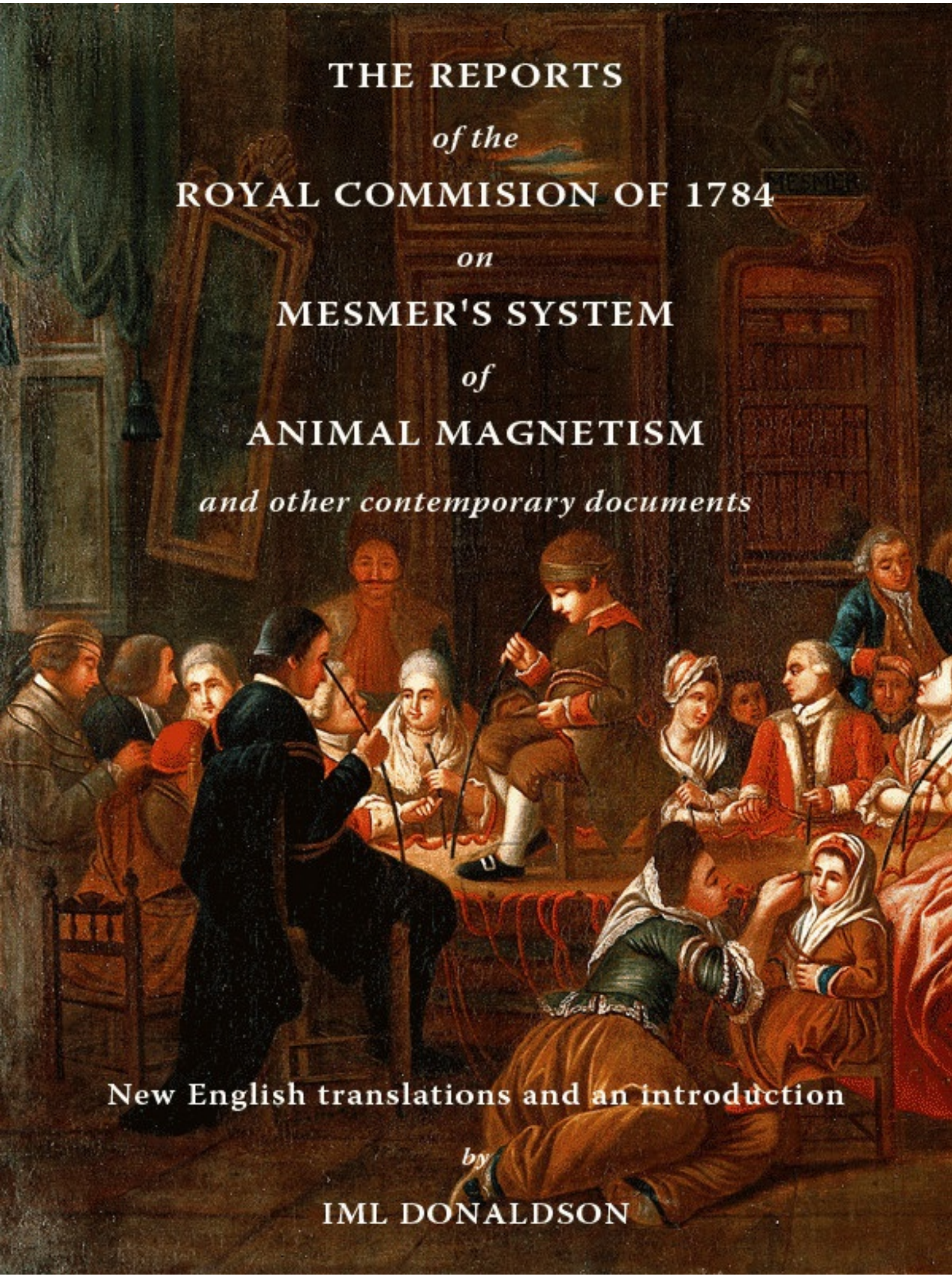

THE REPORTS
of the
ROYAL COMMISION OF 1784
on
MESMER'S SYSTEM
of
ANIMAL MAGNETISM
and other contemporary documents

New English translations and an introduction

by

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Published for the James Lind Library

&

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Cover image based on 'Mesmeric therapy'; courtesy of Wellcome Images

Contemporary print showing treatment by Mesmer's Animal Magnetism. The patients seated round the *bacquet*, a wooden tank filled with bottles of 'magnetised water', hold iron cranks reaching into the *bacquet* against the affected parts. A woman on the left is being magnetised by a standing operator; she may possibly be undergoing a *crise*.

Image courtesy of Wellcome Images

Introduction to the translations of the Rapports

and other documents.

Mesmer's theory of *Animal Magnetism* and his claims of success in using *Animal Magnetism* to treat patients with a wide variety of diseases raised heated public controversy in pre-revolutionary France and much anxiety among medical practitioners.

Mesmer's proposals for a trial of Animal Magnetism in 1780

In 1780 Mesmer approached the *Faculté de Médecine* in Paris asking it to supervise a trial of the results of his treatment of patients using Animal Magnetism. He insisted that such a trial should be only of the results of his treatment whose details he would not disclose. His proposals involved two groups of twelve patients, who were to be assigned to a group by 'the method of lots', one group to be treated by conventional methods the other by Animal Magnetism. Venereal diseases were to be excluded otherwise he made no conditions about which disorders could be included. The trial was to be overseen by the government but the arrangements were to be made by the *Faculté*. The *Faculté* rejected the proposals out of hand and condemned one of their members, Deslon, who had presented the petition on Mesmer's behalf. Mesmer's proposals seem to have been forgotten and, as far as I know, had not been translated into English before my article on them in the James Lind Library which was also published in print in 2005 [1]. My translation of Mesmer's proposals is reproduced in this book.

The *Faculté's* dismissal of Mesmer's proposals without any consideration at all caused some public criticism and, eventually, Mesmer approached the Queen, Marie Antoinette

In 1784 Mesmer's claims were investigated by a number of official bodies, most notably by a board of Commissioners set up by order of Louis XVI and his government and by a panel of investigators from the French Royal Society of Medicine. Of these reports much the most important is that by the Royal Commissioners who included Benjamin Franklin and Antoine Lavoisier as well as the then famous astronomer Jean-Sylvain Bailly and a doctor whose name later became infamous and who has been most unjustly treated by history, Joseph-Ignace Guillotin. Contrary to popular belief, Mesmer did not, in fact, practise the techniques of hypnosis which were later associated with his name (Mesmerism) though it was probably during experiments with *Animal Magnetism* that these were discovered, or at least came to public attention.

The 'public' report of the Royal Commissioners :

There have been two English translations of the text of the *Rapport* of the Royal Commissioners [2]. The first, published in 1785, the year after the report, is by an unknown translator [3]; it is both accurate and elegantly written, but not easily available. The second translation [4] appeared in 1996 in an American periodical 'Skeptic', also not easily available in the UK. It is preceded by a rather populist introduction; the translation itself is generally satisfactory.

When I translated the *Rapport* I was not aware of these previous translations and I have not made a systematic comparison of my text with theirs though I have noticed one clear misinterpretation of the French text by the 1996 translators.

The 'secret' report of the Royal Commissioners, the report of the *Societé Royale de Médecine* and Bailly's Exposé :

The other reports, the '*Rapport secret*' of the Royal Commissioners, The report of the *Societé Royale de Médecine* and Bailly's '*Exposé*' have not, as far as I know, previously been translated into English. The Secret report was intended only for the eyes of the King and his ministers and deals with the danger to public morals which the Commissioners felt was posed by treatment with 'animal magnetism'. It speaks for itself as a set of shrewd observations and as an attempt to have vulnerable women protected from the attentions of practitioners who might, by intention or otherwise, take advantage of them.

The medical Commissioners of the *Societé Royale de Médecine* carried out experiments on lines similar to those of the Royal Commissioners but there were fewer of these, the controls were less impressive and they seem to have been less thorough. Their conclusions were that 'Animal Magnetism' did not exist. The report of the *Societé Royale de Médecine* is of much less modern interest than the others and I have not included its translation here.

The *Exposé* of Bailly:

Though the text of this document is fairly easily available it seems to have attracted little attention - certainly not that which its qualities deserve. The *Exposé* of Bailly differs from the others in its audience; it is the text of a report presented by Bailly to the *Académie des Sciences* on behalf of the Members of the *Académie* who had been on the Royal Commission - that is, Franklin, Lavoisier, le Roy, de Borie and Bailly himself. It is of particular interest because, as well as summarizing succinctly the findings of the Royal Commission, Bailly comments on the observations by the Commissioners of the powers of the 'imagination' in producing dramatic effects and goes so far as to suggest that they will form the material for a new science

(p. 11) :

> …. But the phenomena observed allow several more results that we shall put forward. These results concern the imitation and the imagination, two of our most astonishing faculties; these are facts for a science now new, that of the influence of the mental on the physical, and we ask that we be permitted in this respect to enter into some preliminary and purely philosophical details.

Some recent critics of the Commissioners have claimed that they were uninterested in explanation of the mechanism of the dramatic effects produced by 'Animal Magnetism' and were concerned only to show the falsity of the magnetisers' claims that they were produced by physical magnetism. Bailly's comments show that these criticisms are over-simplistic. It seems that his *Exposé* has been ignored but it shows clearly that the Commissioners were entirely aware of the apparent 'cure' of patients by the 'magnetizers' and that they did not dismiss the reality of the patients' claims that their suffering had improved. What they did dismiss were the claims that any of the effects were caused by physical effects produced by the so-called 'animal magnetism'; they concluded that they were caused by the effects of the whole procedure on the 'imagination' of the patients. These effects on the 'imagination' they did not attempt to explain in physical terms but they pointed out that effects on people's behaviour and beliefs produced apparently by non-physical means were not rare; the commonest such effects were induced by the persuasion of demagogues and those claiming spiritual powers, and they cited examples of these. Bailly makes this clear in the *Exposé*

(p. 8) :

> Forced to renounce physical proofs we were obliged to seek the causes of these real effects in the states of mind [of the subjects]. In the rest of our enquiries we ceased to be physicists to become nothing more than philosophers; and we submitted to examination the affections of the spirit and the ideas of those exposed to the action of magnetism.

Bailly's *Exposé* is a monument to the clarity of thought of a group of eighteenth- century physical scientists and physicians - for he makes it explicit that, though he speaks to the A*cadémie* on behalf of his co-members of that body, the opinions and conclusions of all the Commissioners were the same. Having failed to find a physical cause for the phenomena exhibited by the subjects exposed to 'animal magnetism' they do not dismiss these as chimeras but seek to explain them, as they say, 'as philosophers' and realize that they have found means of well-controlled experimentation through which such apparently non-physical effects on human behaviour and on symptoms can be studied. The *Exposé* does truly herald the beginnings of a new science - that which we now call experimental psychology - and it does this much more explicitly than do the 'reports'. It deserves to be much better known.

It is one of history's sad ironies that two of the Royal Commissioners - Bailly and Lavoisier - were executed within a few years of the publication of their reports as 'enemies of the people' that is of the French revolutionary state, and that one of the others, Guillotin, gave his name to what became the instrument of the Terror. Bailly was Mayor of Paris for a time after the revolution and it was on his orders that the National Guard dispersed a riot in the Champ de Mars, firing on the crowd when they were pelted with stones; a number of the rioters were killed and Bailly was later held responsible for their deaths. During the Terror Bailly was arrested, found guilty of murder, and beheaded at the site of the riot. Lavoisier was a shareholder in the *Ferme Générale* a company which advanced tax due to the treasury then themselves collected the taxes. After the revolution Lavoisier was among the tax collectors - who had always been detested - arrested, tried and executed.

Though he survived the Terror, Guillotin's place in history is tragic - he was among those who tried to persuade the *Assemblée Constituante* to abolish the death penalty in 1789 and only when this completely failed did he argue for the introduction of the most humane method of execution which he could find (he did not, of course, invent the beheading machine) whose instrument was then to become infamous as the Guillotine. It is not surprising that Guillotin's descendants changed their name when the French government refused to rename the Guillotine.

The Editors of the James Lind Library feel that it would be of interest for readers to have easy access to English translations of the full texts of the 'reports' that were published in Paris in 1784 on the examination of Animal Magnetism; I hope that my translations will fulfil this purpose. Because Mesmer's methods of applying 'animal magnetism' are not widely known - he was extremely secretive about them - I have added translations of some passages from an unauthorized publication in 1785 of his instructions to his pupils. These make it much easier to understand the references made in the Reports to such procedures as magnetizing trees and applying 'magnetism' with different poles to patients and subjects.

The arrangement of the text and footnotes of the translations

The pages of the translations have been numbered to correspond to the page numbers of the original French text; they are arranged so that the content of the original and translation correspond closely, page for page. On suitable readers, tapping (or clicking) a page number in the translations of the Public Report

and the *Exposé* will open an image of the corresponding page of the original French text.

The *Rapport* and Bailly's *Exposé* [5] were translated from copies of the original eighteenth century editions. However, the secret report was translated from the text of the *Rapport Secret* reprinted in Burdin & Dubois 1841 [6].

The footnotes of the original (public) *Rapport* were indicated by letters (a) (b) *etc*.; here they are indicated by Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3 *etc*.) and the error produced by the inclusion of two notes (e) in the original has been corrected so that the notes are numbered correctly in the order of their appearance. I have added a few notes of my own which are identified by roman symbols (i, ii and so on).

The French text of the Public report contains a number of marginal notes; these have been presented in the translation as right-justified notes in a distinctive format thus:

Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the kindness of the Special Collections Department of the Library of the University of Edinburgh who made photocopies and scans for me of the complete text of the Library's copy of the Royal Commission's Reports of 1784 and of pages from the anonymous English translation of this report published in 1785.

Images from the original text of the Report of 1784 appear here by permission of the University of Edinburgh; those from the Secret Report and Mesmer's *Aphorisms* appear by courtesy of the Gallica library of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. The images of the text of Bailly's *Exposé* appear with the permission of the Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire de Santé, Paris

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Edinburgh, 2013.

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2. *Rapport des commissaires chargés par le Roi de l'examen du magnétisme animal. Imprimé par ordre du Roi*. A Paris, de L'Imprimerie Royale ; 1784

3 Anonymous *Report of Dr. Benjamin Franklin, and other commissioners : charged by the King of France, with the examination of the animal magnetism, as now practised at Paris*. Translated from the French. With an historical introduction. London: J. Johnson, no 72 St. Paul's Churchyard; 1785.

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Charles and Danielle Salas. Introduction by Michael Shermer. [translation of the 1784 report of the commissioners charged by the king to examine animal magnetism]. *Skeptic* **4**(3): 66 - 83. 1996.

5. Bailly J.S. *Exposé des expériences qui ont été faites pour l'examen du magnétisme animal.* Paris, Chez Moutard, Imprimeur Libraire de la Reine.... 1784.

6. Burdin, C. & Dubois, F. *Histoire Académic du Magnétism Animal.* Paris, JB. Ballière, pp. 92-100. 1841.

Commentary on

Mesmer's proposed trial, 1780 contained in: *Recueil des pièces les plus intéressantes sur le magnétisme animal*. Contents by, or attributed to, several authors; no publisher or place of publication. 1784. pp.133 ff.

Mesmer and his Animal Magnetism in Paris

Having been effectively thrown out of Vienna where his supposed cures by 'Animal Magnetism' had aroused both the enthusiasm of some patients and the enmity of most of the medical establishment, Mesmer went to Switzerland and then to France in 1778 where his reputation had preceded him. In Paris crowds came to see him – some to be treated and some from curiosity.

Mesmer wanted both approbation of his 'discovery' of Animal Magnetism and profit from its exercise and he seems to have believed that the best way to do this was to try to persuade the learned societies of Paris to approve his theory and methods. After a number of unsuccessful approaches to the *Académie des Sciences* and the Royal Society of Medicine, Mesmer paused in his attempt to persuade the learned [1] of the virtues of his theory and concentrated, with great success, on building up a practice treating patients. However, Mesmer really wanted the government's approval and hence benefit and profit to him; without this he was adamant that he would not divulge his secrets. It seems that his principal concern was for profit rather than for academic fame or distinction.

Some time passed before he approached the *Faculté de Médecine* but, in the meantime, he had made the acquaintance of one of its Regent Doctors, d'Eslon or Deslon. Deslon became persuaded of the great utility of Mesmer's method; he said that he did not yet know the nature of the agent involved though he knew the procedure for treatment. He published his observations, just relating the effects he had seen, in 1780 [2]. Mesmer and Deslon became friends and the latter agreed, as a professor in the *Faculté de Médecine*, to propose to the *Faculté* that they examine the discovery.

The *Faculté* was far from happy since they had decided they wanted nothing to do with Mesmer, but they could not refuse the request by one of their own. However, they retaliated by agreeing to a M. de Vauzèmes bringing a charge against Deslon of having damaged the reputation of the *Faculté* by his espousal of the views of Mesmer, to be heard on the same day that Deslon was to make his proposal. The meeting took place on 18 September 1780. De Vauzèmes spoke first and launched a vituperative attack against both Mesmer and Deslon; reading this now one is struck not only by its virulence but also by its baselessness – he proposed that Mesmer's methods should be rejected out of hand without dignifying them by examination since Mesmer was a charlatan; then, since Mesmer was a charlatan, he claimed that Deslon had demeaned the profession of medicine by associating with him. He went further and proposed that the *Faculté* should reject out of hand all such claims for new cures which were contrary to the practice of sound medicine. All this was proposed without any evidence whatever about Mesmer's methods or whether he was indeed a charlatan. Deslon then spoke; his discourse was reasoned and the proposals he presented on behalf of Mesmer for a commission of enquiry were not unreasonable though Mesmer proposed that they be confined to observations on whether his patients improved more or less than did those treated conventionally.

He proposed a trial in which twenty-four patients were to be divided into two groups of twelve, one group to be treated by 'ordinary methods' and the other to be treated by Mesmer [3]. To avoid any later

arguments about 'age, temperament, disease or symptoms' the patients were to be assigned to the groups by drawing lots and the details of duration of treatment and of the examination of the patients were to be decided in advance. A report of each patient's state was to be drawn up and signed by the Commissioners, by Mesmer, and by representatives to be appointed by the government; the latter were to be persons not involved in medical practice to avoid any public suspicion of partisanship. All in all it seems a very fair proposition if one accepts that only the change in the patient's state was to be examined and Mesmer's method was to remain secret.

However, the *Faculté* was determined not to have any truck with Mesmer or his practice. It not only rejected the proposals Deslon had presented on Mesmer's behalf, it also admonished Deslon to behave more circumspectly and threatened that, unless during the next year he repudiated Mesmer's teachings, his name would be deleted from membership of the *Faculté* at the end of the year. In the meantime Deslon was forbidden to take part in deliberations at meetings of the *Faculté*.

Mesmer responded to the rejection of his proposals by publishing them in the *Journal de Paris* and a good deal of feeling was aroused that the *Faculté* had acted very arrogantly in dismissing Mesmer and his methods without any examination of these. It must be remembered, however, that Mesmer steadfastly refused to allow his methods to be scrutinised at all and insisted that only the effects of his treatment should be examined.

Mesmer's proposals that the *Faculté* rejected on 18 September 1780 largely speak for themselves; they are in many ways remarkably modern in the conditions they set out. The proposal that each patient for the trial should be randomly allocated 'by the method of lots' to one of the two groups, to take account of differences between them and their illnesses and to avoid later argument about the outcome, may well be the second earliest instance of random allocation being proposed for a clinical trial. The first such suggestion was, as far as is known in 2013, that by Van Helmont devised about 1643 and published posthumously in the *Ortus Medicinae* of 1648 [4]. However, neither Van Helmont's trial nor Mesmer's actually took place.

It may strike the modern reader as extremely odd that anyone could contemplate a trial in which patients with virtually any disease were to be mixed up [5]; random allocation - whatever Mesmer said - could not, to our minds, possibly control for having different mixtures of diseases or different numbers of patients with the same disease in the two groups. I think the key to this apparent contradiction between taking care to make the groups comparable by random allocation at the same time as explicitly allowing the groups to contain different mixtures of patients with any disease whatsoever (except '*les maladies V…*', probably venereal diseases), is to be found in Mesmer's theory of disease. He explicitly believed (at least as reported by Deslon [6]) that there was only one disease and only one cure for it; in fact that Animal Magnetism was a universal panacea [7]. All disease was caused, according to Mesmer, by disturbance of the flow within the body of a universal and all-pervading fluid and all was to be cured by correcting the flow of this fluid using his method of treatment by Animal Magnetism. There is a sense in which Galenic medicine also took the view that disease was unitary in nature and was always caused by disturbance of the balance of the humours, so it may be that there would have been no qualms on either side when Mesmer and the *Faculté* jointly chose the twenty-four patients for the trial, about including any mixture of patients – provided each patient was randomly allocated to a group. Since the *Faculté* rejected Mesmer's proposals out of hand further speculation on this is idle.

Ironically, in Van Helmont's proposed trial of the treatment of fevers with and without blood-letting, it was Van Helmont who believed that diseases were distinct and had distinct causes and his opponents, the

'Galenists', who believed that disease was essentially unitary in its causation. Mesmer, as we have seen, took the 'unitary' view. However, Van Helmont also believed in a universal remedy (the *Alkahest*), though a very different one from Mesmer.

There is also room for serious doubt about whether Van Helmont's proposals were ever intended to result in a real trial or whether they were - as I argue elsewhere [8] - just a rhetorical device to support his arguments against the 'Galenists'. But there seems no reason at all to doubt that Mesmer would have taken part in a trial, provided it was organized on the lines he proposed, had the *Faculté* agreed to it.

Following the rejection of his proposals, Mesmer appealed directly to the French government and to the queen, Marie Antoinette, who, like Mesmer, was Austrian by birth. Eventually, in 1784, two commissions of enquiry were set up - one by the *Societé Royale de Médecine* and the other by a specially appointed Royal Commission. These resulted in the total rejection of Mesmer's theory by the one commission and of the results of his treatments by the other.

Mesmer was later accused, justly, of unwillingness to participate in trials; indeed, it was not Mesmer's application of Animal Magnetism but Deslon's that was examined by the commissions of enquiry of 1784. Mesmer's refusal to take part in the later trials was because of his complete opposition to allowing his methods - as opposed to the results of his treatments - to be examined. The Royal Commissioners anticipated that Mesmer would deny that his Animal Magnetism was the same as Deslon's and therefore were prudent enough to state explicitly at the end of their report that they expected him to make just such a denial and that, in advance, they dismissed it as baseless. Their expectations were fulfilled; when the Royal Commission found that there was no basis for belief in the existence of Animal Magnetism, Mesmer made exactly this denial saying it was Deslon's claims and not his that had been examined and been found to have no basis.[9]

The proposals for a trial of the curative results of Mesmer's treatment of patients by 'Animal Magnetism' read to an assembly of the Faculté de Médecine de Paris by Deslon on behalf of Mesmer on 18 September 1780.

Court de Gébelin's [10] version of the proposals from a pamphlet dated 31 July, 1783.

From:

Recueil des pièces les plus intéressantes sur le magnétisme animal. 1784. p.133 ff:

What proposals did M. Mesmer make to the *Faculté de Médecine*?

Though the *Faculté de Médecine* lent its ear to this discourse it made irrelevant objections to M. Mesmer's proposals; here is the Memoir that he asked to have presented during the same meeting [11].

The discovery of Animal Magnetism resulted in the printing of a Memoir [12] in which it is set out that Nature offers a universal method of curing and of preserving [the health of] Men: that, with this knowledge the doctor can judge with certainty of the origin, nature and progression of all maladies, even the most complicated; that with it he will be able to prevent their increase and bring about their cure without ever exposing the patients to dangerous effects or unfortunate outcomes, whatever their age, temperament and sex.

This system, which is different to all received ideas, has been regarded as being an illusion; the Author of the discovery expected this but he was not slow in justifying his reasoning by deeds.

He undertook, before the eyes of all Paris, a considerable number of treatments and the improvements produced and the cures brought about by Animal Magnetism have incontrovertibly proved the truth of his assertions.

Nevertheless, it must be said that the experiments carried out until the present have been undertaken for so many different reasons that most of them could not be carried to the point of perfection of which they were capable, and that, while some patients followed their treatment with the required constancy and application, many abandoned it to vicarious circumstances.

Had the Author sought only celebrity he would have continued on the same course, but his desire to be more generally useful moved him to behave otherwise.

He aims to convince the government, but the government cannot reasonably come to a decision on such a subject without the aid of the learned.

If there is a body in Europe which, without presumption, may flatter itself as having the most unprejudiced authority about the subject in question it is undoubtedly the *Faculté de Médecine de Paris*. Addressing the government by its intermediary is thus the most formal proof of the Author's sincerity and the honesty of his opinions.

Thus he asks the *Faculté* to take, in accord with and under the formal auspices of the government, the most decisive means of demonstrating the usefulness of his discovery.

Nothing would appear to lead more directly to this end than a comparative trial of the new method against the old ones.

Since the administration of the usual remedies could not be in better hands than those of the *Faculté*, it is clear that if the new method were to have the advantage over the old, the proofs in its favour would be the more decisive.

Here are some of the arrangements that could be put in place in this respect. It is unnecessary to say that on both sides the greatest freedom of opinion must be upheld, and that each must have equal authority over the patients subjected to each treatment.

1. The intervention of the government must be sought; but, since it is easy to believe that a request from a body such as the *Faculté* must carry more weight than that from an individual, it would be appropriate that, before anything else, the *Faculté* should take on itself this negotiation.

2. Twenty-four patients are to be chosen of whom twelve will be reserved to the *Faculté* to be treated by the ordinary methods: the other twelve will be assigned to the Author who will treat them according to his particular method.

3. The Author excludes from the selection all V[enereal] [13] diseases.

4. In the first instance written reports will be made of the condition of each patient: each report will be signed by the Commissioners of the *Faculté*, by the Author and by the persons appointed by the government.

5. The selection of patients will be made by the *Faculté* or by the *Faculté* and the Author together.

6. In order to avoid any later argument and all the questions that could be raised about differences in age, in temperament, in diseases, in their symptoms etc. the assignment of the patients shall be made by the method of lots [14].

7. The form of each comparative examination of the patients, and when these will be carried out, shall be fixed in advance so that no reasonable argument can arise later about the improvement obtained by either method.

8. Since the Author's method involves little expense, he will not ask for any recompense for his work; but it would seem reasonable that the government should take on itself the costs of the maintenance of the twenty-four patients.

9. The persons appointed by the government shall be present at each examination and shall sign the written reports: however, as it is essential to avoid any suspicion by the Public of special knowledge or of collusion, it will be indispensable that the government's nominees are not members of any medical body.

The Author flatters himself that the *Faculté de Médecine de Paris* will not see anything in the above proposals but just homage rendered to its distinction and the desire that a truth which may be of the greatest advantage to the Nation may be seen to prosper by the efforts of a Body dear to that Nation.

I believe that M. Mesmer still holds to these proposals and I am entirely persuaded that he would still be

ready to carry them out were the government so to wish.

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The Faculté's response to Mesmer's proposals presented by Deslon:

From Bertrand (1826) p.40

Deslon read these proposals at the end of his presentation, placed them on the table and went out to allow the assembly time to deliberate them. When he returned the following resolution was read to him by way of response:

1. M. Deslon is required to be more circumspect in the future.
2. He is to be struck off the list of the Doctors of the *Faculté* at the end of the year if he has not, by then, renounced his observations on Animal Magnetism.
3. The proposals of Mesmer are rejected.

References

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2. Court de Gébelin, Antoine. *Monde primitif analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne considéré dans son génie allégorique et dans les allégories auxquelles conduisit ce génie; précédé du Plan général des diverses parties qui composeront ce Monde primitif ; avec des figures en taille douce*. Paris Chez l'Auteur ….. (9 vols.) 1773-1782.

3. Eslon, Charles d'. *Observations sur le magnétisme animal*. Londres; et se trouve à Paris: Didot: Saugrain: Clousier. 1780.

4. Mesmer, Anton. *Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme animal. Par M. Mesmer, Docteur en Médecine de la Faculté de Vienne*. Geneva (& Paris Chez Didot le Jeune). 1779.

5. *Recueil des pièces les plus intéressantes sur le magnétisme animal*. Contents by, or attributed to, several authors; no publisher or place of publication. 1784.

Notes

[1]. Deslon (1780; see note 3) tried to persuade Mesmer that he would be better to use the popularity of his treatment with the 'people' to persuade the savants of its merits than to try, as Mesmer wanted to, to seek endorsement from the learned societies and thus to influence the opinion of the populace. Events proved Deslon right.

[2]. Eslon, Charles d'. *Observations sur le magnétisme animal. Londres; et se trouve à Paris*: Didot:

Saugrain: Clousier. 1780.

[3]. A translation of the full text of Mesmer's proposals is appended. **Mesmer's proposals.**

[4]. See the article on Van Helmont's 'trial' in James Lind Library (in process of modification).

[5]. Except, perhaps, in the case of a trial where only the effect of a remedy on one or a small number of symptoms (for example, pain, nausea) is to be tested without regard to the underlying pathology giving rise to the symptoms.

[6]. Deslon is quoted as claiming that there is only 'one Nature, one illness, one remedy; and that this remedy is Animal Magnetism'. *Rapport des commissaires chargés par le Roi, de l'examen du magnétisme animal. Imprimé par ordre du Roi. Paris: A Paris, de L'Imprimerie Royale.*; 1784. p3.

[7]. Mesmer FA. *Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme animal par M. Mesmer docteur en médecine de la Faculté de Vienne. à Genève et se trouve à Paris*: P. Fr. Didot le jeune; 1779. Avis au public, vj.

[8]. See article on Van Helmont's proposed trial in the James Lind Library (in preparation).

[9]. For more information see the article on the Commissions of 1784 in the James Lind Library (in preparation). As the Commissioners pointed out in their report, there was no reason at all to believe that Deslon's and Mesmer's theories and practices were different – indeed there was overwhelming evidence that they were the same and that all of them derived from Mesmer, as Deslon most willingly accepted.

[10]. Antoine Court de Gébelin (1719? - 1784) describes himself at the end of this letter as: Censeur Royal [a member of] various Academies and Perpetual Honorary President of the Museum of Paris. On its title page he is described as the author of the book 'Le Monde Primitif'. The latter is an extraordinary work.

> The 'letter' in which the text of Mesmer's proposals for a trial is given is entitled: *Lettre de l'auteur du Monde Primitif à messieurs ses souscripteurs. Sur le magnétisme animal.*; it is dated 31 July, 1783. The *souscripteurs* were the subscribers to Court de Gébelin's publication of the *Monde Primitif* who numbered at least 760 with some, mainly booksellers, subscribing for several copies. The subscribers included the King, Louis XVI, who subscribed for 100 copies, and 8 other members of the French Royal Family; also on the list are Diderot and d'Alembert, authors of the *Encyclopédie*, Benjamin Franklin, and Joseph Banks who was President of the Royal Society of London from 1778 till his death in 1820. In the 'letter' Court de Gébelin apologizes for not producing another volume that year (1783) and explains why he had not been able to continue working on his huge opus after the ninth volume was finished because of an illness from which he believed that Mesmer had cured him. However, he died on 13 May, 1784 without completing any more of the *Monde Primitif*. In the *Recueil* the 'letter' is followed by an account of Court de Gébelin's death (which took place in Mesmer's house) and a postmortem report from which it is clear that he had advanced renal disease.
>
> Bertrand (1826) quotes a shorter version of Mesmer's proposals in his history of Animal Magnetism in France but gives no source for his text. The earlier and fuller account by Court de Gébelin written less than three years after the event seems preferable.
>
> Bertrand, A. *Du magnétisme animal en France: et des judgements qu'en ont portés les*

sociétés savantes ; avec le texte des divers rapports faits en 1784 par les commissaires de l'Académie des sciences, de la Faculté et de la Société royale de médecine ... ; suivi de considérations sur l'apparition de l'extase, dans les traitements magnétiques. Paris: J.B. Baillière; 1826. pp 39-40.

[11]. The proposals were presented by Deslon (Charles Nicolas d'Eslon 1750-1786), who was a Regent Docteur of the *Faculté* and thus had the right of addressing them in spite of the Faculté's reluctance to entertain any approach from Mesmer. See Bertrand (1826).

[12]. Mesmer's Mémoire of 1779.

[13]. The text has: '… toutes maladies V……'. Perhaps the suppressed word is *vénériennes*? Interpreting the word as meaning venereal is a guess by the translator; but it seems a likely rendering since treating venereal disease would have presented clear difficulties for Mesmer because an important part of his regime involved placing his hands, and the metal bars from the *bacquet*, in contact with the affected parts.

[14]. '*... la répartition se feroit par la voie du sort* ' One can be quite certain that this means - and would have been understood in the 18th century as meaning - casting or drawing lots in order to make a random allocation. Nicot, *Thresor de la langue française* (1606), makes explicit the derivation of *sort* from the Latin *sors*, lot or fortune, and *faire sort* he defines as: *sortire, sortem ducere*, meaning to cast or draw lots, to appoint by lot. He also gives as a synonym for *sort* the Latin *clerus* meaning assignment by lots. Editions of the *Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française* between 1694 and 1798 include in the definition of *sort* '*Sort, signifie aussi, La manière de décider quelque chose par le hasard*.' '*Sort* also means the method of deciding something by chance'.

Lavoisier

Documents on animal magnetism

from

Mémoires de Lavoisier, *Oeuvres*, Tome III pp. 499 -513.

With the exception of those parts which are dated individually the documents are undated.

Royal command to Lavoisier to be one of the Commissioners.

To M. Lavoisier,
of the Académie des Sciences

Versailles, 2 April, 1784.

The King has chosen you, Sir, to proceed with several other persons distinguished by their enlightenment and their experience to the examination of the method or practice derived from the claimed discoveries of the *sieur* Mesmer, about which the *sieur* Deslon, doctor of the Faculté of Paris agrees to explain. I do not for a moment doubt that you will fulfil this commission with the zeal and attention which it deserves. When MM. the Commissioners have drawn up a detailed report and their opinion, I shall give an account of it to His Majesty.

I am entirely,

Sir,

Your most humble and most obedient servant.

Le Baron de Breteuil

P.S. It was, Sir, the doctors themselves who wished to combine their report and their opinion with the members of the *Académie*.

The Commissioners chosen by the King from the *Académie des Sciences* to examine the effects of animal magnetism take liberty to observe :

That, as physical scientists, their functions must have as their object only to characterise the agent designated by the name *animal magnetism* and to describe its effect, in general, on the animal economy, or, more generally, on organised beings;

As for matters related to the treatment of diseases, this purpose is entirely foreign to them and is of concern only to doctors. They make the observation only, that the cure of diseases may depend on an infinity of circumstances quite distinct from animal magnetism and it is to complicate the question to make it dependent on this outcome [i.e. the outcome of treatment with animal magnetism]. There are a large number of maladies regarded as incurable which, left to Nature, are cured by her aid alone. In the case of less serious illnesses which are treated according to the rules of medicine, it is often difficult to disentangle that which is due to the art from that which is due to Nature. They believe, in consequence, that the treatment of diseases can lead only to probabilities which could not be converted into certitude except by experiments and observations more numerous and of longer duration than the circumstances permit, and they believe that one cannot deduce from them results sufficiently decisive to pronounce on the present question. They will content themselves, therefore, with making use of patients who have been chosen and admitted, or who will be in the future, in order to make observations on the reality of animal magnetism considered as an agent in general, and they declare that they will not take any part in anything that could be purely medical.

Since we have signed the written report that MM. the Commissioners of the Society of Medicine drew up yesterday, on the state of three sick women who were presented to them, we feel ourselves obliged to declare that, not being medical men, our signature can signify nothing other than our presence at the examination of those patients.

Theoretic-practical treatise on animal magnetism
According to M. Mesmer

There exists in Nature a universal fluid; it is perhaps better felt than described; Newton called it the *ethereal medium*; Descartes, *the universal mover*; the hermetic philosophers, *the universal principle*, etc.

Light, sound, odours communicate by this medium or fluid. They strike first the first parts nearest to the torch or to the scented flower, communicate from globule to globule, and, finally lose themselves in dissipation and remain without force; thus the operation of the fluid could be explained by the laws of movement.

One cannot touch or smell, one cannot perceive this fluid : from this [it would seem as if] it has no existence! But is attraction, of which the effect is so constant, any better perceived, or the power of the magnet which is touched by the finger; or electricity of which use is made to avoid thunderbolts and even to bring about cures? The electric fluid is nothing but the universal fluid combined, which arises from the rubbing of bodies. Electricity does not create this fluid; electricity makes use of it, and this new system makes its theory [that of electricity] more complicated.

Attraction, which is undefined, has perhaps no cause other than this fluid. Why should one not see this effect in the continual movement of the stars? Why should they not be supplied with a similar fluid which directs them, attracts them and traces their courses? This fluid, however it may be demonstrated, forms the action-space that there is between all bodies. One man can communicate to another the fluid which permeates him and gives him existence. Such is animal magnetism.

This action seems to feel the influence of the opposition of poles. To realise the application of this to the human body one must pay attention to the fact that it is clearly divided longitudinally into two parts : the right side may be regarded as the south pole and the left as the north pole; and, in the same way that, if one presents two magnetised bars to each other in opposed directions, that is to say with their poles opposed, they attract each other naturally. In the same way if one presents the south pole or the right side of a body to the north pole or left side of another body, the second body receives a more or less marked sensation which is attributed to the passage of a magnetic fluid provided by the magnetiser, if he has more of it than the magnetised, or received by the magnetiser if he has less of it.

This supposed fluid tends always to put itself in equilibrium and it produces cures in certain subjects without their feeling any sensation; one has seen several patients like this who have been cured of obstructions, hydropsies, diseased glands etc.

Here is how it is applied; the patient is placed on a chair, the magnetiser puts himself opposite, also on a chair, applying the inner sides of his knees to the outer sides of the knees of the subject he is going to magnetise. In this position the poles of their bodies are opposed because the right side of the magnetiser is opposite the left side of the magnetised, and his left side opposite the other's right.

Then one lightly applies the hands to the hypochondria of the patient and leaves them in this position for seven or eight minutes; after that, one moves the hands so that the thumbs are placed on the pit of the stomach; the other fingers of the left hand are on the liver and those of the right hand on the spleen. One leaves them there for some time; after this one moves them from above downwards, beginning with the head, at a distance of six lines[1] from the patient's body, the index or the thumb of the right hand on the left side of the body, in the direction of the sympathetic nerve, keeping the other hand on the hypochondrium.

Sometimes one moves the two hands in the same sense, the right hand in the direction of the left sympathetic nerve and the left hand in the direction of the right sympathetic. On other occasions one moves the hands on the hypochondria or on the affected parts, observing always to direct the hands from above downwards in the direction of the principal nerves of the parts being magnetised, always with the right hand on the left side and the left hand on the right side, thus always conserving the opposition of poles that constitutes the whole of magnetism.

There is another method of decanting the fluid, as though one could magnetise to a greater or lesser degree, or, which is the same thing, magnetise positively or negatively. For this it suffices to bring the thumb close to the part that one wishes to magnetise, and to withdraw it along a perpendicular line to about a foot and a half's distance, approaching it and withdrawing it successively without touching the exact spot. One can carry out this experiment on oneself; it suffices to bring the palm of the left hand close to the right thumb and to approach and withdraw it alternately for eight or ten minutes. Few people have done this without feeling marked warmth in the palm of the hand.

No other preparation is necessary except extreme cleanliness and avoidance of tobacco. Everyone carries with him his dose of magnetism, and all magnetisers are more equipped, or less equipped, to produce its effects, in consequence of their health, constitution and stronger organisation. Only the fingers are used, or a bar of iron six inches long, which is hardly necessary. One uses a conductor to distribute or direct the magnetism as one wishes in the same way as with the fingers, but some people claim that an iron bar is more effective because of the smaller surface-area of its extremity.

The *bacquet* is a barrel of hardwood, one and a half feet deep and four and a half in diameter, completely covered by a lid made of planks well joined together. This lid is pierced around the circumference, at three thumb-breadths from the edge, with a number of holes through which one introduces into the interior of the *baquet* as many iron rods bent at right angles as there are patients seated around it; one points the iron bar, outside the *baquet*, on to the affected part of the patient; sometimes one sets up a chain of communication between all those who are around it by their giving each other a hand; this makes the magnetism stronger. The *baquet* has an inch and a half of sand in the bottom, covered by one and a half to two inches of water, and is fitted with a layer of bottles arranged in a circle, the necks to the outside, and magnetised in the following way.

The bottle to be magnetised is held by its bottom in one hand, the thumb of the other hand is moistened enough to be able to provide six or seven drops of water; the thumb moistened in this way is put into the neck of the bottle, and the bottle (placed on the other hand) is caused to roll in an arc in such a way that the six or seven drops of water provided by the thumb can fall to the bottom of the bottle. After eight or ten seconds the bottle is magnetised and it is corked, being careful that the cork is put in gently so that its approach does not cause evaporation; the bottle can be applied to the stomach of a person susceptible to magnetism and will produce an effect. This experiment has been repeated successfully several times.

The *baquet* supplied thus with magnetised bottles establishes communication between all those magnetised, and thus facilitates the action of magnetism on them, and one can in fact magnetise a bottle in the way one supercharges a Leyden jar with electricity.

When the magnetised subject exhibits a *crise*[2], fainting, convulsion, spasm or delirium, the magnetiser must not be astonished; he is to continue his operation, without this the crise will last a long time and become dangerous if he does not master it. One must never magnetise from below upwards because this can cause accidents, even apoplexy.

When one wishes to discover, using magnetism, which part is affected, one passes the hands over the body, observing the opposition of poles, and the region to which the hand is applied a little firmly becomes very sensitive, if it is the diseased part.

Declaration [3]
Presented by M. de la Fayette to M. the Duc d' Orléans,
to be signed by M. Berthollet.

After having done more than half of M. Mesmer's course, that is to say, having attended inclusively as far as the second lesson upon Man, as it existed in the course for the month of April, 1784; and, finally, after having been admitted to the rooms for treatment and for *crises*, I declare that I have not detected the existence of the agent called by M. Mesmer *animal magnetism*. Not believing the doctrine of M. Mesmer on the existence of the magnetic agent, on the direction of the fluid, and on the effects produced by the introduction and emission of currents, I think that the convulsions, the spasms, and the *crises* that are claimed to be produced by the magnetic procedures are purely an effect of the imagination and have no reality. To assure myself further that I have been more perspicacious than most of those who have done the same course, I agree that, in a year (on 15th May 1785) this opinion, signed by me, shall be placed in the *Journal de Paris*.

Declaration made and signed by M. Berthollet.

After having done more than half of M. Mesmer's course of the month of April, 1784, after having been instructed in the practice of animal magnetism by M. Mesmer, and after having been admitted to the rooms for treatment and for *crises* where I carried out observations and experiments, I declare that I have not detected the existence of the agent called by M. Mesmer *animal magnetism*. I have come to the opinion that the doctrine that we were taught in the course is disproved by the best established truths about the structure of the world and the economy of animals, and that I have seen nothing in the convulsions, spasms and indeed the *crises* - which are claimed to be produced by the magnetic procedures (when such occurrences have any reality) – which cannot be attributed entirely to the imagination, to the mechanical effect of friction on very sensitive parts, and to the rule known for ages that causes one animal to tend to imitate another and to put itself, even involuntarily, in the same position as another animal that it observes – a rule on which convulsive disorders so often depend. Finally, I declare that I regard the doctrine of animal magnetism and the practice of which it serves as the foundation as entirely chimerical, and I am willing that, from now on, any use that may be desired is made of my declaration.

20 May, 1784.

Explanation of the doctrine of M. Deslon

There is a magnetic fluid which is distributed everywhere and which penetrates all bodies : the earth, the planets and the celestial bodies are nothing other than large magnets, and it is by an effect of their attractive and repulsive forces that the movement of the celestial bodies and all the phenomena of astronomy take place. This doctrine reconciles, according to M. Deslon, Descartes and Newton, occupied space and the vacuum.

Each organised body is also a magnet which has poles; through it circulates a magnetic fluid in such a way that, in presenting to each other the opposed poles, a living being can operate upon another living being.

M. Deslon demonstrates this by the following effects : if one presents oneself opposite an other person and approaches the right foot to his left foot, a communication of magnetic fluid is established between the two individuals and this transfer is made detectable by an impression of heat. If one opposes one's right foot to the right foot, or one's left foot to the left foot [of the other person] one does not produce the same effect except if the person doing the approaching has a very large magnetic power, because [in that case] the fluid is transmitted even when one presents to each other two poles that are not opposite.

Magnetism acts over quite large distances and passes through solid bodies. Thus one person can magnetise another without touching him, at least if that person is very sensitive, even through a [closed] door but it is necessary that communication has previously been established between the two beings by touch or at least by the gaze.

To direct the magnetism, and to charge the diseased subject with it, one uses the bars fitted to the *baquet*, a cord that forms a conductor and encircles either the neck or the body or simply the arms or the thighs of the affected party, or touching of the pit of the stomach, the hypochondria or the ovaries. One reinforces the magnetism more by moving the finger along the midline of the body from above downwards. Finally, one can charge a musical instrument with magnetism and it then transmits the fluid along with its sound; in the same way it transmits magnetism to anyone who touches the instrument.

The magnetic fluid is reflected in a mirror, making its angle of incidence equal to the angle of reflection, in such a way that, by directing the finger or the hand equipped with a little iron rod over the image of a person in a mirror, one transmits animal magnetism to him. This fluid is also reflected by trees.

In order to apply these principles to medicine, M. Deslon argues thus : all disease is caused by a morbid humour of which Nature tends to rid itself and brings this about either by resolution or by crises. Thus the efforts of medicine must be directed towards facilitating the progress of Nature and of resolution, or to exciting crises, and it is this that magnetism brings about; all the *crises* that the agent produces, like all real [i.e. natural] crises, end by an evacuation of some kind, such as sweating, bowel movement or spitting.

Remarks by Lavoisier

This simple exposé, concise as it is, shows how cleverly and with what assurance animal magnetism is presented. It is a mixture of true facts and observations with claimed results from a principle that is completely hypothetical and from this one has succeeded in creating a body of doctrine which is then imposed even on enlightened doctors of medicine.

The skill of the Commissioners consists in following the chain of reasoning and recognising where it is interrupted; in posing facts before reasoning. A good system of logic does not allow the admission of new principles in order to explain facts if these can be explained by other principles that are already known. We shall therefore not admit [the existence of] animal magnetism except to the extent that it will present effects that cannot be assigned to any other cause. We shall investigate whether imagination alone, without magnetism, cannot produce similar [effects] and we shall undertake, therefore, a series of experiments on animal magnetism separately from imagination and on the imagination separately from magnetism. These reflections have suggested the following plan to me.

The Commissioners chosen by the king to examine the method of M. Deslon have already seen enough of it to be justified in suspecting that all the effects that it produces can be explained without introducing into physics and medicine an animal magnetic fluid of which no positive proof demonstrates the existence, and which shares none of the properties of other known fluids, and for which one supposes gratuitously some [properties] which are incompatible with others and with everything that one knows.

The techniques that M. Deslon uses reduce essentially to two : 'touching' and the claimed emission of a magnetic fluid that is conducted and condensed, either with the finger or with a little iron rod. We have seen only one effect produced by these two methods : it consists of making some people fall into convulsive states, but without there being any alteration in the pulse nor disturbance of the health.

But one knows that the imagination alone, struck or primed to a certain point, is sufficient to produce these effects, that there exists a host of examples of imitative convulsions; more significantly, 'touching' might be able to produce these results when its effects are added to those of the imagination.

The art of drawing conclusions from experiments and observations consists in evaluating the probabilities, and in judging whether they are large enough, or numerous enough, to amount to proof. This type of calculation is more complicated and more difficult than one thinks; it demands great sagacity and is, in general, beyond the powers of most men. It is upon their errors in this type of calculation that is founded the success of charlatans, sorcerers and alchemists; and, in other times, of magicians, enchanters and all those who deceive themselves and attempt to prey on public credulity.

It is above all in medicine that the difficulty of evaluating the probabilities is greater. As the principle of life is, in animals, a force that acts all the time and continually tends to overcome obstacles, and Nature, left to its own resources, cures a large number of maladies, when remedies are employed it is difficult to determine what is due to Nature and what to the remedy. Thus, for all that most people regard the cure of a disease as a proof of the efficacy of the remedy, in the eyes of a wise man this result is only a probability, more or less large, and this probability cannot be converted into certainty except by a large number of results of the same kind.

These reflections have struck MM. the Commissioners on magnetism, and they have recognised that, for a methodical proof of the existence of magnetism by the cure of diseases, it would require, perhaps, the life-time of several men. Therefore they have rejected a type of proof that might lead them to admit [the existence of] an agent which has no reality at all; they have thought that it would rather be necessary to get to the source and to prove that magnetism did not exist in order to conclude that the cures that are attributed to it are not due to that cause.

Once this type of experiment has been excluded, the path which the Commissioners have to follow is simple and self-evident. The methods of procedure of the partisans of magnetism consist in two things: 1st

in touchings; 2nd in various procedures for making the magnetic fluid in one body pass into another [body] at some distance; and the result of these two procedures is to make the patient on whom one operates fall into the state called *crise*, that is to say, to give him convulsions; but to conclude that the convulsions that very sensitive people exhibit are due to a particular agent, to a magnetic fluid, it would be necessary that one could attribute the convulsions to that single cause alone. For, logically, when an effect can depend on several causes, one cannot conclude that it is due to one rather than to another. Indeed, one knows that the least contradiction, the smallest constraint, an excited imagination, suffice to give convulsions to very sensitive people; in addition, there exist imitative convulsions[4] such as yawning that communicate themselves from one person to another. Thus, if the effects of magnetism, and the convulsions that are sometimes the consequence, can as well be explained by the effects of an excited or exalted imagination, all the efforts of the Commissioners must be directed to distinguishing in 'magnetism' those things that are related to physical causes from those that are related to moral causes, the effects of a real agent from those due to the imagination. There is but one method of arriving at this end, that is by magnetising people without their knowledge and by persuading them that they are being magnetised when they are not. By combining these two types of experiment one will obtain separately the effects of magnetism and those of the imagination, and, from this, one will be able to conclude what should be attributed to the one and what to the other. Any experiment that deviates from this plan will obscure the matter instead of illuminating it; for, both in the science and in the arts, a single conclusive experiment is more exact than a large number of others which do not go directly to the purpose.

Plan of experiments

We shall go to Passy, to M. Franklin's house, at exactly midday.

All the Commissioners will meet M. Deslon and the subjects who are to be magnetized in M. Franklin's bedroom ; there we shall explain in a definite manner that neither M. Deslon nor the other Commissioners shall say a word, except only for a single Commissioner who will question the patient.

Arrange for M. Deslon to magnetize M^{me} de Roumagné ; M. Franklin with M. Majaud, M. Darat, M^{me} Moré in the salon ; the Commissioners, M. Guillotin, M. Le Roy, M. de Bory, directly in the other room ; M. Bailly, M. Lavoisier, M. Sallin, through the door.

Then, on the pretext of having experiments to arrange, we shall take the patients to a place in the house where they will be kept under surveillance, each in a separate room; one of them can be put in the *salon*.

Since the object of the first two experiments is to test the effect of the imagination on people who are not magnetized, but who believe themselves to be, one can do several at once. Thus one will be able to carry out the experiment with the bowl and the one with direct magnetization.

For this purpose, two Commissioners, MM …. will take one of the patients, blindfold him and take him to the bowl, where the required number of chairs will have been set out. A third Commissioner will come in a few moments later, making a little noise, in such a way that the patient will be persuaded that it is M. Deslon. One of the Commissioners, M … will be charged with feeling the patient's pulse from time to time, and asking him about what he feels, remembering that the object is to make the patient believe he has been magnetized and that he ought to be feeling effects, and slanting his questions in such a way as to confirm him in this idea. Another Commissioner, M …. will carefully record in writing the questions, the replies and all the circumstances. It is important that there is only a single Commissioner who speaks.

If the patient falls into a *crise* the Commissioners will have nothing to do other than to give him aid, to observe and to record.

However, one of them can absent himself to go and fetch M. Deslon if it is thought to be necessary. But M. Deslon will be required to observe the rule of silence even faced with a patient in *crise* and even if he should appear to be unconscious. On the other hand, if, after thirty minutes, there has been no effect, one of the two will go and find M. Deslon and get him to approach quietly, while the interrogating Commissioner distracts the patient's attention by his questions. In addition, since it is not the patient himself whom M. Deslon will magnetize, but the water in the basin, the distance can be great enough that the patient does not notice his presence.

During the same period three other Commissioners will be responsible for the experiment on direct magnetisation of another patient in the *salon*. M … will be the interrogator, M. …. will keep the records and M. …. will be charged with unaffectedly imitating M. Deslon magnetizing. In this experiment all will be done that one believes most appropriate for deceiving the imagination of the patient so that he cannot doubt that M. Deslon is present. The one whose responsibility is to interrogate will use all convenient methods in his questions; he will even appear on occasions to address remarks in a low voice to M. Deslon who is magnetising, but who is required to work without replying in accordance with our rules.

A few minutes before the end of the time that has been allotted, one will say to the patient : "Look, the experiment is about to finish and we will take you back to the place where you were blindfolded, but

there is one other thing to which we would like you to agree; that is, to remain for another quarter of an hour with your blindfold on so that you can examine your sensations when you are not magnetized and compare them to those that you have just experienced."

Then one will lead the patient to a room where M. Deslon will have been taken and signal to him to magnetize the patient; but it is likely that we will not have to get to that stage and that the patient will have fallen into *crise* before the end of the thirty minutes when M. Deslon was absent.

So that the procedures are carried out precisely, each Commissioner will take a summary of what he has to do.

Summary of the report [5]

The animal magnetic fluid that M. Mesmer claims to have discovered is, as he describes it and in his own words:[6]

> "an agent universally distributed throughout the whole of Nature; it is the mechanism of a mutual influence between the celestial bodies, between the earth and animate bodies; it is combined in such a way as not to allow any vacuum; its subtlety is beyond comparison; it is capable of receiving and propagating all the impressions of movement; it is susceptible to flux and reflux. The animal body demonstrates the effects of this agent and it is by insinuating itself into the nerves that it affects them immediately. One recognises, in the human body in particular, properties similar to those of the magnet; in it diverse and opposite poles can be distinguished. The action and the power of animal magnetism can be communicated from one body to other bodies, animate and inanimate. This action takes place at a considerable distance without the intervention of any intermediate body; it is augmented, [when] reflected by mirrors, and communicated, propagated and increased by sound; this power can be accumulated, concentrated and transported. Although this fluid is universal, all bodies are not equally susceptible to receiving and transmitting it; there are even some, though a small number, which have a property so opposed [to it] that their mere presence destroys all the effects of the fluid in other bodies.
>
> Magnetism can, according to MM. Mesmer and Deslon, immediately cure diseases of the nerves and, through them, other diseases; it perfects the action of medicaments; it provokes and controls salutary *crises* in a way of which one can make oneself master. By its means the doctor is able to know the state of health of any individual, and to judge with certainty the origin, nature and progress of the most complicated maladies; it prevents the worsening of these and leads to their cure without ever exposing the patients to dangerous effects or to annoying consequences, whatever their age, temperament and sex.[7] Nature offers in magnetism a universal means of curing and of preserving Men."

Such is the agent of which MM. Mesmer and Deslon teach publicly the existence and effects; there is, according to them, only a single disease and only a single remedy and this remedy is animal magnetism. Such a singular and novel doctrine should, according to the custom of all ages, lend itself at once to ridicule and infatuation. The capital[8], when it was exposed to all this singular novelties, divided into factions and animal magnetism found strong champions in the city, at the court and among doctors themselves. Astonishing cures were reported, the miracles multiplied and the most incredulous were taken aback.

The government could not remain indifferent to a question of this kind that affected the health and the life of its citizens, and, because according to the system of M. Mesmer and his disciples any individual could, simply by practising magnetism, cure anyone, the whole science of medicine would become useless; it would be necessary to close the medical schools, to change the system of instruction, to destroy the corpus of works believed until the present to be the depositories of medical knowledge and to change everything to the study of magnetism. In an affair of this importance the government had to be on its guard against both too facile belief and too unbridled incredulity. It was necessary to acquire information before coming to an opinion; it was essential at least to avoid the reproach of precipitate prejudice. Such are the motives that have given rise to the setting up of the Commission whose report we present. The Commissioners were chosen from the Faculté de Médecine of Paris and from the Académie des Sciences

[9]. Their wisdom, their moral qualities, the name of the celebrated Franklin placed at the front, everything about the Commission seemed appropriate to command respect and to inspire confidence.

It was about the middle of the month of April that the Commissioners began their discussions and meetings, and, although they have been criticised by the public for their slow progress, one cannot but be surprised, after reading their report, that people with other business also to attend to, were able to complete such a large number of experiments, to draw up a complete description of them and to present it to the public in about four months.

The Commissioners were first careful to follow the treatment given by M. Deslon and to witness the effects produced there by the practice of magnetism;

> "they saw, in the centre of a large room, a circular box made of oak and raised about a foot or a foot and a half, called the *baquet* ; the lid, also of oak is pierced by a number of holes from which issue iron rods, cranked and moveable. The patients are arranged in several rows around the baquet and each has his iron rod, which, because of its crank, can be placed directly on the affected part. A cord passed around their bodies joins them together; sometimes a second chain is created through the hands, that is to say, by placing the thumb between the thumb and index of one's neighbour : one also presses the thumb that one holds. The impression received through the left hand leaves through the right and circulates round.
>
> A pianoforte is placed in a corner of the room and there various airs and movements are played; sometimes the voice and singing are added."

M. Deslon and all those who magnetise have in their hand a small iron rod ten or twelve inches long which they regard as suitable to act as a conductor of magnetism.

"They move it in front of the face and over the whole body from above downwards, above or behind the head and on the affected parts, observing the distinction of poles which forms part of the science of magnetism. One also acts on the patients by fixing them with the gaze."

In addition to these general techniques common to all, each patient is magnetised individually by touching them, that is to say, by applying the hands to the hypochondria and to the area of the lower belly.

> "Some of the patients are calm and tranquil and show absolutely nothing; others cough and spit and feel some slight discomforts, local heat or a general warmth, and have sweating. Others are agitated and tormented by convulsions; these are characterised by sudden involuntary movements of all the limbs; by tightening of the throat, by convulsive movements of the hypochondria and epigastrium, by difficulties with their eyes, by piercing cries, tears, hiccoughs, exaggerated smiles; these are commonly followed by expectoration of a cloudy, viscous liquid. Nothing is more striking than the spectacle of these convulsions. One sees looking for each other and throwing themselves on one another, smiling at each other, speaking to each other affectionately and soothing each others' *crises*."

It is mainly the women who are subject to these *crises*.

After this spectacle of what happens at the public treatment the Commissioners describe the experiments that they have carried out to uncover the causes which produce such singular effects. They first took careful account of that which MM. Mesmer and Deslon call the *magnetic fluid* escapes all the senses

and that its presence cannot be shown by any physical experiment; that all the means by which it has been thought to make them detectable by the senses were illusory; that it has no relation to either the electric fluid or to that of the magnet. The Commissioners therefore found themselves reduced to demonstrating its existence by its action on animate bodies. M. Deslon insisted that one should rely exclusively on experiments of this kind. The Commissioners thought differently and, on the contrary, they excluded all evidence from the cure of diseases. Here are the reasons that they advance for the route that they have followed.

They say, as did Hippocrates, that it is Nature which cures diseases; the art of medicine cooperates with her; but what is there which could distinguish in a cure what is due to Art and what to Nature? Everyday one sees grave illnesses cured by mutually opposing remedies; among a large number of patients there are almost as many [cured] among those abandoned to Nature as among those treated according to the rules of Art. If, then, diseases are treated by magnetism how could one know if the cure was brought about by the magnetism or by Nature without magnetism? Suppose, the Commissioners said to themselves, that magnetism does not exist would we not expose ourselves to the risk, by treating patients by the practice of magnetism, of giving the credit for Nature's cures to an imaginary agent? And thus a method that can lead us to admit the existence of a non-existent agent is defective and dangerous.

The treatment of disease thus appeared to the Commissioners to be able to supply only results that are always uncertain and often erroneous. They thought that the uncertainty of this method, and all the causes of illusion that are inseparable from it, could be compensated only by an infinity of cures and by the experience of several centuries, and they rejected a plan which could not conform either to the object of their commission or with the impatience of the government and the public.

These reflections directed their procedures; they began by carrying out experiments on themselves; not at the 'public treatment' where the course of their observations would have been disturbed continually, where their doings would have been observed, where each word they spoke would have been commented upon, but at the private baquet installed at M. Deslon's house, in a room set apart, which he had put at their disposal. They continued for more than three months to attend at the baquet at least once per week, and often to remain there for two hours, to be magnetised regularly there by touching by M. Deslon or by one of his pupils. Sometimes they were there alone, sometimes they took with them patients of their acquaintance and people sufficiently knowledgeable to appreciate their sensations. Neither the Commissioners nor any of those who attended the baquet with them had a *crise* or anything that approached it.

An unvarying and real cause must produce uniform effects on each occasion when the circumstances are absolutely the same. How then is one to explain the striking difference found between the effects observed at the public treatment and those at the private sessions? In the one case calm and silence, in the other turbulence and agitation; there violent *crises*, the constant state of an agitated body and spirit, Nature exaggerated; here the body free of pain, the spirit untroubled, Nature following its ordinary equilibrium and course, in a word, an absence of all effects. One had to conclude either that magnetism is not a consistent and real agent or that the circumstances found at the public baquet were not the same as those to be found at the individual treatment.

This comparison began to make the Commissioners suspect that an excited imagination could well count for something in the effects attributed to magnetism and that the *crises* were reinforced by the presence of a large number of people in crisis. The experiments that they had carried out at Passy, at M. Franklin's house, did nothing to contradict this opinion. Of seven patients who were magnetised by M. Deslon there

were only three who had shown some slight effects and also he commonest of these effects was a visible consequence of 'touchings' continued for a long time. A very young child, scrofulous and almost emaciated, a young girl subject to convulsions, but who was in a state of imbecility, felt absolutely nothing. However, the absence of reason does not remove anything from sensibility, it damps down the power of the imagination : thus the action of the imagination is a necessary condition for the effects of magnetism.

This was just an initial opinion that it was necessary to verify by experiments; the Commissioners felt that, when a phenomenon is the result of a number of causes, one must try to analyse them, to separate them, to find out the influence of each in particular and thus, through all the experiments in which we are going to follow their progress, they have tried to separate the effects of the imagination from those attributed to magnetism, to magnetise without the involvement of the imagination and to bring the imagination into play without its being accompanied by magnetism.

This way of proceeding showed them that it was not necessary to use any of the techniques prescribed for the practice of magnetism in order to produce its effects, that it was sufficient to heighten the imagination of the patients progressively and when one had arrived at the necessary degree of exaltation on could, without magnetism, provoke *crises* and assuage them and provided that one could make oneself master of the imagination one became at the same time master of all the effects that depend upon it. It was at the house of M. Jumelin, doctor of medicine in the Faculté de Paris, who is at present in Constantinople in the entourage of M. de Choiseul-Gouffier ambassador to the Porte, that the Commissioners carried out the first experiments of this kind. A sufficient number of patients having been assembled there we got them in one after the other, blindfolded them, sat them done and persuaded them that we were magnetising them; then, by carefully managed questions, we caused them to experience impressions of heat and cold, made them perspire and sweat, all the effects attributed to magnetism, although we had not magnetised them in any way at all.

When the type of crise that they had demonstrated had completely passed, we magnetised them without their knowledge, still blindfolded, and the magnetism was then without effect.

This singular fact of the ineffectiveness of magnetism without imagination and the effectiveness of imagination without magnetism was never shown in a more striking fashion that in the experiments carried out at Passy at M. Franklin's. M. Deslon had sent there two of the most susceptible of his patients to magnetism. We took one of them into the salon, blindfolded, made her sit down and persuaded her that we were going to fetch M. Deslon to magnetise her. In fact, after a few moments, one of the Commissioners entered copying the gait of M. Deslon; we appeared to speak to him and ask him to begin the magnetisation : at the end of three minutes the patients showed a nervous shudder, she had pains in her head and her arm and a tingling in her hands and made involuntary movements of her feet and hands. In a word, the Commissioners saw one of the most characteristic *crises* even although for the whole duration of the experiment the patient had not been magnetised in any way and we had even avoided feeling her pulse for fear that it could be claimed that we had communicated magnetism to her. On the same day we put another patient in front of and near a closed door; we persuaded her that M. Deslon was on the other side of the door and was magnetising her. It was hardly one minute after she was seated that she began to have shivering, that she was take with convulsions, with chattering of her teeth, twisting of her arms and trembling of the whole body, etc.

A few days previously we had tried out at M. Franklin's at Passy the effects of a magnetised tree. We chose for the experiment an orchard in which fruit trees with long trunks were planted equally spaced in a line. We asked M. Deslon to magnetise one of them. M. Deslon had brought with him a young man about

twelve years old who was very sensitive to magnetism.; he was kept under watch while he experiment was prepared so that there could be no suspicion that he knew what was happening. We took him, blindfolded, and presented him successively to different trees far away from the one that had been magnetised. From the first tree the youth began to have some impressions; these increased gradually at each tree and, at the fourth, although it was not magnetised and was very far from the tree that had been magnetised, the young man fell into a crise, his limbs became rigid and he lost consciousness.

In another experiment twelve porcelain cups were prepared; M. Deslon was asked to magnetise one of them which had been carefully marked with a sign known to the Commissioners. The cups were presented in succession to a person who had already been tested and was known to be very sensitive to magnetism. At the fourth cup the patient fell into a crise and, what is more remarkable, when she asked for a drink the magnetised cup was then presented to her and she drank from it quietly and said she was much relieved. The cup and magnetism thus had completely failed in their effect because the crise took place without magnetism and it was calmed rather than increased at the approach of the magnetised cup.

A few moments later, once the patient was completely recovered, she was taken to a room where she remained alone for almost two hours, the Commissioners being occupied with other experiments during this time. The noise that she was making having attracted some people entirely without knowledge of magnetism, she was found to have fallen again into a crise only by the belief that she was where she had been magnetised. She knew that she had come in order to take part in some experiments; the approach of anyone, the least noise, attracted her attention, revived the idea of magnetism, and renewed the convulsions.

These experiments proved in a convincing way that the imagination without magnetism produces all the effects attributed to magnetism. It remained to prove in an equally formal manner that magnetism produces nothing without the imagination, and this was the result that the Commissioners approached in the next experiment.

In an apartment we arranged two contiguous rooms joined by a communicating door. The door was taken off and a frame covered with double paper was substituted for it. In one of the rooms was one of the Commissioners, unknown to the person who was to be magnetised; he was seated next to a table and, on the pretext of being busy making a book catalogue, he was on a position to write down everything that happened. In the same room was a woman who was said to be from the provinces and to have some linen to work on. We had chosen a linen worker who had already been used in the experiments at Passy and whose sensitivity to magnetism was known. When she arrived things were arranged in the room so that there was only a single chair on which she could sit, and this chair was placed in the embrasure of the communicating door where she found herself as it were in a niche.

The Commissioners were in the other room and one of them, a doctor, experienced in the art of magnetising and having already produced effects was charged with magnetising the worker through the paper frame and without her knowledge. It is a principle in the theory of magnetism that this agent passes through wooden doors, walls, paper etc. The female worker was thus magnetised in the same way as if it had been in the open and in her presence. In fact she was so magnetised for half an hour at a very short distance, following all the rules of magnetism. During all this time she had made cheerful conversation; asked about her health she replied freely that she was well. At Passy, where, without her being magnetised she believed that she had been, she fell into a crise at the end of three minutes; thus the imagination alone produced all the effects attributed to magnetism, and magnetism without the imagination did not produce any effect.

Such are the principal and most striking experiments that the Commissioners' report presents; we shall not follow them in all their details. They might have ended their research and contented themselves with having proved that the animal magnetic fluid did not exist, but it was important that they should follow with care the effects of the exalted imagination in the practice of magnetism, and this is not the least interesting part of their report.

It is usually with the gaze that the person who magnetises seizes (to use the received expression) the subject to be magnetised. It is this gaze that produces the first disturbance of the imagination, which begins the work of magnetisation. Touching, the application of the hands, follows quickly : they are usually carried to the hypochondria, to the epigastric regions and, sometimes, to the ovaries. The hands – the fingers – press on and compress these various regions more or less. The Commissioners examined the physiological effects that must result from this on the colon and on the stomach; they emphasize the close rapport that exists between these two viscera and the uterus. The various responsive plexuses in this region constitute a veritable nervous centre connected to all the other parts of the body. It is on this nervous centre that the affections of the mind generally make their first impressions, and it is thus that, during large fits[10] of emotion one feels a pressure, a contraction of the stomach. The imagination, excited, first brings the diaphragm into play; during sighs, tears and laughter the diaphragm reacts on the viscera of the lower belly; hence arises the colic which is quite common following agitation; the diarrhoea caused by terror; the jaundice by chagrin.

The tears, the laughter, the coughing, the hiccoughs and in general all the effects seen in what are called the *crises* of the public treatment, arise therefore from the disturbance of the functions of the diaphragm by physical causes such as touching and pressure; or from the power with which the imagination is endowed to act on this organ, or even more from the combination of these two causes. The circumstances that are combined at the public treatment contribute even more to increase these effects; imposing equipment, harmonious instruments, agreeable singing, a heated atmosphere made noxious by the number of people there, all combine to disturb and to excite the nervous types. A mechanical imitation, which Nature seems to have made a rule for sensitive and organised creatures, determines the rest. In the first hour of treatment, the patients in general show only slight effects; little by little the impressions are spread and reinforced

> "as one sees at theatrical presentations where the effect is stronger when there are more spectators and above all in large venues where one is at liberty to applaud. This sign of individual emotion creates a general feeling because everyone participates in it to the degree that he is susceptible. It is, moreover, what one sees in armies on a day of battle when the enthusiasm of courage, just as do terrors and panics, spreads so rapidly; the sound of the drum and military music, the noise of the cannonades and musketry, the cries, the disorder, disturb the organs and move the spirits in the same way and elevate the imagination to the same extent. In this drunken unity, one emotion that is demonstrated becomes universal, it encourages the charge or it causes flight. The same cause gives rise to revolts; the imagination governs the multitude; men gathered in numbers are more susceptible to their feelings, reason has less empire over them, and when fanaticism seizes these gatherings it produces the shakers of the Cevennes, the convulsions of Saint-Médard etc."

It is in order to arrest this movement, so easily communicated to the emotions, that, during seditions and revolts assemblies are forbidden. It has been realised that, in isolating individuals spirits are calmed, and there is a recent example of this in the young girls of Saint-Roch, in whom separation cured the convulsions that they had when together.

Thus we find with magnetism, or, rather, the imagination such as acts in theatrical performances, in armies, during revolts, [is active] in the crowded assemblies around the baquet; in all of them there is an active and terrible power whose effects one sees with astonishment, while at the same time its cause is obscure and hidden.

Touchings, imagination, imitation, these are the real causes of the effects attributed to this new agent advertised under the name of *animal magnetism*. The practice of magnetism consists of the art of increasing the imagination by degrees; gaze, pressure, touching seem to act as a preparation, the nerves begin to be agitated, imitation communicates and expands the impressions.

But this claimed magnetism, this imaginary agent, the imagination exalted by the practice of magnetism gives rise to *crises*; and it remained to discover whether these might be useful, if they could cure or relieve patients.

> "Undoubtedly, the Commissioners say, the imagination of patients often has a large influence on the cure of their diseases. This effect is known only by general experience and has not at all been demonstrated by positive experiments, but it seems that one cannot doubt it. It is a common saying that faith is a saviour in medicine; this faith is the product of the imagination : thus imagination acts only by gentle means; this it does by spreading calm to all the senses, and re-establishing order in the functions, in revitalising everything through hope. Hope is Man's life; anything that offers him the one contributes to giving him the other. But, when the imagination produces convulsions it acts by violent means; this means are almost always destructive. It is only in very rare cases that they can be useful; it is in desperate cases that it is necessary to dislocate in order to regulate anew. Methods of this kind can be useful in medicine only in the way that poisons are. It must be necessity that demands them and good order that employs them. This requirement is brief, the shock must be a single one. Far from repeating it, the wise doctor concerns himself with the appropriate means to repair the necessary damage that it has caused. But, at the public treatment with magnetism, the injury is repeated every day; the *crises* are long-lasting and violent. The state of such *crises* being damaging, habituation to them cannot but be deleterious. How can it be supposed that a woman with an affliction of the chest, could, without danger, have crises of convulsive coughing, and forceful expectorations, and, by such violent and repeated efforts weaken and perhaps tear the lungs, organs to which it is so difficult to bring soothing balms? How can one suppose that a man, whatever his malady, requires, to cure him, to fall into *crises* where his life seems to be lost, where the limbs become rigid, where, during precipitate involuntary movements he strikes his chest forcibly, *crises* that end with abundant spitting up of mucus and blood? This blood is neither vitiated nor corrupt; this blood comes from vessels from which it has been torn by [the patient's] efforts, and which it leaves contrary to the will of Nature. These actions [of animal magnetism] are therefore a real injury and not a curative hurt; it is injury added to disease, whatever the latter may be."

The *crises* present yet another danger. Man is continually ordered by habit; habit modifies Nature by successive degrees, but she uses it with such power that often she changes it entirely and makes it unrecognisable. Who can assure us that this state of crisis, at first entered into voluntarily, will not become habitual? And if this habit, contracted in this way, were often to reproduce the same accidents, without these being desired, and almost without the aid of the imagination what would be the condition of an individual subjected to these violent *crises*, tormented in mind and body by their miserable impression, whose days would be divided between apprehension of pain and whose life would be nothing but

enduring torture? Diseases of the nerves, for all that they occur naturally, are the despair of doctors; it is no part of medical art to induce them. An art is damaging if it disturbs the functions of the animal economy, pushes Nature to extremes and multiplies the victims of its derangements. An art is the more dangerous if it not only aggravates maladies by causing repeated accidents by making them degenerate into habits, but also if this state is contagious, as one might suspect, the procedure of provoking nervous convulsions and exciting them in public during the treatments, is a way of spreading them in the large towns, and even of inflicting them on generations to come because the ills and the habits of parents are transmitted to their offspring.

The Commissioners, having seen that this animal magnetic fluid can not be perceived by any of our senses, that it has no action on them, nor on the patients that they have submitted to it, and being certain that the pressures and touchings bring about changes rarely favourable to the animal economy and disturbances in the imagination that are always irritating; finally, having demonstrated by decisive experiments that the imagination, without magnetism, produces convulsions and that magnetism without the imagination produces nothing at all, have concluded unanimously that, on the question of the existence and the usefulness of magnetism there is nothing to prove the existence of an animal magnetic fluid ; that this non-existent fluid is consequently useless; that the violent effects that are seen at the public treatment are due to touching and to the imagination set in action and to that mechanical imitation that makes us repeat whatever strikes our senses in spite of ourselves. At the same time they find themselves obliged to add, as an important observation, that these touchings, these repeated actions of the imagination in order to produce *crises* can be damaging; that the spectacle of the *crises* is also dangerous because of that imitation that Nature seems to have set as a law for us, and that, in consequence, all public treatment at which the practice of magnetism is employed, can only have, in the long run, sinister effects."

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[1]. *six lignes*; 1.35 cm. One *ligne*, or Paris line, in the French pre-metric system of linear measurement was equal to 0.225 cm. Twelve *lignes* equalled one *pouce* (thumb) or inch) and twelve *pouces* one *pied* or Paris foot of 32.484 cm. (IMLD.)

[2]. The magnetisers, and hence the Commissioners, used '*crise*' to mean specifically the 'convulsive' state produced by so-called magnetisation. When the word is used with this specific meaning I have set it in italics. (IMLD.)

[3]. Berthollet: Claude Louis Berthollet (1748-1822). Physician to the Duc d'Orléans. In 1784 he was appointed inspector of dyeworks and director of the Gobelins tapestry factory. A friend of, and collaborator with, Lavoisier and, with him, a founder of modern chemical nomenclature.

Duc d'Orléans: Louis Phillipe Duc d'Orléans (1725-1785). Father of Phillipe (Égalité), who was revolutionary but was nevertheless executed in the Terror, and whose son, Louis-Phillipe, became the last king of France following the 1830 revolution; he reigned from 1830-1848.

La Fayette: Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834) was an important figure in both the French and the American revolutions.

[4]. Presumably by 'convulsions' Lavoisier here means just involuntary actions – like yawning.

[5]. In Lavoisier's hand (Note by editor of the printed *Mémoires*.)

[6]. The sections within double quotation marks are marked thus in Lavoisier's text. The French text of

these passages is the same as (though not always exactly to the word) as portions of the text of the published Rapport. It seems highly probable that they are quotations from the published Rapport or a late draft of it. However, because Lavoisier's text is undated another possibility is that Lavoisier marked these passages with quotation marks because they were portions of a draft by him which were incorporated in the final report of the Commissioners. (IMLD.)

[7]. Memoir by M. Mesmer on the discovery of animal magnetism, 1779, p.74 et seq. (Lavoisier)

[8]. Paris IMLD.

[9]. MM. Franklin, Majault, Le Roy, Sallin, Darat, Bory, Guillotin, Lavoisier. (Lavoisier)

[10]. *Grands mouvements* It seems most likely that this is to be taken figuratively rather than literally. (IMLD)

⇒ original title

REPORT

OF THE COMMISSIONERS

Charged by the King

With the examination

OF

Animal magnetism.

Printed by order of the King.

PARIS,

At the Imprimerie Royale.

M. DCCLXXXIV.

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Report

Of the Commissioners charged by the King

With the Examination of Animal Magnetism.

On 12 march 1784 THE KING named doctors chosen from the Faculté de Paris, Messrs.

Borie, Sallin, d'Arcet, Guillotin, to investigate and to report to him an account of Animal Magnetism, practised by M. Deslon: and, on the request of these four doctors, His Majesty named, to proceed with them to this investigation, five members of the Académie Royale des Sciences, Messrs. Franklin, Le Roy, Bailly, de Bory and Lavoisier. M. Borie having died at the beginning of the Commissioners' work, His Majesty chose M. Majault, Doctor in the Faculté, to replace him.

The agent that M. Mesmer claims to have discovered, which he has called Animal Magnetism, is, as he has described it himself and in his own words, "a fluid distributed everywhere; it is the means by which celestial bodies exert a mutual influence on each other, the earth and on living bodies; it is continuous in such a way that it does not tolerate any vacuum; its subtlety is without compare; it is capable of receiving, propagating and communicating all the influences of movement; it is susceptible of flux and reflux. The animal body demonstrates the effects of this agent; and it is by

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entering the substance of the nerves that it affects them directly. In the human body in particular one recognises properties similar to those of the magnet; there one may distinguish poles equally separate and opposed. The action and the virtues of Magnetism may be communicated to other living and inanimate bodies: this action takes place at an extended distance, without the aid of any intermediate body; it is increased when reflected from mirrors; it is communicated, propagated and increased by sound; this quality can be accumulated, concentrated and moved around. Although this fluid is universal, not all living bodies are equally susceptible to it; there are even those, though they are very few, which have a property so opposed to it that their mere presence destroys the effects of the fluid on other bodies.

Animal Magnetism is able to cure maladies of the nerves immediately, and through these, others; it improves the action of medicaments; it produces and directs salutary *crise*s, in such a way that one can master them; by its means the doctor is able to know the state of health of each individual and judge certainly of the nature and progress of the most complex maladies; it prevents the increase of, and acts towards the cure of these, without ever exposing the patient, of whatever age, temperament or sex, to

dangerous or troublesome effects (1)

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Nature offers, in Magnetism, a universal means of curing and preserving man. (2).

Such is the agent that the Commissioners have been charged to examine, and whose properties are avowed by M. Deslon, who accepts all the principles of M. Mesmer. This theory forms the basis of a memoir that was read at M. Deslon's house on 9 May in the presence of M. the Lieutenant General of Police and of the Commissioners. In this memoir it is set out that there is only one nature, one illness, one remedy and that this remedy is Animal Magnetism. This doctor, in instructing the Commissioners in the doctrine and procedures of Animal Magnetism, showed them its practice, demonstrating the poles, showing them how to touch patients and to direct this magnetic fluid on to them.

M. Deslon agreed with the Commissioners, 1st to prove the existence of Animal Magnetism; 2nd to pass on his understanding about the discovery; 3rd to prove the usefulness of this discovery and of Animal Magnetism in the cure of sick people.

After receiving this understanding of the theory and practice of Animal Magnetism, it was necessary to find out about its effects; the Commissioners were taken, each of them several times, to M. Deslon's place of treatment.

EXPLANATION OF THE ARRANGEMENTS

They saw, in the middle of a large room, a circular enclosure, made of oak and elevated by about one and a half feet, that is called the baquet 1; the top of this box is pierced by a number of holes from which emerge moveable cranked iron bars. The patients are placed in several ranks around the baquet, each with his own iron rod which, because of the bend in it, can be placed directly on the affected part; a cord passed around their bodies joins them

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together; sometimes a second chain is formed by their holding hands, that is to say, by each putting the thumb between the thumb and the index of his neighbour: then the thumb so held is pressed; the influence received on the left leaves on the right and circulates throughout the circle of patients.

A piano forte is placed in a corner of the room and on it are played different airs on various movements; sometimes the sound of the voice and of singing are added.

All those who carry out the magnetisation have in their hand an iron rod ten to twelve inches in length.

M. Deslon declared to the Commissioners, 1st That this rod is a conductor of magnetism; it has the advantage of concentrating it in its point and of making the emanations more powerful. 2nd Sound, in accordance with M. Mesmer's principle, is also a conductor of magnetism, and, to communicate the influence of the fluid to the piano forte it suffices to bring the iron rod close to it, whoever touches the instrument is charged also, and the magnetism is transmitted by the sounds to the surrounding patients. 3rd. The cord that surrounds the patients, and the chain of thumbs, is there in order to increase the effects by communication. 4th. The interior of the baquet is made in such a way as to concentrate the magnetism;

it is a large reservoir from which it flows by the iron rods that plunge into it.

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The Commissioners assured themselves later, by using an electrometer and a non-magnetised iron needle, that the bacquet contained nothing electric or magnetic; and, according to the declaration made to them by M. Deslon about the interior of the cabinet, they recognised there no physical agent capable of contributing to the effects attributed to magnetism.

The patients, arrayed in large numbers and in several rows around the baquet, thus receive magnetism by all these means at once; by the iron rods that transmit it from the baquet, by the cord tied around the body, and by the union of thumbs that

METHOD OF EXCITING AND DIRECTING THE MAGNETISM

communicates that from their neighbours; also, by the sound of the piano forte, or of a pleasant voice, that transmits it through the air. The patients are next magnetised directly by the finger and the iron rod moved in front of the face, above or behind the head and on the affected parts, always observing the distinction of the poles; they are also acted upon by gazing at and fixating them. But, above all, they are magnetised by application of the hands and by pressure with the fingers on the hypochondrium and the region of the lower belly; this application is often continued for a long time, sometimes for several hours.

EFFECTS OBSERVED ON THE PATIENTS

Thus the patients offer a very varied spectacle according to the various states in which they find themselves. Some of them are calm, quiet and do nothing; others cough,

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spit, feel slight pain, local warmth or heat all over and sweat; yet others are agitated and troubled by convulsions. These convulsions are extraordinary in their number, duration and force. As soon as a convulsion begins, several others appear. The Commissioners have seen them last for more than three hours; they are accompanied by spitting up of a turbid, watery, viscous fluid, torn from them by the violence of their efforts. Sometimes there have been streaks of blood in it; there was, among others, a sick young man who often produced it in large amounts. The convulsions are characterised by sudden involuntary movements of all the limbs and of the whole body, by the closing off of the throat, by sudden twitchings of the hypochondrium and epigastrium, by agitated movement and turning aside of the eyes, by piercing cries, tears, hiccups and immoderate laughter. They are preceded or followed by a languor and reverie and by a marked weakness and even prostration. The least unexpected sound causes agitation and one sees that changes in tone and in tempo of the airs played on the piano forte influence the patients so that a more lively movement increases their agitation and renews the force of their convulsions.

There is a room covered in mattresses and originally intended for patients affected by these convulsions, a room called des *crise*s; but M. Deslon does not think it appropriate to use it, and all the patients, whatever is happening to them, are together in the public treatment rooms.

Nothing is more astonishing than the spectacle of these convulsions; until one has seen them one can have no idea

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of them: and, on seeing them, one is surprised both by the quietness of one group of the patients and by the agitation that affects others; the various manifestations that are repeated; the sympathies that are established. One sees the patients seeking each other out and throwing themselves on each other, smile, speak affectionately and calm each others' *crise*s. All are subject to the magnetiser; even if they are quite prostrated his voice, a glance, a sign from him revives them. One cannot but recognise in these regular effects a great power that agitates the patients and overcomes them, and of which the magnetiser seems to be the seat.

This convulsive state is incorrectly called a *crise* in the theory of Animal Magnetism: according to this doctrine it is regarded as a salutary crisis of the kind that Nature herself provides, or that the doctor provokes who is skilled in facilitating it for the treatment of diseases. The Commissioners will adopt this expression in the rest of this report, and, when they use the word *crise* they will always mean the state either of convulsions or of extremely lethargic prostration produced by the procedures of Animal Magnetism.

These experiments must have as their first object the demonstration of the existence of Animal Magnetism. In dealing with this existence one must first set aside the influence of the heavens.

The Commissioners have noticed that among the numerous patients in *crise* there are always many women and few men; that the *crise*s take one or two hours to be established and that, as soon as one appears, all the others begin successively and in a short time. But, after these general observations, the Commissioners soon came to the conclusion that occasions of public treatment could not be where they carried out their experiments. The multiplicity of the effects is the first obstacle;

one sees too many things at once to study one of them in detail. In addition,

GENERAL REMARKS ON PUBLIC TREATMENT:

THE COMMISSIONERS CAN NOT CARRY OUT EXPERIMENTS AT THEM

distinguished patients who come for treatment for the sake of their health might be annoyed by questions; the minuteness of observing them might disturb or displease them. The Commissioners themselves would be disturbed by making the observations. They therefore decided that the presence of all of them at this treatment was not at all necessary; it would suffice that one or two of them went there from time to time to confirm these first general observations, to make new ones if necessary, and to report to the assembled Commission.

After having seen the effects at the public treatment it was necessary to disentangle their causes and to look for evidence of the existence and the utility of Animal Magnetism. Animal Magnetism can well exist without being useful, but it cannot be useful if it does not exist.

THESE EXPERIMENTS MUST HAVE AS THEIR FIRST OBJECT THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

IN DEALING WITH THIS EXISTENCE ONE MUST FIRST SET ASIDE THE INFLUENCE OF THE HEAVENS.

As a result, the principal object of the Commissioners' scrutiny, and the essential object of their first experiments, had to be to assure themselves of this existence. This objective was already very extensive and needed to be simplified. Animal Magnetism embraces the whole of Nature; it is, it is said, the means

by which celestial bodies influence us; the Commissioners believed that they must first set aside this large influence and consider only that part of the fluid that is distributed on earth, without being concerned whence it comes, and demonstrate the action that it has upon us, around us and before our eyes before examining its relations with the Universe.

The most reliable means of demonstrating the existence of

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Animal Magnetic fluid would be to make its presence apparent to the senses, but it did not take long for the Commissioners to realise that this fluid escapes all our senses. It is in no way luminous and visible as is electricity; its action is not apparent to the eyes like the attraction of the magnet; it has no taste or odour;

FIRST, DISMISS THE IDEA OF CELESTIAL INFLUENCES

it operates silently and surrounds you or penetrates you without touch informing you of its presence. If it exists in and around us it is thus in a manner that is absolutely insensible. Among those who profess Magnetism there are some who claim that one sometimes sees it come out of the extremities of the fingers which serve it as conductors, or who believe that they feel its passage when one moves the finger in front of the face and on the hand. In the first case the perceived emanation is nothing but transpiration which becomes perfectly visible when it is magnified by the solar microscope; on the second

THE MAGNETIC FLUID ESCAPES ALL THE SENSES.

the impression of cold or of coolness that is shown, an impression that is much more marked when one is hot, results from the movement of the air that follows the finger and whose temperature is always less than that of animal heat. On the other hand, when one brings the finger near the skin of the face which is colder than the finger, and keeps it still, one notices a feeling of warmth which is the animal heat being communicated.

IT IS AN ERROR TO BELIEVE THAT VISION AND TOUCH CAN DETECT ITS PRESENCE.

Again, it is claimed that the fluid has an odour and that one smells it when one brings under the nose either the finger or a conducting iron bar; it is been said that the sensations are different to the two nostrils when one presents the finger or the iron rod with the direct pole or the opposite pole. M. Deslon has carried out the experiment on several Commissioners; the Commissioners have repeated it on several subjects;

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none of them noticed this difference in sensation between one nostril and the other: and, if on paying attention to it some odour is, in fact, detected, it is because of the presence of iron, indeed of warm iron that has been rubbed; and on presentation of the finger it is due to the presence of emanations of sweat whose odour is often mixed with those of iron which are imprinted on the finger. These effects have been erroneously attributed to Magnetism; they are all due to known natural causes.

NOR IS IT DETECTABLE BY SMELL.

Moreover, M. Deslon has never relied on these fleeting impressions, he has not thought he could produce them as proofs; on the contrary he has declared expressly to the Commissioners that he could only demonstrate the existence of Magnetism by the action of the fluid causing changes in living bodies. This

existence becomes all the more difficult to establish by effects that are demonstrative and of which the cause is not equivocal and by authentic effects which cannot be influenced by moral circumstances; and finally by proofs that are capable of striking and impressing the mind, the only ones capable of satisfying enlightened physicists.

THE INFLUENCE OF THIS FLUID IS DETECTABLE ONLY BY ITS EFFECT OF LIVING BODIES.

The action of magnetism on living bodies can be observed in two different ways; either by the action persisting for a long time and by curative effects in the treatment of diseases or by instantaneous effects on the animal economy and by the observable changes that it produces there. M. Deslon insisted that the first method should be used principally and practically exclusively; the Commissioners did

not believe they could do this, for the following reasons:

Most diseases have their seat in the interior of the body. Long experience through many centuries has made known the symptoms that indicate and characterise them; the same experience has shown the method of treating them. In this method, what is the aim of the doctor? It is not to defy and subjugate Nature, it is to assist in her operations. Nature cures the sick,

BY THE EFFECTS PRODUCED IN THE TREATMENT OF PATIENTS OR BY TEMPORARY EFFECTS ON THE ANIMAL ECONOMY.

so said the Father of Medicine; but sometimes she encounters obstacles which obstruct her in her course and uselessly consume her forces. The doctor is the minister of Nature; an attentive observer, he observes her progress. If that progress is firm, steady, regular and without deviation the doctor watches in silence and takes care not to trouble her with remedies that are at best useless; if the progress is hindered he aids it; if it goes too slowly or too fast he accelerates or retards it. Sometimes he relies on adjusting the diet to achieve his object; sometimes he uses medicaments.

THE COMMISSIONERS' REASONS FOR EXCLUDING TREATMENT OF PATIENTS.

The action of a medicament introduced into the human body is a new force combined with that great force that causes life: if the remedy follows the same paths that this force has already opened for the expulsion of maladies it is useful, it is salutary; if its tendency is to open contrary pathways and to

THE EFFECT OF A REMEDY IS ALWAYS SOMEWHAT UNCERTAIN.

divert this action it is damaging. However, it must be pointed out that this effect, salutary or damaging, real though it is, may often escape vulgar observation. The physical history of man demonstrates some very singular phenomena in this respect. One sees that diets of the most opposite kinds do not prevent him from attaining a great age. One sees that people attacked by apparently the same disease are cured by following quite different regimes and by taking quite different remedies; Nature is thus powerful enough to maintain life in spite of a bad diet and to triumph at once over both the disease and the remedy. If she has this power to resist remedies so much the more does she have the power to act without them. The experience of the efficacy of remedies is thus always somewhat uncertain; in the case of magnetism there is a further uncertainty, that of whether it exists. How, then, can one be sure of the action of an agent whose existence is in doubt seeing that one may well doubt the action of medicaments whose existence

poses no problem!

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The cure that is most often cited in magnetism's favour is that of M. le Baron de ***; the court and the city found it equally instructive. We shall not enter here into a discussion of the facts; we shall not examine whether the remedies that had been

CURE OF MALADIES DOES NOT PROVE USEFUL.

SECOND REASON.

used previously could have contributed to this cure. We admit on the one hand the great danger in which the sick man was, and on the other the ineffectiveness of all the means of ordinary medicine. Magnetism was brought into use and M. le Baron de *** was completely cured. But, could a *crise* of Nature alone not have produced this cure? A woman of the people, very poor, who lived at Gros-caillou was attacked in 1779 by a very well characterised malignant fever; she constantly refused all aid and asked only that a vase of water beside her should be kept full: she remained quietly on the straw that served her as bed, drinking the water all day and doing nothing else. The disease developed, passed successively through different phases and ended in complete cure (3). Mademoiselle G***, living in the Petites-écuries du Roi had in her breast two glands that gave her much disquiet;

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a surgeon advised the use of Le Peintre's water as an excellent resolver saying to her that if this remedy was not successful within a month it would be necessary to extirpate the glands. The girl, terrified, consulted M. Sallin who judged that the glands were capable of resolution; M. Bouvart who was consulted subsequently was of the same opinion. When she had started the remedies she was advised to have some diversion; a fortnight later she was taken, at the Opera, by a violent cough and expectoration so abundant that she had to be taken home; she coughed up over the space of four hours about three pints of a glary lymph; an hour later M. Sallin examined her breast and found no vestige of the gland. M. Bovary, called the next day, declared the happy effect of this natural crisis. If Mademoiselle G*** had taken Peintre's water Le Peintre would have had the credit for the cure.

Experience throughout all times proves, and doctors recognise, that Nature by herself and without any treatment cures a great number of the sick. If magnetism had no effect the patients submitted to its procedure would be, as it were, abandoned to Nature. It would be absurd as a means of demonstrating the existence of this agent to choose a method that, by attributing to it all the cures of Nature, would tend to prove that it had a useful and curative effect even if it had no such thing.

The Commissioners agree with M. Mesmer in this. He rejected the cure of diseases when this method of proving the existence of Magnetism was proposed to him by a Member of the Académie des Sciences:

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it is, he said, *an error to believe that this type of proof is incontrovertible; nothing proves definitely whether the doctor or medicine cures the sick*. (4).

The treatment of patients thus can only give results that are always uncertain and often false; this uncertainty could only be dissipated, and all causes of error removed, by an infinite number of cures and,

perhaps, by experience over several centuries. The purpose and the importance of the Commission required more rapid methods. The Commissioners had to rely upon purely physical proof, that is to say, on the immediate effects of the fluid on the living body while separating these effects from all the illusions with which they might be mixed and assuring themselves that they could be due to no cause other than Animal Magnetism.

They decided to carry out experiments on individual subjects who were willing to take part in various experiments that might be devised; and who, some by their simplicity and others by their intelligence, would be capable of giving an accurate and exact account of their experience. The experiments will not be presented here in their order in time but arranged according to the facts that they illuminate.

The Commissioners decided to carry out experiments on themselves first, and to submit themselves to the action of Magnetism.

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They were very curious to experience through their own sensations the effects claimed for this agent. They therefore submitted themselves to its effects,

PRECAUTION THAT THEY THOUGHT NECESSARY.

and with such determination that they would not have been disturbed to undergo some accidents and disturbance of health that were clearly recognisable for certain as effects of Magnetism, and that would have put them in a position to resolve straight away, and by their own evidence, this important question. However, in submitting themselves thus to Magnetism the Commissioners took an essential precaution. There is no one, in the best state of health, who, if he is willing to pay close attention, does not detect within himself an infinity of movements and variations, be it an infinitely slight pain, or warmth in different parts of his body; these variations which occur all the time are independent of Magnetism. This fixing of one's attention on oneself may not be without its own effect. Whatever may be its mechanism, there are so many reports of relations between the volition of the mind and the movements of the body that one cannot say just how far the influence of attention may extend; it seems to be only a succession of volitions directed constantly and uninterruptedly to the same object. When one considers that volition moves the arm as it pleases, can one be sure that attention, focussed on some internal part of the body, cannot there cause slight movements, bring to it warmth and so modify its current state as to produce new sensations? The first concern of the Commissioners had to be not to make themselves too attentive to what was going on within themselves. If Magnetism is a real and potent cause it is not necessary that they should think about it to make it act and be apparent; it should, so to speak, force itself upon and fix their attention and make itself apparent to a mind even intentionally turned away from it.

But in making the decision to carry out experiments on themselves

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the Commissioners unanimously resolved to make them upon each other without any outsider present other than M. Deslon to magnetise them, or persons chosen by them; they also resolved not to carry out magnetisation at the public treatment so that they could discuss their observations freely, and be in every case the only, or at least the first, judges of whatever they might observe.

As a result a dedicated room was given them at M. Deslon's and a baquet for themselves and the

Commissioners went there once each week; they remained there for up to two and a half hours at a time with the iron crank pressed against the left hypochondrium, surrounded by the communication cord and from time to time making the chain of thumbs. They were magnetised either by M. Deslon or by one of his assistants sent in his place, and it was the Commissioners who appeared to be the most sensitive who were magnetised for longer and more often; they were magnetised sometimes with the finger and the iron rod presented to and moved over different parts of the body, sometimes by the application of the hands and pressure with the fingers either on the hypochondrium or on the hollow of the stomach.

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None of them felt anything, or at least detected nothing that was of a nature to be attributed to the action of Magnetism.

THEY DETECTED NOTHING.

Some of the Commissioners are of a robust constitution; others have a less strong constitution, and others are subject to indispositions: one of these felt a slight pain in the hollow of the stomach following heavy pressure that had been applied there. This pain lasted all that day and the next and was accompanied by a feeling of fatigue and malaise. A second felt, on the afternoon of one of the days on which he had been 'touched', a slight irritation of the nerves, to which he was subject. A third, who was more sensitive, particularly to an extreme instability of the nerves, felt more pain and more marked irritation; but these small inconveniences are the result of perpetual and ordinary variations in the state of health and consequently have nothing to do with Magnetism, or are the result of the pressure applied to the region of the stomach. The Commissioners mention these small details only because of a scrupulous integrity; they relate them because they imposed on themselves the obligation to tell the truth always and about everything.

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The Commissioners could not help being struck by the differences between the public treatment and their individual treatment at the baquet. The calm and the silence of the one, the movement and agitation of the other; there, multiple effects and violent cries, the habitual state of the body and spirit distracted and troubled, Nature excited; here, body free of pain, spirit untroubled, Nature keeping her habitual equilibrium and following her ordinary course, in a word the absence of all the effects; here one does not find that great power that is astonishing at the public treatment; Magnetism without energy seems to be stripped of all sensible action.

The Commissioners, having attended the baquet only once per week to begin with wanted to test whether continuity might not have an effect; they attended for three successive days but their sensitivity was unchanged and they obtained no effect. This experiment was carried out and repeated on eight subjects at a time, of whom several had the usual inconveniences: suffice it to conclude that Magnetism has little action, or none at all, in the healthy state, and even in those with slight indispositions. We decided to try the effect on people who were really ill, and we chose these from the class of the people.

Seven patients were collected together at M. Franklin's house at Passy; they were magnetised in front of him and the other Commissioners by M. Deslon.

The widow Saint-Amand, an asthmatic with swollen abdomen, thighs and legs, and the woman Anseaume who had a swelling of the thigh, felt no effect; little Claude Renard, a child of six, scrofulous and almost

wasted, who had a swollen knee with the limb flexed and the joint almost immobile - an interesting child and more reasonable than his age would suggest - also felt nothing; neither did Geneviève Leroux, a nine year old, who had convulsions and a disease that seemed very similar to that called *chorea sancti Viti*.

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François Grenet did notice some effects; he had an illness of the eyes, particularly the right with which he saw hardly at all and where there was considerable swelling. When the left eye was magnetised by approaching it and shaking the thumb close to it for quite a long time, he felt pain in the eyeball and the eye watered. When the right eye - the more affected one - was magnetised he felt nothing; he had the same pain in the left eye but nothing anywhere else.

The woman Charpentier who had been thrown to the ground against a beam by a cow two years earlier had several consequences of her accident; she had lost her vision which she had partially recovered but she had remained in a state of habitual ill health; she said she had two hernias and that her belly was so sensitive that she could not suffer the cords of the belt of her skirts: this sensitivity was due to nerves that were agitated and made very sensitive; the slightest pressure on the region of the abdomen could provoke this sensitivity and produce effects over the whole body by the intermediacy of these nerves.

This woman was magnetised like the others by application of, and pressure from, the fingers; the pressure was painful to her: then, when the finger was directed towards the hernia, she complained of pain in the head; when the finger was placed in front of the face she said that she was becoming unable to breathe. On repeated movement of the finger from above downwards she had sudden movements of the head and shoulders, as one has from a mixture of surprise and fright, and like those of someone in whose face drops of water were thrown. It seemed that she developed the same movements

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with her eyes closed. The fingers were brought under her nose while she was made to close her eyes and she said that she felt unwell if one continued. The seventh patient, Joseph Ennuyé, exhibited effects of the same kind but much less marked.

Of these seven patients there were four who felt nothing and three others who had some effects. These effects were worthy of the Commissioners' attention and required scrupulous examination.

To clarify their ideas in this respect, the Commissioners decided to test patients whose circumstances were different,

EFFECTS VARIABLE. SOME FELT SOMETHING, THE OTHERS NOTHING.

patients chosen from within society who would be expected to be independent and whose intelligence would make them capable of discussing their own sensations and giving an account of them. Mesdames de B** and de V**, Messieurs M** and R*** were admitted to the private baquet with the Commissioners; they were asked to observe what they felt but without paying too much attention to it. M. M** and Mme de V** were the only ones who felt anything. M. M** had a cold swelling over the whole of the knee joint and pain in the patella.

THIRD EXPERIMENT. TESTS OF PATIENTS FROM A MORE DISTINGUISHED CLASS.

He said, after being magnetised, that he had felt nothing in his body except at the moment when the finger

had been brought in front of the affected knee; he had thought he felt a slight warmth in the place where he usually had pain. Mme de V** who suffered from an illness of the nerves,

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was several times on the point of falling asleep when she was being magnetised. Magnetised for an hour and nineteen minutes without interruption, most often by application of the hands, she felt only agitation and malaise. These two patients came only once to the baquet. M. R**, who was sick with the remains of an enlargement of the liver after a badly-treated obstruction, came there three times and felt nothing. Mme de B**, suffering gravely from obstructions, came there constantly with the Commissioners; she felt nothing; and it must be noted that she submitted to magnetisation with perfect tranquillity, which gave rise to great astonishment.

Other patients were tested on other occasions, but not around the baquet. One of the Commissioners was magnetised by M. Deslon for half an hour during an attack of migraine; one of the symptoms of his migraine is excessive coldness of the feet. M. Deslon brought his foot close to that of the patient, the foot was not warmed; the migraine took its usual course and when the patient was placed beside the fire he had the salutary effects that heat always gives him; neither during the day nor the following night did Magnetism have any effect.

M. Franklin, for all that indispositions had prevented him from going to Paris and taking part in the experiments that had been carried out there, was himself magnetised by M. Deslon who went to his house in Passy.

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The company was numerous; all those who were there were magnetised.

Several patients who had accompanied M. Deslon felt the effects of Magnetism as they were accustomed to do at the public treatment; but Mme de B**, M. Franklin, both his relatives and his secretary, an American officer, felt nothing for all that one of M. Franklin's relatives was convalescent and the American officer was sick with a recurrent fever.

These different experiments provide results that need to be brought together and compared, from which the Commissioners have been able to draw conclusions. Of fourteen patients there were five who appeared to have demonstrated effects and nine who showed nothing. The Commissioner with the migraine and the cold feet had no improvement at all from Magnetism and his feet were not warmed at all. Thus this agent does not at all have the property attributed to it of communicating heat to the feet. Magnetism is also said to be suitable for making known the variety and seat of diseases by the pain that the action of the fluid causes there without fail. This would be a most useful property; a fluid that indicated disease would be a powerful tool in the hands of doctors who are often deceived by equivocal symptoms; but François Grenet had no sensation and no pain except in the less affected eye. If the other eye had not been red and swollen one would have believed it to be intact on the basis of the effects of Magnetism. M. R** and Mme de B**, both suffering from obstructions,

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and Mme. de B** very severely, felt nothing and would not have been alerted either to the site or the nature of their malady. Obstructions, however, are diseases that are said to be particularly sensitive to the

action of Magnetism because, according to the new theory, the free and rapid circulation of the fluid by the nerves is a means of unblocking channels and destroying obstacles, that is to say, the swellings that are found there. At the same time it is said that Magnetism is the touchstone of health: if M. R** and Mme de B** had not demonstrated the suffering inescapable from obstruction they would have been justified in thinking themselves to be in the best health in the world. One must say also of the American officer that Magnetism, said to be an indicator of diseases, had absolutely lost its effect.

The warmth that M. M** felt in the patella is too small and fugitive an effect to draw any conclusion from it. One might suspect that it arose from the cause described above, of too much attention by the observer: the same attention produces similar sensations at other times when Magnetism is not employed. The improvement demonstrated by Mme de V** came no doubt from the constancy and annoyance of the same situation; and, if she had some movement of the vapours, one knows that the property of nervous affections is greatly dependent on the attention that one pays to them; it suffices to think about them or to hear them spoken about to make them reappear. One can imagine what must happen to a woman whose nerves are very sensitive, magnetised for an hour and nineteen minutes;

she has no thoughts during this time but of the ills that are habitual to her. She could have had a considerable nervous crisis without one needing to be surprised by it.

Thus there remain only the effects produced on the woman Charpentier, and on François Grenet and Joseph Ennuyé that could appear to be due to Magnetism.

SOME OF THE PATIENTS FROM THE PEOPLE ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO FEEL THESE EFFECTS.

But on comparing these three cases with all the others the Commissioners were astonished that these three patients from the class of the people were the only ones who had felt anything, while those from a higher class endowed with more illumination and more able to give an account of their sensations, felt nothing. Certainly François Grenet had pain in the eye and watering since the thumb had been brought very close to his eye; the woman Charpentier complained that when her stomach was touched the pressure affected her hernia;

REASONS FOR DOUBTING THAT THE EFFECTS ARE DUE TO MAGNETISM.

and that pressure could have produced some of the effects that the woman demonstrated; but the Commissioners suspected that these effects were increased by circumstances of custom.

Let us consider the position of a person of the people, and thus ignorant, attacked by a malady and wishing to be cured, brought with ceremony before a large assembly composed in part of doctors, where she is given a treatment completely new to her and of which she has persuaded herself in advance that she is going to demonstrate prodigious actions.

Let us add that she is paid for her cooperation and that she believes she will please us more by manifesting some effects, and we have natural causes to explain these effects; at the least we have legitimate reasons to doubt that their true cause is Magnetism.

In addition one may ask why Magnetism had effects on people who knew what was being done to them,

who might be believed to have an interest in saying what they said, while it had no action on little Claude Renard – on that delicate organism of infancy, so mobile and sensitive? The reasonableness and ingenuity of this child assures us of the truth of his evidence. Why did this agent produce nothing in Geneviève Leroux who was in a perpetual state of convulsion? She certainly has sensitive nerves; how is it that Magnetism had no action either in increasing or in diminishing her convulsions? Her indifference and her passivity make one believe that she felt nothing, because the absence of reason did not allow her to suppose that she ought to feel something.

These facts allowed the Commissioners to observe that Magnetism seemed ineffective on those who submitted to it with some scepticism. The Commissioners, even those with the most sensitive nerves, when they had intentionally distracted their attention, and being armed with that philosophical doubt which must accompany all enquiry, did not at all demonstrate the impressions that the three patients from the class of the people felt: and they had to suspect that these impressions,

supposing them to be entirely real, were the result of an anticipatory belief and could have been due to the imagination. Their research will now be directed towards a new aim; it concerns destroying or confirming this suspicion and determining just to what extent the imagination can influence our sensations; demonstrating whether it can be the cause, in whole or in part, of the effects attributed to Magnetism.

EXPERIMENTS ARE PROPOSED TO DESTROY OR CONFIRM THIS SUSPICION.

In addition, the Commissioners heard the experiments spoken of that had been made at the house of M. The Dean of the Faculté by M. Jumelin, Doctor of Medicine; they wanted to see these experiments and assembled with him at the house of one of them, M. Majault. M. Jumelin declared that he was not a pupil either of M. Mesmer or of M. Deslon,

M. JUMELIN'S METHOD OF MAGNETISING DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF MRS. MESMER & DESLON

he had learnt nothing about Animal Magnetism and according to what he had heard said he had deduced some principles and devised some procedures. His principles consisted of regarding the magnetic fluid as a fluid that circulates in the body and which emanates from it but which is essentially the same as that which causes heat; a fluid that, like all others, tends to equilibrium and passes from a body in which there is more to one in which there is less. His procedures are also different from those of Messrs. Mesmer and Deslon; he magnetises, as they do, with the fingers and the conducting iron rod and by application of the hands, but without any distinction of poles.

FOURTH EXPERIMENT WHICH PROVES THAT USING THIS METHOD THE SAME RESULTS ARE PRODUCED.

Eight men and two women were initially magnetised and felt nothing; finally a woman who is Porter

to M. Alphonse le Roy, Doctor of Medicine, having been magnetised on the forehead but without being touched, said that she felt warmth. When M. Jumelin moved his hand around and presented the five extremities of his fingers over all the woman's face, she said that she felt like a flame which moved around: magnetised on the stomach she said she felt warmth there; magnetised on the back she said that she felt the same warmth there: in addition she said that her body was hot all over and she had a headache.

FOURTH EXPERIMENT WHICH PROVES THAT USING THIS METHOD THE SAME RESULTS ARE PRODUCED.

The Commissioners seeing that of these eleven persons submitted to the experiment only one was sensitive to M. Jumelin's magnetism thought that this proved only that she had undoubtedly an imagination more easily upset; the occasion lent itself to clarifying this. After the woman's sensitivity had been well demonstrated it was necessary only to separate her from her imagination, or at least to put her imagination out of action. The Commissioners proposed to bandage her eyes to see what her sensations would be when things were done without her knowledge. Her eyes were blindfolded and she was magnetised; after this the phenomena did not correspond to the places towards which the Magnetism was directed. Magnetised in succession on the stomach and the back the woman felt only heat in her head and pain in her right eye and in the left eye and ear. Her eyes were covered

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and M. Jumelin applied his hands to her hypochondria; she said that she felt heat there. Then after several minutes she said that she was going to be ill, and she did, in fact, become ill. When she had recovered she was taken again and her eyes covered; M. Jumelin asked for silence and made the woman believe that she had been magnetised. The effects were the same although nothing had been done to her from nearby or far away; she felt the same heat, the same pain in the eyes and ears and, in addition, she felt heat in her back and kidneys.

At the end of a quarter of an hour a sign was made to M. Jumelin to magnetise her on the stomach; she felt nothing; the same thing happened with the back. The pains in the head remained but the heat in the back and kidneys ceased.

One sees that here effects were produced and these effects were similar to those found in the three patients described above. But they were obtained by different procedures; it follows that the procedures do nothing. The method of Messrs. Mesmer and Deslon, and an opposite method both gave the same result. The distinction of poles is thus a chimera.

THE CONCLUSION IS THAT THE METHOD IS INDIFFERENT, THAT THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN POLES IS CHIMERICAL.

One may observe that, when the woman saw what was going on, she placed her sensations precisely in the part magnetised; but when she did not see she placed them at random

MARKED EFFECTS OF THE IMAGINATION.

and in parts very far away from where the Magnetism was directed. It is natural to conclude that the imagination determines these sensations,

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true or false. We were convinced of this when we saw that this woman, having rested well, no longer feeling anything, showed all the same effects although she was not magnetised; but the demonstration was made complete by the finding that, after a session of a quarter of an hour, her imagination having no doubt cooled, the effects, instead of increasing, diminished at the very moment that the woman was really magnetised.

And, if she found herself unwell this is something that often happens to women when they are restrained and hampered by their clothes. Application of the hands to the hypochondria could have produced the

same effect on an excessively sensitive woman, but one does not even need that cause to explain the fact. It was very hot, the woman had no doubt had some strong feelings in the first few moments, she had made the effort to submit herself to a new and unknown treatment, and, after an effort sustained for too long, it is not extraordinary that she became enfeebled.

The fainting thus has a natural and known cause, but the sensations that she experienced when she was not magnetised can only have been the effects of her imagination. During similar experiments that M. Jumelin carried out in the same place the next day, in the presence of the Commissioners, on a man with his eyes covered and on a woman with her eyes open, the results were the same; one realised that their replies were evidently determined by the questions

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that were put to them. The question indicated where the sensation should be; instead of directing Magnetism on to them one did nothing but heighten and direct their imagination. A child of five magnetised next felt nothing but the warmth that he had experienced previously while playing.

These experiments seemed to the Commissioners sufficiently important for them to wish to repeat them in the hope of getting some new insights and M. Jumelin was good enough to participate in this. It is of no use to object that M. Jumelin's method is a poor one because the proposal at this time was not to test Magnetism but the imagination.

The Commissioners agreed to bandage the eyes of the subjects tested and usually not to magnetise them but to ask them questions in such a way as to indicate the answers to the subjects. This procedure should not lead them into error; it deceived only their imagination. In fact, when they were not magnetised their only response should have been be that they felt nothing; and when they were magnetised it should be the impression felt that ought to dictate their response and not the way in which they were interrogated.

In consequence, when the Commissioners arrived at M. Jumelin's they began by testing his domestic servant. A bandage was applied to his eyes; this was specially-prepared and was used in all the following experiments. The bandage consisted of two cups of gum elastic of which the concavities were filled with eiderdown and the whole was enclosed and sewn into two pieces of material cut to a circular shape. These two pieces of material were attached to each other

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and had cords that tied behind the head. Placed on the eyes they left between them space for the nose and left breathing free; but nothing could be seen, even daylight, either through, above or below the bandage. Once these precautions had been taken for the comfort of the subjects and to make the results secure, M. Jumelin's domestic was persuaded that he had been magnetised. He then felt warmth almost all over and movements in his abdomen. His head became heavy and he appeared to be on the point of falling asleep. This proves, as we have said above, that this effect is due to the circumstances and to boredom and not to magnetism.

When he was then magnetised with his eyes open, by presenting the iron bar to his forehead, he felt prickling of the skin there; when his eyes were covered again and the iron bar was presented he did not feel this at all and, when the bar was not presented but he was asked if he did not feel anything on his forehead, he declared that he felt something coming and going across the width of his forehead.

M. B**, a learned man, especially in medicine, when his eyes were blindfolded presented the same spectacle, having effects when one did nothing and often feeling nothing when one did something. These effects were even the same as those which he felt before he had been magnetised in any way, but when he believed he had been magnetised for the previous ten minutes. He reported warmth in the lumbar region which he compared to that of a stove. It is clear that M. B** had a powerful sensation since to explain it he was driven to such a comparison; and this sensation he owed entirely to the imagination

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which was the only thing that was acting on him.

The Commissioners, especially the doctors, made a large number of experiments on different subjects whom they themselves magnetised or whom they made believe that they had been magnetised. They magnetised either with opposed poles or with direct poles, inverted or not, and, in every case they found the same effects; there was no difference in all of these tests other than subjects' imaginations being more sensitive or less sensitive. (5). They are thus convinced by these observations that the

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imagination alone can produce various sensations and can elicit pain, warmth and even considerable heat in all parts of

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the body, and they have come to the conclusion that imagination necessarily accounts in great part for the effects attributed to magnetism. But it must be agreed that the practice of magnetism produces changes in the living body and derangements larger than those that have just been described. None of the subjects who had been magnetised till this stage were affected to the point of having convulsions; there was thus a new topic to study – whether by acting on the imagination it was possible to produce *crise*s similar to those that took place at the public treatment.

Several experiments were planned with this object. When a tree has been 'touched' according to the principles and methods of magnetism anyone who stops under it must experience to a greater or lesser degree the effects of this agent; even to the extent of losing consciousness or having convulsions 11.

PROPOSED TO TEST WHETHER THE EFFECTS OF IMAGINATION CAN GO AS FAR AS PRODUCING

SEVENTH EXPERIMENT ON A MAGNETISED TREE.

We discussed the point with M. Deslon who said that the experiment must succeed provided that the subject was sensitive and we agreed with him to carry it out at Passy in the presence of M. Franklin. The requirement that the subject be sensitive made the Commissioners think that, for the experiment to be decisive and not need repetition, it was necessary that it should be carried out on someone chosen by M. Deslon in whom he had already demonstrated sensitivity to magnetism.

M. Deslon therefore brought with him a young man of about twelve. An apricot tree had been noticed in the garden, well isolated and suitable to conserve magnetism that had been imparted to it. M. Deslon was taken to it alone so that he could magnetise it;

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the young man remained in the house with someone who never left him. We would have preferred that M. Deslon not to be present at the experiment but he declared that it might fail if he did not direct his stick and his gaze at the tree to increase its action. Action was taken to put M. Deslon as far away as possible and to place the Commissioners between him and the young man in order to ensure that there could be no signal and to be able to give an assurance that the subject had had no information. These precautions were essential in an experiment for it to be reliable, but they were not oppressive.

Next, the young man, with his eyes blindfolded, was led to four trees in succession which had not been magnetised in any way. He was required to embrace them, each for two minutes, according to the directions given by M. Deslon himself.

M. Deslon who was present a long way away directed his stick towards the tree that was really magnetised.

At the first tree, when he was questioned at the end of one minute, the young man declared that he was sweating with large drops; he coughed, spat and said that he had a slight headache; the distance from the magnetised tree was about twenty-seven feet.

At the second tree he felt confused [IV], and had the same headache; the distance was thirty-six feet.

At the third tree the confusion increased as did the headache; he said he believed he was approaching the magnetised tree; however he was about thirty-eight feet from it.

Finally, at the fourth unmagnetised tree, at forty-eight feet from the tree that had been magnetised, the young man fell into a *crise*; he lost consciousness, his limbs became extended and rigid [V] and he was carried on to a nearby lawn where M. Deslon attended to him and got him to come round.

THE PATIENT FALLS INTO CRISIS UNDER A TREE THAT IS NOT MAGNETISED.

The outcome of this experiment was entirely against magnetism. M. Deslon wanted to explain the outcome by saying that all trees are naturally magnetised and that their magnetism had also been reinforced by his presence.

THEREFORE THE IMAGINATION PRODUCED THIS CRISIS.

But if this were so a person sensitive to magnetism would not dare to go into a garden without the risk of having convulsions; this assertion is shown to be false by everyday experience [III]. The presence of M. Deslon had no more effect than it had in the coach in which the young man came with him; sitting opposite him the young man was not affected. Had the young man felt nothing even under the magnetised tree one could have said that he was not sensitive enough, at least on that day, but the young man fell into a *crise* under a tree that had not been magnetised. This effect is therefore one that has no physical cause, or external cause, and can have no other cause than the imagination. The experiment is thus entirely conclusive: the young man knew that he was being taken to a magnetised tree, his imagination was fired then this stimulation increased and, at the fourth tree it had increased to the extent required to produce the *crise*.

Other experiments reinforced this one and gave the same result.

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One day when the Commissioners met together with M. Franklin at Passy they had asked M. Deslon to bring some patients with him and to choose from among his treatment of the poor those who were the most sensitive to magnetism. M. Deslon brought two women and, while he was busy magnetising M. Franklin in another room we separated the two women and put them in two different rooms.

One of them, the woman P** had cataracts on her eyes but, since she still had a little vision her eyes covered with the bandage described above. She was persuaded that M. Deslon had been brought in to magnetise her and silence was requested; three Commissioners were there, one to ask questions, one to write and one to impersonate M. Deslon. We seemed to be addressing M. Deslon and asking him to start but we in no way magnetised the woman. The three Commissioners kept quiet and observed what was going to happen. At the end of three minutes the patient began to feel a frisson in the nerves; then successively she felt pain behind her head, in her arms and a sensation of ants in her hands, as she put it; she became cold, beat her hands, rose from her chair, and tapped her feet: the *crise* was very clearly marked. Two other Commissioners who were in the room next door with the door closed heard the tapping of the feet and noises of the hands and, though they did not see anything, were witnesses to the noisy scene.

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NINTH EXPERIMENT WHICH GAVE THE SAME RESULT.

A WOMAN WHO BELIEVED SHE WAS BEING MAGNETISED THROUGH A CLOSED DOOR HAD A

These two Commissioners were with the patient Miss B**, who had a nervous disorder. Her eyes were left open and uncovered. She was seated in front of a closed door and persuaded that M. Deslon was on the other side, busy magnetising her. She had hardly been sitting in front of the door for one minute when she began to feel a frisson; after another minute she had chattering of the teeth although she was also warm all over. In the end, after a third minute, she fell entirely into crisis. Her respiration was laboured, she stretched out both arms behind her back twisting them violently and leaning her body forwards; there was a general tremor throughout the body. The chattering of her teeth became so noisy that it could be heard from outside; she bit her hand so strongly that it bore tooth marks.

It is well to remark that neither of these patients had been touched in any way; we had not even taken their pulse so that it could not be claimed that we had communicated magnetism to them, and yet the *crise*s were complete. The Commissioners who had wished to find out the effect of working on the imagination, and judge what part it could play in the *crise*s of magnetism had obtained what they desired. It is not possible to see the effect of this working on the imagination more openly and evidently than in these two experiments. And if the patients declared that their *crise*s were stronger when they were being treated this is because the disturbance of the nerves communicates itself and in general any private individual emotion

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is increased by the sight of similar emotions.

There was an opportunity to test the woman P** on a second occasion and to see to what an extent she was dominated by her imagination. We wished to carry out the experiment of the magnetised cup: this experiment consists of choosing from among a number of cups one that one magnetises. They are

presented in turn to a patient sensitive to magnetism who should fall into a *crise*, or at least show similar effects, when he is presented with the magnetised cup, and be indifferent to all those that are not magnetised. M. Deslon recommends only that it is necessary to present the cups to the patient by the direct pole so that the person who holds the cup does not magnetise the patient and so that the only effect is due to the magnetism of the cup.

The woman P** was sent to M. Lavoisier at the Arsenal, where M. Deslon was; she began by falling into crisis in the antechamber before having seen either the Commissioners or M. Deslon though she knew that she was going to see them; this was a well-marked effect of the imagination.

When the crisis had settled down the woman was taken to the place for the experiment. Several porcelain cups that had not been magnetised were presented to her; the second cup began to affect her and at the fourth she fell entirely into *crise*. One might claim that she was already in a state of *crise* which had begun in the antechamber and which became reactivated on its own; however, the decisive

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observation was that, when she was given a drink in the magnetised cup by M. Deslon himself, she drank it calmly and said that she was much relieved. The cup and magnetism thus lacked any effect since the crisis was calmed instead of being increased.

A little time later, while M. Majault was examining the cataracts on her eyes the magnetised cup was presented behind her head for twelve minutes; she in no way perceived it and showed no effect; she was at no time more tranquil because her imagination was distracted and occupied by the examination that was being made of her eyes.

The Commissioners were told that while this woman was alone in the antechamber several people who had nothing to do with magnetism approached her and that the convulsive movements recommenced. It was pointed out to her that she was not being magnetised but her imagination had been so fired that she replied: if you were not doing anything to me I would not be in the state that I am in. She knew that she had come to take part in experiments; anyone approaching or the slightest noise attracted her attention and reawakened the idea of magnetism and renewed the convulsions.

For the imagination to act in a powerful fashion it is often necessary that several cords be touched at once. The imagination is responsive to all the senses; its reaction must be proportional to the number of senses involved and to the sensations received: the Commissioners realised this as a result of the experiment that will now be described. M. Jumelin had spoken to them of a young woman of twenty whom he had caused to lose the power of speech through the action of magnetism; the Commissioners

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repeated this experiment at his house, the young woman was agreeable to taking part and allowed her eyes to be bandaged.

TWELFTH EXPERIMENT; THE ACTION GOES AS FAR AS TO CAUSE LOSS OF SPEECH.

In the first instance we tried to produce the same effect without magnetising her; but, because she had felt, or believed she had felt, the effects of magnetism we did not succeed in striking her imagination enough for the experiment to be successful. When she was really magnetised with her eyes covered we had no

more success. Her eyes were uncovered; thus her imagination was struck both by vision and hearing and the effects were more marked; but when her head began to become heavy and she felt some problem at the root of her nose, a lot of the symptoms that she had had the first time returned; however, speech was not lost. She had noticed herself that that it was necessary that the hand magnetising the forehead should descend as far as the nose; she remembered that the hand was placed there when she lost her voice. We did what she asked and, in three quarters of a minute, she became mute; one heard no more than some inarticulate and mute sounds in spite of visible efforts of her throat to push out the sound and those of the tongue and the lips to articulate it. This state lasted only one minute; one saw when she found herself in exactly the same circumstances, the seduction of her spirit and the effect on the organs of the voice were the same. But it was insufficient that she was informed

aurally that she was magnetised; it was necessary that vision should give her stronger and more striking evidence, and it also required that a familiar gesture reawakened her ideas. It seems that this experiment shows in a marvellous way how the imagination acts, mounting by degrees and requiring several external supplements to become more effectively striking.

THE GAZE SERVES TO STRIKE THE IMAGINATION.

This power of vision over the imagination explains the effects that the doctrine of magnetism ascribes to the gaze. Gaze has a pre-eminent power of magnetising; the Commissioners were told that all the gestures used together do nothing except in a subject who has already been ‘mastered’ by fixing him with the gaze. The reason for this is simple; it is in the eyes where the most expressive traits of the passions are seated, it is there that is deployed all that is most important and seductive in the character. The eyes must therefore have great power over us; but they have this power only because they strike the imagination to a greater or lesser extent according to the strength of that imagination. All the practice of magnetism thus begins with the gaze; and its effect is so powerful and has such deep roots, that when a woman newly arrived at M. Deslon’s, encountered, while coming out of a *crise*, the gaze of one of M. Deslon’s assistants who was magnetising her, she fixated him for three quarters of an hour. She was pursued for a long time by this image; she always saw in front of her that same eye engaged in fixating her and she carried it constantly for three days in her imagination,

THIRTEENTH EXPERIMENT THAT PROVES THIS EFFECT OF GAZE.

in her sleep as well as when awake. One sees that all this can produce an imagination capable of conserving the same impression for so long; that is to say, renewing the same sensation for a period of three days by itself and by its own power.

THESE EXPERIMENTS ARE UNIFORM AND DECISIVE; THEY PROVE THAT THE IMAGINATION IS SUFFICIENT TO PRODUCE THE EFFECTS ATTRIBUTED TO MAGNETISM.

The experiments that we have just described agree with each other and are decisive; they allow the conclusion that the imagination is the true cause of the actions attributed to magnetism. But perhaps the protagonists of this new agent might object that identity of the effects does not always prove the identity of the causes. They would accept that the imagination can excite these impressions without magnetism; but they would maintain that magnetism can also excite them without the imagination. The Commissioners would easily refute this assertion by reasoning and by the principles of physics, the first of all of which is

never to admit new causes except in absolute necessity. As long as the observed effects can be produced by an existing cause, and one that has been demonstrated by other phenomena, sound physics teaches that the observed effects must be attributed to it; and when it is claimed that a hitherto unknown cause has been discovered, sound physics demands also that it be established and demonstrated by effects that do not belong to any known cause and can be explained only by the new cause. Thus it is for the proponents of magnetism to present other proofs and to seek out effects that can be separated entirely from the illusions of the imagination.

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But, since facts are more demonstrative than reasoning and produce more striking evidence, the Commissioners wanted to find out by experiment of what magnetism would be capable when the imagination was not acting.

We were provided with an apartment in which there were two contiguous rooms that communicated through a door. We removed the door and substituted for it a frame covered with a double layer of paper. In one of the rooms was one of the Commissioners to write down what happened and a woman said to be from the provinces who had some linen to work on. We sent for the Dlle. De B**, a linen worker who had already taken part in experiments at Passy and whose sensitivity to magnetism was known. When she arrived things were arranged so that there was only one seat in which she could sit and that seat was placed in the embrasure of the communicating door where she found herself, as it were, in a niche.

The Commissioners were in the other room and one of them, a doctor experienced in magnetism and who had already produced effects with it, was instructed to magnetise the Dlle. De B** through the frame of paper. It is one of the principles of the theory of magnetism that the agent passes through wooden doors, walls etc. A paper frame could not be an obstacle to it; moreover, M. Deslon has established for sure that magnetism passes through paper, and the Dlle. De B** was magnetised as though she had been in view and in his presence.

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The magnetising continued, in effect, for half an hour at a foot and a half distance with opposed poles, following all the rules laid down by M. Deslon and that the Commissioners had seen carried out at his house. During all this time, the Dlle. De B** conversed cheerfully; asked about her health she replied freely that she was well: at Passy she had fallen into a *crise* at the end of three minutes; here she tolerated magnetism without any effect for thirty minutes. But here she did not know that she was being magnetised while at Passy she knew that she was. One sees that the imagination alone produces the effects attributed to magnetism and, that, when the imagination is not active, there are no more effects.

There is only one objection that could be made to this experiment; that the Dlle. De B** could have been indisposed and been less sensitive to magnetism at that time. The Commissioners had foreseen this objection and therefore carried out the following experiment. As soon as we had stopped the magnetising through the paper, the same doctor-Commissioner went into the other room. It was easy for him to get the agreement of the Dlle. De B** to allow herself to be magnetised. He began therefore, to magnetise her, being careful to do as he had in the previous experiment, keeping a foot and a half from her, using only gestures and movements of the index finger and the iron rod; because, had he applied his hands and touched the hypochondria it could have been claimed that the magnetism had acted by this more

immediate application. The only difference that there was between these two experiments was that,

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in the first, he magnetised using opposed poles according to the rules while in the second he magnetised using direct poles reversed. By acting in this way he should have produced no effect, according to the theory of magnetism.

However, after three minutes, the Dlle. De B** felt malaise and suffocation; there followed a cut-off hiccup, chattering of the teeth, tightness in the throat and a severe headache; she sat uneasily on the chair, she complied of her kidneys; she struck her foot several times on the parquet then she extended her arms behind her, twisting them strongly as at Passy; in a word there was a convulsive *crise* that was complete and perfectly characterised. She had these events after twelve minutes whereas the same treatment used for thirty minutes had found her insensitive. Thus there is nothing here but the imagination and it is accordingly to it that these effects belong.

If it was the imagination that started the *crise* it was again the imagination that terminated it. The Commissioner who was magnetising her said that it was time to finish; he presented to her his two crossed fingers and it is well to observe that, by doing this, he magnetised her by direct poles as he had done previously; thus nothing had changed, the same treatment should have led to the same impressions. But the action was sufficient to calm the crisis; the heat and the headache dissipated. The discomfort was chased from place to place while announcing that it was going to

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disappear. Thus it was that through the voice that commanded the imagination the pain in the neck stopped, then the feelings in the chest, the stomach and the arms. It needed only three minutes for the Dlle. De B** to declare that she no longer felt anything and was absolutely in her usual state.

IMAGINATION DOES EVERYTHING, MAGNETISM IS VOID .....

These last experiments as well as those that were carried out at M. Jumelin's have the double advantage of showing at once the power of the imagination and the ineffectiveness of magnetism in the effects produced.

COMBINATION OF SEVERAL CAUSES TO AUGMENT THE

If the effects are even more marked and the *crise*s seem more violent at the public treatment this is because several causes join the imagination and work with it to multiply and increase its actions. One begins with the gaze to master the spirits; touching and the application of the hands follows quickly; it is convenient to develop here the physical effects of these.

These effects are of various sizes: the least are hiccups, disgust, purgation; more considerable are the convulsions that are called *crise*s. The place where touching takes place is in the hypochondria, in the hollow of the stomach and sometimes on the ovaries when it is women who are touched. The hands and the fingers press on and compress these regions to a greater or lesser extent.

The colon, one of the large intestines, runs through the regions of the two hypochondria and the epigastric region that separates them. It is placed immediately below the integument.

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It is thus on this intestine that touching acts, on this sensitive and very irritable intestine. Movement alone, repeated movement without any other agent, excites the muscular action of the intestine and sometimes produces evacuation. Nature seems instinctively to suggest this manoeuvre in the hypochondria. The practice of magnetism is nothing but this same manoeuvre and the purgations that it can produce are even more facilitated during magnetic treatment by the frequent and almost habitual use of a real purgative, cream of tarter in a drink.

But while the movement excites principally the colon this intestine offers other phenomena. It becomes more or less distended and sometimes takes up a considerable volume. Hence it communicates to the diaphragm such irritation that that organ goes more or less into convulsion and this is what is called *crise* in the treatment with animal magnetism. One of the Commissioners saw a woman who was subject to a sort of spasmodic vomiting repeated several times each day. Her efforts produced only a viscous turbid liquid, like that expelled by patients in crisis during the practice of magnetism. The convulsion had its seat in the diaphragm; and the region of the colon was so sensitive that the least touch on this part, a strong disturbance in the air, the surprise caused by an unexpected noise, sufficed to excite a convulsion. Thus, this woman had *crise*s without magnetism solely because of the irritability of the colon and diaphragm and the women who are magnetised have their *crise*s from the same cause and irritability.

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The application of the hands to the stomach has equally remarkable physical effects. The application is made directly on this organ. It is operated upon either by strong continuous compression or by light repeated compression, sometimes an agitation is produced by rotating the iron rod when applied to this part; finally the thumbs are passed one after the other over it in rapid succession. The manoeuvres at once induce an agitation in the stomach that is more or less strong and more or less lasting according to whether the subject is more or less sensitive and irritable. One prepares and disposes the stomach to this irritation by compressing it beforehand. This compression acts on the diaphragm and communicates to it the impressions that it receives. It can avoid being irritated only if the diaphragm is not irritated and from this, as with the action of the colon, result the nervous effects about which we have just spoken.

In sensitive women, if one has just simply compressed the two hypochondria without any other movement, the stomach finds itself squeezed and the women become enfeebled. This is what happened to the woman magnetised by M. Jumelin, and that often happens without any other cause when women are too restricted by their garments. There is then no crisis, however, because the stomach is compressed without being agitated and the diaphragm remains in its normal state. The same manoeuvres carried out on the ovaries in women, as well as producing their own peculiar effects, often produce the same effects even more powerfully. The influence and the rule of the uterus over

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the animal economy is well known.

The intimate relationship between colon, stomach and uterus and the diaphragm is one of the causes of the effects attributed to magnetism. The regions of the lower belly, when they are subjected to different touches, respond by way of various plexuses which form there a veritable nervous centre by means of which - a deduction made from all systems - there exists a certain sympathy, a communication, a correspondence between all the parts of the body; an action and reaction such that sensations excited in

one centre act on other parts of the body; and, reciprocally, a sensation arising in one part disturbs and brings into action the nervous centre which often transmits the impression to all the other parts.

This explains not only the effects of magnetic 'touching' but also the physical effects of the imagination. It has always been observed that the affections of the spirit make their first impression on this nervous centre, and this leads to the common saying that one's stomach feels heavy and that one feels suffocated. The diaphragm is involved, whence the sighs, tears and laughter. There is also a reaction on the viscera of the lower abdomen and it is thus that one may explain the physical disorders produced by the imagination. Sudden displeasure occasions colic, terror causes diarrhoea, chagrin gives rise to jaundice. The history of medicine contains an infinite number of

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examples of the power of the imagination and the affections of the spirit. The fear of fire or firm and sustained hope returns the use of the limbs to someone immobile from gout, or to a paralytic; lively and unexpected joy dissipates a quatrain fever that has lasted two months; concentrated attention stops hiccup; those who have become mute after an accident recover their speech following a lively emotion of the spirits. History shows that such emotion is sufficient for recovery of speech and the Commissioners have seen that the activated imagination sufficed to suspend its use. The action and reaction of the physical on the moral and of the moral on the physical have been demonstrated from observations in medicine since such observations began, that is to say since the start of medicine.

Tears, laughter, cough, hiccup and, in general, all the effects seen in what are called *crise*s during the public treatment thus have their origin either from disturbance of the functions of the diaphragm by some physical means, such as touch or pressure, or from that power with which the imagination is endowed to allow it to act on that organ and to disturb its functions.

Were it to be objected that touch is not always necessary to these effects, the reply would be that the imagination can have sufficient resources to produce everything on its own; above all the imagination acting during a public treatment, and thus doubly excited by its own movement and by that of the surrounding imaginations. We have seen what it did in the experiments of the Commissioners on isolated subjects; one can imagine its effects multiplied on the patients gathered together at the public

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treatment. The patients are assembled there in a space small relative to their number; the air is hot however much care is taken to renew it, and it is always more or less charged with mephitic gas which acts particularly on the head and on the nervous system. If there is music this is another means of acting on the nerves to move them.

Several women are magnetised at a time and, at first, show only the effects that the Commissioners found in many of their experiments. They have remarked that, even at the treatment, it is usually only at the end of two hours that the *crise*s begin.

EFFECTS OF THE IMAGINATION IN CROWDED MEETINGS.

Little by little the impressions are communicated from one to another and are reinforced, as one sees at theatrical performances where the impressions are greatest when there are many spectators, and above all in the places in which one is free to applaud. The signs of individual emotion establish a general emotion

that is shared by everyone in the degree to which he is susceptible. It is this that one sees in armies on the day of battle where the enthusiasm of courage spreads as fast as the terror of panic. In this universe of madness an impression appears and becomes universal; it encourages a charge or it causes flight. The same cause gives rise to revolts; imagination governs the multitude;

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men collected together are more submissive to their sensations, reason has less rule over them and when fanaticism presides at such gatherings it produces the *Trembleurs des Cevennes*. (6).

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It is to stop this agitation so easily communicated to the spirit that, in towns in revolt, one forbids assemblies. Everywhere an

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example acts on the moral condition; mechanical imitation put the physical in train; by isolating individuals one calms the sprits, by separating them one also causes the convulsions to stop; the nature of these is always contagious: there is a recent example in the young girls of Saint-Roch who, when they were separated, were cured of the fits that they had when they were together. (9).

Thus one sees 'magnetism' – or, rather, the imagination – acting at spectacles, in the army and in assemblies of many people as at the baquet, acting by different methods but producing similar effects. The baquet is surrounded by a crowd of patients; sensations are continually communicated and

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received; in the end the nerves must become fatigued by this usage, they become irritated and the most sensitive woman gives the signal. Thus all the cords, stretched in unison to the same degree, respond; cries are multiplied, they mutually reinforce each other, they become violent. At the same time the men, witnessing these emotions, share them in proportion to their nervous sensibility and those in whom this sensitivity is greatest and most mobile themselves fall into *crise*.

This great mobility, in part natural and in part acquired both in men and women, becomes a habit. Once these sensations have been experienced once or more it requires only that one remember them to increase the imagination to the same degree and to produce the same effects. This is always easy to bring about by placing the subject again in the same circumstances. Thus there is no need of the public treatment, one has only to touch the hypochondria, to move the finger and the iron bar in front of the face; these signs are familiar. It is not even necessary to carry them out; it is sufficient that the patients, their eyes covered, believe that the signs are being repeated on them and persuade themselves that they are being magnetised; the ideas are revived, the sensations are reproduced, the imagination by its accustomed means makes the same phenomena reappear. This is what happens to M. Deslon's patients who fall into *crise*s without the baquet, and without being excited by the spectacle of the public treatment.

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Touch, imagination, imitation – such are thus the true causes

TOUCH, IMAGINATION AND IMITATION ARE THE TRUE CAUSES OF THE EFFECTS ATTRIBUTED TO MAGNETISM.

of the effects attributed to this new agent known under the name of Animal magnetism, to this fluid that is said to circulate in the body and to communicate itself from individual to individual; such is the result of the Commissioners' experiments and of the observations that they have made on the techniques used and the effects produced. This agent, this fluid, do not exist; but, though it is a complete chimera, the idea is not new. Some authors, some doctors from the last century, have dealt with it expressly in their works. The curious and interesting researches of M. Thouret proved to the public that the theory, procedures and effects of animal magnetism proposed during the last century were almost the same as those that have been renewed in this century. Magnetism is thus nothing but an old error. The theory is presented today with a larger structure, necessary in a more enlightened century; but this makes it no less false. Men make, abandon and take up again errors that please them. There are errors that are eternally dear to humanity. How many times has astrology reappeared on earth? Magnetism should remind us of it. People have wanted to tie it to celestial influences so that it would be more seductive and would attract men by the two hopes that touch them most, that of knowing their future and that of prolonging their days.

There is reason to believe that imagination is the principal of the three causes that we have just assigned to magnetism. We have seen from the experiments described that it is sufficient

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by itself to produce *crise*s. Pressure, and 'touching' seem to serve to prepare it; it is by 'touching' that the nerves begin to be struck, imitation communicates and expands the impressions.

But imagination is that active and terrible force that produces those large effects that one sees with astonishment at the public treatment. These effects are striking to everyone for all that their cause is obscure and hidden. When one considers that, in the last century, these effects seduced men esteemed for their merit and for their knowledge such as Paracelsus, Van Helmont, Kirker etc. one should not be surprised if today learned, enlightened people and even a large number of doctors have been deceived by them. The Commissioners, when they had been present only at the public treatment where there was neither the time nor the facilities to carry out experiments, could themselves have been led into error. It is essential to have had the freedom to isolate the effects to distinguish their causes; it is necessary to have seen, as they did, the imagination in action, as it were partially, producing separated detailed effects to understand the accumulation of these effects and to form an idea of its power when complete and of the prodigies it produces. But this investigation demands a sacrifice of time and a number of investigations to be pursued that one has not always the leisure to undertake for one's own instruction or curiosity, that one does not even have the right to follow, unless one is, like the Commissioners, charged with the King's orders and honoured by the confidence of the public.

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M. Deslon does not dissociate himself from these principles, and he believes it useful to employ the power of the imagination in medicine.

M. Deslon does not dissociate himself from these principles. He declared at the committee meeting held at M. Franklin's on 19 June that he believed that he was able to state that the imagination had the largest part in the effects of animal magnetism; he said that this new agent was perhaps only the imagination itself whose power is so great that it is little known. He assured us that he had always recognised this power in the treatment of his patients and he assured us also that several had been either cured or infinitely relieved. He observed to the Commissioners that imagination directed thus to the relief of suffering humanity would be of great benefit in the practice of medicine (7); and, persuaded of the reality of this power of the

imagination he invited them to study its progress and effects with him. If M. Deslon is still attached to the original idea that these effects are due to the action of a fluid that communicates itself from individual to individual by touch or under the direction of a conductor, he was not slow to recognise with the Commissioners that only one cause is needed for an effect and, since the imagination suffices the fluid is unnecessary. Doubtless we are surrounded by a fluid that belongs to us; insensible transpiration forms an atmosphere around us of

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equally insensible vapours; but this fluid only acts like atmospheres, can only communicate infinitely little by 'touching' is not directed either by conductors nor by the gaze, nor by intention, is not propagated by sound nor reflected by mirrors and is not capable in any case of the effects that are attributed to it.

It remains to examine whether the *crise*s or the convulsions produced by the techniques of this so-called magnetism in those assembled around the baquet could be useful and cure or relieve the patients.

THE IMAGINATION IS ALMOST ALWAYS DAMAGING WHEN IT PRODUCES VIOLENT EFFECTS AND CONVULSIONS.

No doubt the imagination of patients often has a great influence on the cure of their illnesses. This effect is known only by general experience and has not in the least been determined by positive experiments; but it does not seem that one can doubt it. It is a known adage that faith saves in medicine; this faith is the product of the imagination: thus imagination acts only by gentle means, it acts by spreading calm to all the senses, re-establishing order in the functions and rekindling hope. Hope is the life of man; whoever can give him the one contributes to giving him the other. But when imagination produces convulsions it acts by violent means; these means are almost always destructive. It is only in very rare cases that they can be useful; it is in desperate cases that everything must be upset to begin everything again. These dangerous attacks can only be of use in medicine like poisons. They

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must be commanded by necessity and employed with economy. The benefit is momentary; there must be only one assault. Far from repeating it, the wise doctor occupies himself with means of repairing the necessary harm that it has done; but at the public treatment by magnetism the *crise*s are repeated each day; they are long and violent; since the state of crisis is harmful the habit can only be dangerous. How can one believe that a woman whose chest is affected can have, without danger, the *crise*s of a convulsive cough and forced expectoration; and by repeated and violent efforts exhaust and perhaps tear the lung, in which case one has great difficulty in soothing and relieving it! How can one imagine that a man, whatever his disease, needs, for its cure, to fall into *crise*s where vision seems to be lost, where the limbs become rigid or into precipitate and involuntary movements in which he strikes his chest hard ; *crise*s that finish with abundant expectoration of mucus and blood! This blood is neither vicious nor corrupt; this blood comes from the vessels from which it has been torn by the efforts and from which it issues against the wishes of Nature. These effects are, therefore, a real ill and not a curative ill; they are an ill added to the malady, whatever that may be.

These *crise*s have yet another danger. Man is without cease governed by custom; custom modifies Nature by successive degrees but does so so powerfully that often custom changes her almost entirely and makes her unrecognisable. Who will assure us that this state of *crise*s, begun voluntarily at first, will

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not become habitual! And if this habit, thus acquired, often reproduces the same accidents in spite of volition, and almost without the aid of the imagination, what will be the state of an individual subjected to violent *crise*s, tormented physically and mentally by their unhappy impression, whose days are divided between apprehension and pain and whose life is nothing but an enduring agony! Maladies of the nerves, for all that they are natural, are the despair of doctors; it is not for the Art to produce them. That Art is dangerous which disturbs the functions of the animal economy, pushes Nature aside and multiplies the victims of these derangements. That Art is the more dangerous when it not only aggravates the maladies of the nerves in recalling past happenings but makes them habitually degenerate. But if this malady is contagious, as one might suspect, the practice of provoking nervous convulsions and exciting them in public during the treatments is a means of spreading them in the large towns and even inflicting them on generations to come because the ills and habits of parents are transmitted to their posterity.

CONCLUSION. THE MAGNETIC FLUID DOES NOT EXIST AND THE METHODS USED TO BRING IT INTO ACTION ARE DANGEROUS.

The Commissioners, having recognised that this animal magnetic fluid cannot be perceived by any of our senses, that it has no effect, either on them or on the patients who are subjected to it; being assured that the pressures and touchings occasion changes which are rarely favourable to the animal economy, and disturbances that are always disturbing to the imagination, having finally shown by decisive experiments that

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the imagination, without magnetism, produces convulsions, and that magnetism without imagination produces nothing, have concluded unanimously about the question of the existence and utility of magnetism, that nothing proves the existence of animal magnetism; that this fluid without existence is consequently without use; that the violent effects that are seen at the public treatment are produced by the 'touching', by the imagination excited to action and to that mechanical imitation that drives us in spite of ourselves to repeat that which strikes our senses. At the same time they feel that they are obliged to add, as an important observation, that the 'touching', the repeated action of the imagination to produce *crise*s can be harmful; that the spectacle of these *crise*s is also dangerous because of that imitation that Nature seems to have made a law for us; and that, in consequence, all public treatment where the techniques of magnetism are employed can have in the long term only damaging effects. (8).

At Paris, this eleventh of August one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.

Signed B. FRANKLIN, MAJAULT, LE ROY, SALLIN, BAILLY, D'ARCET, DE BORY, GUILLOTIN, LAVOISIER.

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SECRET REPORT VI

On animal magnetism, compiled by Bailly

In the name of the same commission

- 1 -

The Commissioners charged by the king with the examination of animal magnetism, in compiling their report which is to be presented to his majesty and which may, perhaps, become public, thought that it would be prudent to suppress one observation that should not be divulged; but they did not think it their duty to deceive his majesty's minister: this minister charged them to compose a note about it to be placed before his majesty and reserved to him alone.

This important observation concerns moral behaviour; the Commissioners have recognised that the principal causes of the effects attributed to animal magnetism are 'touching', imagination and imitation and they have seen that there are always many more women than men in *crise*: this difference has as its primary cause the different organisation of the two sexes; women have, in general, more excitable nerves and their imaginations are more vivid and exalted. It is easy to affect it the imagination and to move it. This great excitability of the nerves, while giving them more delicate and exquisite senses, makes them more susceptible to the impressions produced by 'touching'. In touching them in any part one could say that one touches them all over; this great excitability of their nerves makes them sensitive to imitation; women, as has already been remarked, are similar to stretched sounding strings in unison; it suffices that one be put in motion for all the others instantly to follow it: the Commissioners have seen this several times, as soon as one woman falls into crisis the others do not delay in following her.

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This arrangement makes it understandable why women have more frequent longer and more violent *crise*s than men; it is to the sensitivity of their nerves that most of their *crise*s are due. There are some *crise*s that are due to a hidden, though natural, cause; to a certain cause of the emotions to which all women are more or less susceptible, and which by an indirect influence, by accumulation of emotions and by increasing them to a high pitch, can contribute to the production of a convulsive state that can be confused with other *crise*s; this cause is the power that Nature gives to one sex over the other to attract and move it; it is always men who magnetise women.

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The relations thus established are no doubt only those of a patient in respect of her doctor; but this doctor is a man; whatever the malady, it does not separate us from our sex, it does not entirely free us of the power of the other; illness can reduce impressions without ever abolishing them. Furthermore, most of the women who come to be magnetised are not really ill; many of them come because of idleness and for amusement; others, who have some indispositions nevertheless preserve their freshness and forces; their senses are complete, their youth has all its sensibility; they have plenty of charms to affect the doctor, they are healthy enough for the doctor to affect them; thus the danger is reciprocal. Long continued proximity, the indispensable touching, the individual warmth that is communicated, mutual glances, are the well-known ways of Nature and the means that she has used for ever to cause unfailingly the communication of

sensations and affections.

The man carrying out magnetisation usually has the woman's knees held between his; the knees and all the lower parts of the body are thus in contact. The hand is applied to the hypochondria, and sometime lower down to the ovaries; touch is thus exerted simultaneously over many parts and in the region of the most sensitive parts of the body.

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Often, the man who has his left hand employed thus passes his right behind the woman's body; both of them lean toward each other to make this double contact easier. The proximity becomes the greatest possible, face almost touches face, the exhaled breath is inspired, all the physical impressions are instantly shared, and the mutual attraction of the sexes must act with all its power. It is not surprising that the senses light up; imagination, acting at the same time, spreads a certain disorder throughout the whole mechanism; it suspends the judgement, it diverts the attention, the women are not able to take account of what is happening to them, they do not know the state that they are in.

The doctors among the Commissioners, present and attentive at the treatment, have carefully observed what takes place. When this type of crisis is developing, the face becomes flushed by degrees, the eye becomes burning; these are the signs by which Nature announces desire. One sees the woman lower her head, move her hand to her forehead and to her eyes to cover them; her habitual modesty is aroused and makes her take care to hide herself. However, the *crise* continues and the eyes become troubled; this is an unequivocal sign of complete disorder of the senses: this disorder can be quite unperceived by the woman who suffers it, but it in no way escaped the observant gaze of the doctors. As soon as this sign has appeared the eyelids become moist, breaths are short and interrupted, the chest rises and falls rapidly; convulsions become established as well as brusque and precipitate movements of the limbs or the whole body. In the case of vivacious and sensitive women, the final effect, the end of the sweetest of emotions, is often a convulsion; to this state succeeds languor, enfeeblement and a sort of sleep of the senses which is a necessary repose after a powerful agitation.

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The proof that this convulsive state, however extraordinary it may appear to the observer, is in no way unpleasant and contains nothing unnatural for those who experience it, is that, once it is over, there remains no disturbing trace of it. The memory of it is not disagreeable, the women feel better and are in no way reluctant to experience it again. As emotions that are experienced are the germs of affections and leanings, one sees why those who magnetise inspire so much attachment, an attachment that must be more marked and more lively in women that in men since the practice of magnetism is confined to men. Many women have doubtless not experienced these effects, others have remained ignorant of this cause of the effects they have experienced; the more respectable they are the less they will have suspected it. We are certain that many have perceived it and withdrawn from magnetic treatment, but those who do not know about it need to be protected.

The magnetic treatment cannot but be dangerous to the morals. In proposing to cure diseases that need long treatment, emotions that are agreeable and dear are excited, emotions that are then missed, that one seeks to recover because they have a natural charm for us and they contribute to our physical well-being; but morally they are not the less to be condemned and they are the more dangerous because of the ease of falling into the agreeable habit. A state experienced almost in public, among other women who seem to

feel it equally, offers nothing alarming; one stays there, one returns, and one sees no danger until it is too late. Exposed to this danger strong women absent themselves; but the weak can lose their morals and their health.

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M. Deslon is not ignorant of this; M. the Lieutenant General of Police has questioned him in this regard, in the presence of the Commissioners, in a meeting held at M. Deslon's own house on the 9 May last. M. Lenoir said to him: I ask you, as Lieutenant General of Police, if, once a woman has been magnetised or is in a *crise*, it would not be easy to abuse her? M. Deslon replied in the affirmative, and, to render justice to this doctor, he has always insisted that only his colleagues, dedicated to honesty by their profession, should have the right to magnetise. One may also say that, although there is a room originally set aside for *crise*s, he does not allow it to be used; all the *crise*s take place before the public gaze, but, in spite of this observance of decency, the danger no less exists that the doctor can, if he wishes, abuse the patient. The occasions recur every day, at all times; he is sometimes exposed to them for two or three hours; who can say that he will always be a master of refusal? And, even supposing him to be possessed of superhuman virtue, when there have been emotions that establish needs the imperious law of Nature will call someone on his refusal and he will reply in vain that he has not committed but that he has caused to commit.

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There is yet another means of exciting convulsions, a means of which the Commissioners have no direct and positive proof but which they cannot help suspecting, that is a simulated crisis which gives the signal for, or which produces, a large number of others by imitation. This is a necessary means for hastening and maintaining *crise*s, *crise*s, moreover, useful to magnetism, without which it would founder.

There are no real cures; the treatments are very long and fruitless. There are patients who go to the treatment for eighteen months or two years without any relief; in the end one becomes bored by it and no longer goes. The *crise*s form a spectacle, they occupy one and are interesting; moreover, to inattentive eyes they are effects of magnetism and proofs of the existence of this agent which is, in reality, nothing but the effects of the imagination.

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In drawing up their report the Commissioners speak only of the examination of magnetism as practised by M. Deslon, because, on the king's orders, the object of their Commission led them only to M. Deslon; but it is clear that their observations, their experiments and their opinions bear on magnetism in general. M. Mesmer will not omit to say that the Commissioners have not examined his method, nor his techniques nor the effects they produce. The Commissioners, indeed, are too prudent to pronounce on what they have not seen, on that of which they do not have knowledge; however, they must make the observation that the principles of M. Deslon are the same as those in the twenty-seven propositions that M. Mesmer had printed in 1779.

If M. Mesmer announces a larger theory, it will only be more absurd; celestial influences are an old chimera whose falsity has been long recognised; all this theory can be judged in advance by that which magnetism necessarily has for its base, and it can have no reality because the animal fluid does not exist. This brilliant theory exists, like magnetism, only in the imagination; M. Deslon's method of magnetising is the same as M. Mesmer's.

Their effects correspond also; there are *crise*s equally violent, equally repeated, and announced by similar symptoms in the case of M. Deslon as in that of M. Mesmer. What can M. Mesmer claim in stating an unknown and imperceptible difference, since the principles, the practice and the effects are the same? Moreover, if this difference were real, what could one infer about the utility of the treatment in opposition to the conclusions detailed in our report and in this note for his majesty's eyes?

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The public opinion is that there are no more cures for M. Mesmer than there are for M. Deslon; there is nothing to prevent convulsions for him, as for M. Deslon, becoming habitual and expanding into an epidemic in the towns and extending to future generations; his practices and assemblies have the same grave inconveniences for morals.

The experiments of the Commissioners, which show that all the effects are due to touching, to the imagination and to imitation, in explaining the effects obtained by M. Deslon explain equally those produced by M. Mesmer. One may reasonably conclude, then, that, whatever may be the mystery of the magnetism of M. Mesmer, this magnetism cannot be more real than that of M. Deslon, and that the practices of the one are neither more useful nor less dangerous than those of the other.

Signed FRANKLIN, BORY, LAVOISIER, BAILLY, MAJAULT, SALLIN, DARCET, GUILLOTIN, LEROY.

Done at Paris, this 11 August 1784.

Notes by the translator

[i] Baquet: From what they say a little later in the Report it seems that the Commissioners were not shown the contents of the baquet, though they satisfied themselves that they did not give rise to a magnetic field. A detailed description of these contents is given in a little book published in 1785 under the title of 'Aphorisms de M. Mesmer' by an adherent of Animal Magnetism, the doctor Caullet de Vaumorel. Though Mesmer seems to have repudiated this work as unauthorised there seems no reason to doubt the authenticity of its contents, said to have been dictated by Mesmer himself to his pupils. In summary, the shallow wooden barrel contained bottles of water, powdered glass or other materials that were 'magnetised' individually and arranged radially in layers. For more details of the construction of various types of baquet and related matters see the appended translation of selected parts of the Aphorisms.

[ii] Magnetising trees. In the *Aphorisms* detailed instructions are given for magnetising trees and setting up treatment of patients under them.

[iii] Despite its absurdity, this is exactly what the adherents of Animal Magnetism claimed – paragraph 304 of the *Aphorisms* says:

'The tree is now endowed with all the virtues of magnetism. Healthy people, when they remain for some time close to the tree can feel its effect and the sick, especially those who have already been magnetised, will be violently affected and will have *crise*s.'

[iv] *étourdi*: the nearest appropriate translation seems to be 'confused'; the sense given in 18th century dictionaries is that of being astonished or dazed or possibly stunned.

[v] *ses membres se sont roidis*: '*roidir*' is defined by Nicot (*Thresor de la langue française*, 1606) thus: *Se ad firmitatem intendere, Rigescere*; that is 'to stretch out in stiffness, to stiffen'. It is given both as 'to extend' and 'to stiffen' by 17th and 18th century dictionaries. It seems most likely that, in the context, it means 'extended and rigid.'

[vi] This translation is of the text of the *Rapport Secret* reprinted in: Burdin, C. & Dubois F. *Histoire Académic du Magnétisme Animal. Paris*, JB. Ballière, 1841 pp 92-100; the extensive, but not particularly illuminating, nineteenth century authors' footnotes have not been translated and the page numbers refer to the reprinted text, with its first page (92 in the book) re-numbered as 1.

Notes in the original report

[1] M. Mesmer's *memoire* on the discovery of Animal Magnetism, pages 74 and following.

[2] *Ibid*. Notice to the Reader, page VI.

[3] This detailed observation was presented to the *Faculté de Médecine de Paris*, in an assembly *de prima mensis* by M. Bourdois de la Mothe, charitable doctor of Saint-Sulpice, who had conscientiously visited the sick woman every day.

[4] M. Mesmer, *Précis historique*, pages 35, 37.

[5] M. Sigault, A doctor of medicine in the *Faculté de Paris,* well known for having devised the operation on the symphasis, carried out several experiments that showed that magnetism is nothing but the effect of the imagination. Here are the details that he gave in a letter to one of the Commissioners dated 30 July.

"Having let it be known in a large house in the Marais that I was an expert in M. Mesmer's methods, I produced various effects in a lady. My tone, the serious demeanour that I adopted, together with my gestures made a great impression upon her that she wished at first to hide her from me; but, putting my hand on the region of her heart I felt palpitations. Her state of oppression also indicated a tightness in the chest. There were also various other symptoms; her face became convulsed, her eyes were troubled, she eventually fainted after which she vomited up her dinner, passed several stools, and found herself incredibly enfeebled and in a state of collapse. I repeated the same procedure with several people, with more or less success, according to their degree of belief and sensitivity.

A celebrated artist who gives lessons in drawing to the children of one of our Princes, complained for several days of a great migraine; he told me about it on the Pont-royal and after persuading him that I was an initiate in the mysteries of M .Messer, almost immediately I took away his pain with a few gestures, to his great astonishment.

I produced the same effect in a young hatter who also had migraine; but in this case when nothing happened with my first gestures I put my hand on the wrong side telling him to look at me. At once he felt tightness in the chest, palpitations and gasping for breath and great malaise. From that moment he no longer doubted the power I had over him. In fact, having put my finger on the affected area I asked him what he felt. He said that the pain was receding. I assured him that I was going to drive it down into his arm and make it come out through his thumb, and I did this vigorously. He took me at my word and was relieved for two hours. Then he stopped me in the street to say that the pain had returned. It seems to me that this effect is the same as that produced by a dentist on the feelings of those who had come to him to have a tooth pulled.

Finally, when I was in the parlour of a convent in the Rue du Colombier a young lady, F.S.G., said to me : 'you go to M. Mesmer's then!' 'Yes,' I said: 'I can magnetise you through the grille'. At once I presented my finger to her; she became terrified, felt that she had been seized and begged me to stop. Her emotions were so strong that, if I had continued, she would have certainly have fallen into convulsion."

M. Sigault recounted that he himself had felt the power of the imagination. One day when the question arose of magnetising him to convince him, he felt, just as it was decided to touch him, a tightness of the chest and palpitations. But, quickly becoming reassured, all the gestures and procedures of magnetism were employed without making any impression at all on him.

[6] This footnote is the second to be numbered (e) in the original; the sequence has been corrected in the translation . IMLD.

M. le Maréchal de Villars, who put down the troubles in the Cevennes, says : « of this kind I have seen things that I would not have believed if they had not taken place before my eyes; a whole town in which all the women and girls without exception appeared to be possessed by the Devil. They shook and prophesied publicly in the streets…. One of them had the temerity to shake and prophesy before me for an hour. But, of all the follies, the most surprising was that which the Bishop of Alais told me about and that I sent to M. de Chaillard in the following terms:

A gentleman of Mandagors, lord of the area of that name and Maire of Alais, with the highest responsibilities in the town and county, who has also been for some time sub-delegate to M. de Bâville, has just done an extraordinary thing. He is a man of sixty, wise in his behaviour, of plenty of spirit and who has written several works and had them published. I have read several of them, and, before I knew what I have just found out about him, I had found in them a lively imagination.

A prophetess, aged about 27 or 28, had been arrested and brought before M. d' Ablais. He questioned her in the presence of a number of churchmen. This creature, after listening to him, replied with a modest air and exhorted him to stop tormenting the true Children of God, and then spoke to him for an hour in a foreign language of which he understood not a word; as we have seen the Duc de Ferté do previously when he had drunk a little, speaking English in front of the English. I have heard it said about this: I understand well that he is speaking English, but I understand not a word of what he says. That would also have been difficult to understand since he had never known a word of English. This girl spoke Greek, and Hebrew. You will easily believe that M. d'Alais had the prophetess locked up. After several months the girl seemed to have recovered from her wanderings as a result of the care and advice of the lord of Mandagors who had visited her frequently; she was released, and from what the lord of Mandagors had been up to with her it turned out that the prophetess was pregnant.

But the present position is that the lord of Mandagors has resigned from all his charges and passed them on to his son and has said to several people, and to M. the Bishop himself, that it was by God's command that he had known this prophetess and that the child that will be born will be the true saviour of the world. Because of all this, and in other circumstances, one would do nothing but send M. the Maire and the prophetess to the madhouse. The Bishop suggested to me that he should be arrested. I wanted first to discuss it with M. de Bâville but ordered that he and the prophetess should be watched so that they could not escape: my thoughts were that, in this matter of madmen, an affair concerning a madman of this importance should be dealt with as quietly as possible and so we should try to deal with him carefully, and then to make sure of him. For you will readily realise that, to declare publicly a Maire of Alais as a prophet - a lord of considerable lands, a former sub-delegate of the Intendant, an author and someone previously regarded as wise - among people who are accustomed to hold him in esteem and respect him, all this could make things worse rather than better. All the more so since, apart from the folly of believing that God had ordered him to know this girl, he is very sane in his discourse, as was Don Quixote very wise except when there was a question of chivalry. M. de Bâville's opinion was the same as mine, not to rush. His children took him quietly to one of his châteaux and kept him there and the prophetess was locked up." *Vie du Maréchal Duc de Villars*. Page 325 et seq.

( ) On the day of the ceremony of their first Communion, in the parish of Saint-Roch a few years ago (

1780), after the evening Office there was, as usual, a procession outside. The children were hardly back in the church, and returned to their places, than one young girl felt ill and had convulsions. This affection propagated itself so rapidly that, in the space of half an hour, 50 or 60 young girls of 12 to 19 fell into the same convulsions; that is to say, they had tightness of the throat, swelling of the stomach, suffocation, hiccup and more or less violent convulsions. These events recurred in some of them in the course of the week; but the following Sunday, assembled at the *Dames de Saint-Anne*, an institution for the education of young girls, a dozen fell into the same convulsions and more would have done so if the precaution had not been taken of immediately sending each child back to its parents. The number of schools had to be increased. By thus separating the children, and only allowing them to be together in small numbers, three weeks sufficed to dissipate entirely this epidemic of convulsions. See, for similar examples, '*le Naturalism des convulsions*', by M. Hecquet.

[7] M. Deslon had already said in 1780: "If M. Mesmer had no secret other than to make the imagination act effectively for the health, would it not still be a marvellous benefit! For if the medicine of the imagination were always to be the best, why should we not practise the medicine of the imagination!" *Obervation sur le magnetism animal pages* 46 & 47.

[8] If it were to be objected to the Commissioners that this conclusion applies to magnetism in general, and not only to the magnetism practised by M. Deslon, the Commissioners would reply that the intention of the King was to have their opinion on animal magnetism; they have therefore not exceeded the bounds of their commission. The would also reply the M. Deslon appeared to them learned in what are called the principles of magnetism, and that he is certainly able to produce effects and to provoke *crise*s.

The principles of M. Deslon are the same as those contained in the twenty-seven propositions that M. Mesmer made public in print in 1779. If M. Mesmer announces a larger theory today, the Commissioners in no way required to have knowledge of this theory to decide about the existence and usefulness of magnetism; they required only to consider the effects. It is by its effects that the existence of a cause is made manifest; it is by these same effects that its utility can be demonstrated. Phenomena are known by observation long before one is able to arrive at the theory that binds them together and explains them. A theory of the magnet does not yet exist and the phenomena are vouched for by the experience of several centuries. M. Mesmer's theory is a matter of indifference and is superfluous here; the techniques and the effects, it is these that it was necessary to examine. It is also easy to prove that the essential techniques of magnetism are known to M. Deslon.

M. Deslon has been a disciple of M. Mesmer for several years. He has constantly seen the techniques of animal magnetism used over this time, and the means of exciting and directing them. M. Deslon has himself treated patients in front to M. Mesmer; by himself he has obtained the same effects as with M. Mesmer. Finally coming together, both of them have collected their patients together, both of them have treated patients without distinction, and thus using the same procedures. The method that M. Deslon uses today cannot be other than that of M. Mesmer.

The effects also correspond. There are *crise*s equally violent, equally multiplied and announced by the same symptoms with M. Deslon and with M. Mesmer; these effects therefore, do not belong to one particular practice, but to the practice of magnetism in general. The experiments of the Commissioners show that the effects obtained by M. Deslon are due to touching, to the imagination and to imitation. These are thus the causes of magnetism in general. The observations of the Commissioners have convinced them that these convulsive *crise*s and violent techniques can only be useful in medicine in the same way as poisons; and they have formed the judgement, independently of any theory, that whenever

one seeks to excite these convulsions they can become habitual and damaging; they could expand into an epidemic and perhaps affect future generations.

In consequence, the Commissioners have had to conclude that not only the methods of a particular practice but the techniques of magnetism in general, can, in the long term, be dangerous.

Bailly title

EXPOSÉ

Of the experiments
that were carried out
to examine

ANIMAL MAGNETISM;

Read at the Académie des sciences,
by M. Bailly on his own behalf and on that of
MM. Franklin, le Roy, de Bory and Lavoisier,

on the 4th September 1784 :

In the presence of M. le Comte d'Oëls.

- 1 -

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In the presence of M. le Comte d'Oëls.

Gentlemen,

You know that Commissioners were appointed by the king from the faculty of medicine and from this academy to examine animal magnetism and to give their opinion on its existence

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and on its usefulness. We have presented an account of this to the king and to the public. His majesty was satisfied with our work; the public will make its judgement of it.But the academicians [among the Commissioners] owe the academy and their colleagues a detailed account of their proceedings. This article is intended to set before you the opinions that directed our investigations and the results that our work has produced.
When I say 'we', Gentlemen, I understand the whole Commission; nothing has been set aside, the work belongs to all of us: we were all equally motivated by the interests of truth, we were always united, always unanimous. The account that is to be given to you here is in particular homage to our colleagues; but it contains nothing that is not the result of the common labour of the members of both societies.

It is already more than six years since animal magnetism was announced to Europe, particularly in France and in this its capital. But it is only over about the last two years that it has been of particular interest to a considerable number of citizens and that it has become the object of public discussion. Never had a more extraordinary question divided the opinions of an enlightened nation. There was proposed a sure and powerful means of acting on living bodies, a new remedy, a universal agent

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to cure and prevent disease. Physicists were ignorant of its procedures and they heard talk of nothing but prodigies. Few real cures were cited but many people said they were relieved and the remedy was agreeable enough to raise the hopes of the sick. After some time the secret was revealed. Thus one has seen learned enlightened persons, even those distinguished by their abilities, adopt the theory and the practices that they have been taught; one has seen a number of physicians and surgeons admitted to the

school of magnetism and become its partisans, defending its theory and following its practice. These plaudits of magnetism must cause the best minds to consider and the learned to suspend their judgement. It was under these circumstances that the Commissioners were appointed by the king; the investigation that he ordered was a fruit of the wisdom of his administration. It was a scandal for Europe to see a people enlightened by all the sciences and the arts - a people among whom philosophy has made the greatest progress - forget the teaching of Descartes who was philosophy's reviver, and enfold within its bosom two opposing parties who directed their view and consideration upon the same object but were divided and in conflict over it; one party announcing

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magnetism as a useful and sublime discovery, the other regarding it as an illusion at once dangerous and ridiculous. The decision was important and indispensable; it was necessary to enlighten the doubters, it was necessary to establish a base upon which either incredulity or confidence could rest. One must not be indifferent to the ill-based reign of false opinions: sciences that grow from truth gain much from the suppression of error: error is always an evil yeast that ferments and ultimately corrupts the mass into which it is introduced. But when the error comes from the empire of science to spread to the multitude, to divide and agitate minds, when it presents a mendacious means of curing the sick and prevents them from seeking other aid, when, above all, it influences at once both mind and body, a good government has an interest in destroying it. The distribution of light is a good employment of authority! The Commissioners enthusiastically agree with the administration's opinions and embrace the honour of its choice [of them].
When they were taken to the public treatment by magnetism they were at once struck by a very remarkable contrast between the effects produced and the apparently feeble methods employed.

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On the one hand there were violent convulsions, long lasting and repeated; on the other, simple touching, gestures and signs: in spite of this the public treatment made it clear that a great power was set in action by these means, for all their feebleness. A spectacle of this kind seems to transport us to the time and reign of the fairies: this control exercised over a number of individuals, the man who wields it, the stick that serves as his instrument, all resemble, in fact, the enchantments of our fables; it is their tales brought into action. But if this spectacle is astonishing it must not be overwhelming. If it has overtaken the faith of a number of spectators brought by a more or less attentive curiosity, above all if it has seduced the sick, always open to self-deception, it did not produce this effect on men chosen for a serious investigation. Their first duty was to be on guard against illusions. They watched each other closely, they made their observations in silence and remained calm amidst excitement, they were able to attend to their reason and to seek enlightenment.

We enquired first by what powers so many surprising effects were produced and for what reasons they were attributed to an unknown and novel fluid, a fluid belonging to and acting upon Man.

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The larger and more extraordinary the discovery the more one must be exigent about the choice of proofs. Furthermore, acting as physicists, we sought to detect the presence of the fluid; but this fluid evades all the senses. We were told that its action on living bodies was the sole proof that could be advanced of its existence. You have seen, Gentlemen, in our report the solid reasons that made us reject absolutely the cure of disease as one of the claimed effects of this force. Nature is active at the same time as the remedy; one does not know whether the improvement is due to the remedy or to Nature. Nature sometimes cures without any remedy: how can one be convinced of the existence of an invisible remedy by cures that Nature can accomplish without it? We were forced, therefore, to rely on observation of the

physical action of the fluid upon the animal economy, on changes from moment to moment. But this led us, Gentlemen, into a labyrinth of difficulties. If the primary causes of Nature are simple the final results are the products of vast complication. Man makes no movement that cannot be due to an infinity of causes. A moral as well as a physical being, his affections, ills and movements depend as much upon his thoughts as upon the irritability of his organs.

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The experiments that we carried out on ourselves made us realise that, when the attention is withdrawn, there is no longer any effect. The tests carried out on patients showed us that children, not susceptible to preconceived ideas, detect nothing; that an unwilling mind opposes the action of magnetism even during a state of habitual convulsions and sensitivity of the nerves when such action should be most apparent. If, among a number of patients, some felt slight and equivocal effects, the others detected nothing; we could not but be surprised by this. Is not magnetism claimed to be a universal fluid, to be the principle of life and the great resource of Nature? What sort of agent is it that does not always act under the same conditions? Does its absence of action in some cases not indicate that in the others the action attributed to it is due to other causes? Its effect was missing when we used it to carry warmth to the feet. Its effect was missing when we tested it for its ability to indicate disease. We tried various methods of magnetising, by observing and by neglecting the distinction between poles; all had the same effects. The poles are thus a chimera that has no purpose but to assimilate 'magnetism'

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to the real magnetism which is one of the phenomena of Nature. Thus it was that, as we advanced in our examination, we saw disappear one after the other the properties attributed to this pretended fluid and the entire edifice, built on an imaginary base, crumbled before us. Forced to renounce physical proofs we were obliged to seek the causes of these real effects in the the states of mind [of the subjects]. In the rest of our enquiries we ceased to be physicists to become nothing more than philosophers; and we submitted to examination the affections of the spirit and the ideas of those exposed to the action of magnetism. Thus, experimenting on subjects with their eyes covered, we saw, in a clear fashion, the effects arise from ideas that we implanted and the effects follow the same path as our questions. When we did not magnetise [the subjects] the effects were the same and corresponded to our questions in the same way.On the varied and independent effects of magnetism we had to acknowledge the influence of the imagination; but, in the examination of the mental aspects to which we were led by the nature of the enquiry, we followed, as far as was possible, the sure and methodical approach of the sciences; while observing as philosophers we nevertheless followed the procedures of physics.

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We operated as is done in chemistry where, after decomposing substances and discovering their principles, one assures the correctness of the analysis by re-synthesising the same substances from their re-united principles. We said: the effects attributed to magnetism and to a fluid that nothing demonstrates take place only when the imagination is aroused and can be struck. The imagination thus seems to be its principle. We must see whether these effects can be reproduced by the power of the imagination alone. We attempted this and were fully successful. Without being touched and without any sign being used, subjects who believed they had been magnetised felt pain or heat – very great heat. In subjects endowed with more sensitive nerves we produced convulsions and what are called crises. We have seen the imagination so exalted and having become so powerful as to cause speech to be lost in an instant. At the same time we demonstrated the voidness of magnetism by opposing it to the imagination. Magnetism alone, used for thirty minutes, produced no effect; but the imagination put in action in the same person and

using the same methods under absolutely similar circumstances, produced a very strong and well characterised convulsion. Finally, to complete the demonstration,

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to complete the picture of the imagination's effects, at once capable of agitating and of calming, we caused the convulsion to cease by that same charm that had induced it, by the power of the imagination.
If we did not carry out experiments on animals, which are regarded as devoid of imagination, this was because the experiments would have been more difficult and delicate without being more conclusive. In the first place the cure of animal diseases is no more valuable that the cure of human disease; and if we were to rely on acting on animals from moment to moment how would we be able to know what they felt? Since they cannot be interrogated their movements cannot be other than equivocal. In addition, a large reason for rejecting this type of proof is that a universal fluid is proposed, a fluid acting on Man and proper to cure his ills. It would be very strange that effects which were boasted of in the human species could only be made apparent in animals. It was thus in Man that we had to test magnetism and our experiments enabled us to discover only the power of the imagination. We proceeded by proofs of negatives and this path was determined by the nature of things. An opinion is attacked and

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defended by contrary means. A real agent must be demonstrated by positive proofs while a chimerical agent can be excluded only by its lack of effects and the demonstration of its nullity.
The series of experiments that we carried out thus permitted us to conclude and establish that nothing proves the existence of an animal magnetic fluid. Sound physics does not permit recourse to an unknown and insensible fluid to explain effects that can all be produced by the imagination either on its own or combined with touch and imitation.
Such are the causes of the effects attributed to magnetism; such is the outcome of our work. But the phenomena observed allow several more results that we shall put forward. These results concern the imitation and the imagination, two of our most astonishing faculties; these are facts for a science now new, that of the influence of the mental on the physical, and we ask that we be permitted in this respect to enter into some preliminary and purely philosophical details.
Mental man, like physical man, does not exist or become what he is

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except through these two faculties: he is moulded and is perfected by imitation; he acts and becomes powerful through the imagination. Imitation is thus the first means of his perfectibility; it modifies him from birth to death. Without imitation the progress made by an individual would be lost for everyone else; it is by it that traits are effaced in polite and common society so that everyone has the same attitude, and by it that children learn our usages and conventions and bend to our customs, learning the language. The softening of speech is an effect of the same cause. This imitation acts also on the mind; it does not introduce anything really novel but it preserves received ideas, it forms and constitutes national sentiment and, as it most often causes beliefs without the person's knowledge, it is on its irresistible power that are founded the prejudices that last so long and are so resistant.
Under this faculty all would remain at the same level, everything would be passed on but the level of knowledge and of institutions would never increase. The imagination is the faculty of progress; it is through it that men have traversed the different states of developed society. It is an eminently active faculty, the author of good

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and ill, everything is before it, the future as well as the present, the worlds of the universe as much as the place where we are. It enlarges all that it touches; it works always expansively and in this expansiveness is its power. It is by this force that it deploys mental resources and multiplies physical forces; Nature is obedient to its voice and develops in its entirety. Also, when imagination speaks to the multitude, the multitude sees neither dangers nor obstacles. A single man commands and the others are only his instruments. Nations are what their rulers will; armies are what their generals are; this is a truth known from the time of Alexander to that of Frederick and his illustrious brother.
The imagination, such as we have just painted it, Gentlemen, seems to have a slow and gradual progression; it is established only by repeated lessons; but, if in society it makes insensible progress, in the treatment by magnetism it manifests itself by striking phenomena. There, crises are multiplied in proportion to their violence; they all begin almost at the same time. It seems like a spark that ignites a blaze. This faculty of communication is very remarkable. We knew that

Man, mechanical in a large number of his actions, bends himself over time to repeat what he sees and what he hears; but the convulsions of magnetism show us that the same effect takes place instantly at large and in such a way that a number of suitably disposed individuals are instruments tuned to a unison of whom one sets all the others in motion.
As for the imagination, one knows the derangements that a lively and sudden impression occasions in the machinery of Man. Imagination renews or suspends the animal functions; it revives in hope or freezes in terror. In one night it makes the hair go white; in a moment it returns the use of the limbs or of speech.; it destroys or develops the seeds of illness, it even causes death. But these astonishing effects belong to unexpected revolutions. It is the concurrence of circumstances that brings them and chance that seems to produce them; they do not at all appear to depend on the power and the will of Man. That which we have learnt - or at least which was confirmed to us by evident demonstration by the examination of the techniques of magnetism - was that one man can act on another, at any moment and almost at will, by affecting his imagination; that the simplest gestures and signs can

have the most powerful effects; that the action of Man on the imagination can be reduced to an art and brought about by a technique in subjects who have faith in it. People speak of ‘magnetism of intention’; undoubtedly intention can be sufficient provided it is reciprocal; it establishes a relation and a necessary dependence between two individuals. That intention which I direct is commanded by my imagination; that intention that responds to me is exalted by the obedient imagination. The search for an agent that does not exist thus serves to make known a real power of Man; Man has the power to act on his like, to disturb his nervous system and to imprint convulsions on him. But this action cannot be regarded as physical; we do not see that it depends on a fluid which is communicated; it is entirely mental, it is the action of imagination on imagination. This action is always dangerous; one can observe it as a philosopher and it is good to know it only to foresee or forestall its effects.
Magnetism will not have been entirely useless to the philosophy that condemns it; it is one more thing to consign to the history of errors of the human spirit and a great experiment on the power of the imagination.

END

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translation of:

Bailly JS. *Exposé des expériences qui ont été faites pour l'examen du magnétisme animal.* Paris: Chez Moutarde. 1784

IML Donaldson; Edinburgh.

⇒ translation page 1

RAPPORT

Des Commiſſaires chargés par LE ROI, *de l'Examen du Magnétiſme animal.*

LE ROI a nommé le 12 mars 1784, des Médecins choiſis dans la Faculté de Paris, M.rs Borie, Sallin, d'Arcet, Guillotin, pour faire l'Examen & lui rendre compte du Magnétiſme animal, pratiqué par M. Deſſon; & ſur la demande de ces quatre Médecins, Sa Majeſté a nommé pour procéder avec eux à cet Examen, cinq des Membres de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, M.rs Franklin, le Roy, Bailly, de Bory, Lavoiſier. M. Borie étant mort dans le commencement du travail des Commiſſaires, Sa Majeſté a fait choix de M. Majault, Docteur de la Faculté, pour le remplacer.

Nomination des Commiſſaires.

L'agent que M. Meſmer prétend avoir découvert, qu'il a fait connoître ſous le nom de *Magnétiſme animal*, eſt comme il le caractériſe lui-même & ſuivant ſes propres paroles, « un fluide univerſellement répandu; il eſt le moyen d'une influence mutuelle entre les corps céleſtes, « la terre & les corps animés; il eſt continué de manière à ne « ſouffrir aucun vide; ſa ſubtilité ne permet aucune compa- « raiſon; il eſt capable de recevoir, propager, communiquer «

Expoſition de la doctrine du Magnétiſme animal.

⇒ translation title

RAPPORT
DES COMMISSAIRES
CHARGÉS PAR LE ROI,
DE L'EXAMEN
DU
MAGNÉTISME ANIMAL.

Imprimé par ordre du Roi.

A PARIS,
DE L'IMPRIMERIE ROYALE

M. DCCLXXXIV.

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» toutes les impreſſions du mouvement ; il eſt ſuſceptible de
» flux & de reflux. Le corps animal éprouve les effets de cet
» agent ; & c'eſt en s'inſinuant dans la ſubſtance des nerfs, qu'il
» les affecte immédiatement. On reconnoît particulièrement
» dans le corps humain, des propriétés analogues à celles
» de l'aimant ; on y diſtingue des pôles également divers &
» oppoſés. L'action & la vertu du Magnétiſme animal peuvent
» être communiquées d'un corps à d'autres corps animés &
» inanimés : cette action a lieu à une diſtance éloignée,
» ſans le ſecours d'aucun corps intermédiaire ; elle eſt
» augmentée, réfléchie par les glaces ; communiquée,
» propagée, augmentée par le ſon ; cette vertu peut être
» accumulée, concentrée, tranſportée. Quoique ce fluide ſoit
» univerſel, tous les corps animés n'en ſont pas également
» ſuſceptibles ; il en eſt même quoiqu'en très-petit nombre,
» qui ont une propriété ſi oppoſée, que leur ſeule préſence
» détruit tous les effets de ce fluide dans les autres corps.
» Le Magnétiſme animal peut guérir immédiatement les
» maux de nerfs, & médiatement les autres ; il perfectionne
» l'action des médicamens ; il provoque & dirige les criſes
» ſalutaires, de manière qu'on peut s'en rendre maître ; par ſon
» moyen le Médecin connoît l'état de ſanté de chaque indi-
» vidu, & juge avec certitude l'origine, la nature & les progrès
» des maladies les plus compliquées ; il en empêche l'accroiſſe-
» ment & parvient à leur guériſon, ſans jamais expoſer le
» malade à des effets dangereux ou à des ſuites fâcheuſes,
» quels que ſoient l'âge, le tempérament & le ſexe *(a)*.

(a) Mémoire de M. Meſmer ſur la découverte du Magnétiſme animal, *pages 74 & ſuivantes.*

⇒ translation page 3

La Nature offre dans le Magnétiſme, un moyen univerſel « de guérir & de préſerver les hommes *(b)*. »

Tel eſt l'Agent que les Commiſſaires ont été chargés d'examiner, & dont les propriétés ſont avouées par M. Deſſon, qui admet tous les principes de M. Meſmer. Cette théorie fait la baſe d'un Mémoire qui a été lû chez M. Deſſon, le 9 Mai, en préſence de M. le Lieutenant général de Police & des Commiſſaires. On établit dans ce Mémoire qu'il n'y a qu'une nature, une maladie, un remède ; & ce remède eſt le Magnétiſme animal. Ce Médecin en inſtruiſant les Commiſſaires, de la doctrine & des procédés du Magnétiſme, leur en a enſeigné la pratique, en leur faiſant connoître les pôles, en leur montrant la manière de toucher les malades, & de diriger ſur eux ce fluide magnétique.

Propoſitions de M. Deſſon.

M. Deſſon s'eſt engagé avec les Commiſſaires, 1.° à conſtater l'exiſtence du Magnétiſme animal ; 2.° à communiquer ſes connoiſſances ſur cette découverte ; 3.° à prouver l'utilité de cette découverte & du Magnétiſme animal dans la cure des maladies.

Engagement qu'il prend avec les Commiſſaires.

Deſcription du traitement.

Après avoir pris cette connoiſſance de la théorie & de la pratique du Magnétiſme animal, il falloit en connoître les effets ; les Commiſſaires ſe ſont tranſportés, & chacun d'eux pluſieurs fois au traitement de M. Deſſon. Ils ont vu au milieu d'une grande ſalle, une caiſſe circulaire, faite de bois de chêne & élevée d'un pied ou d'un pied & demi, que l'on nomme le *baquet ;* ce qui fait le

(b) Ibid. Avis au Lecteur, *page VI.*

⇒ translation page 4

deſſus de cette caiſſe eſt percé d'un nombre de trous, d'où ſortent des branches de fer coudées & mobiles. Les malades ſont placés à pluſieurs rangs autour de ce baquet, & chacun a ſa branche de fer, laquelle au moyen du coude, peut être appliquée directement ſur la partie malade; une corde paſſée autour de leur corps les unit les uns aux autres; quelquefois on forme une ſeconde chaîne en ſe communiquant par les mains, c'eſt-à-dire, en appliquant le pouce entre le pouce & le doigt index de ſon voiſin : alors on preſſe le pouce que l'on tient ainſi; l'impreſſion reçue à la gauche ſe rend par la droite, & elle circule à la ronde.

Un *piano forte* eſt placé dans un coin de la ſalle, & on y joue différens airs ſur des mouvemens variés; on y joint quelquefois le ſon de la voix & le chant.

Tous ceux qui magnétiſent ont à la main une baguette de fer, longue de dix à douze pouces.

Explication de ces diſpoſitions.

M. Deſſon a déclaré aux Commiſſaires, 1.° que cette baguette eſt conducteur du Magnétiſme; elle a l'avantage de le concentrer dans ſa pointe, & d'en rendre les émanations plus puiſſantes. 2.° Le ſon, conformément au principe de M. Meſmer, eſt auſſi conducteur du Magnétiſme, & pour communiquer le fluide au *piano forte*, il ſuffit d'en approcher la baguette de fer; celui qui touche l'inſtrument en fournit auſſi, & le Magnétiſme eſt tranſmis par les ſons aux malades environnans. 3.° La corde dont les malades s'entourent, eſt deſtinée ainſi que la chaîne des pouces, à augmenter les effets par la communication. 4.° L'intérieur du baquet eſt compoſé de

⇒ translation page 5

manière à y concentrer le Magnétiſme ; c'eſt un grand réſervoir d'où il ſe répand par les branches de fer qui y plongent.

Les Commiſſaires ſe ſont aſſurés dans la ſuite, au moyen d'un électromètre & d'une aiguille de fer non aimantée, que le baquet ne contient rien qui ſoit ou électrique ou aimanté ; & ſur la déclaration que M. Deſlon leur a faite de la compoſition intérieure de ce baquet, ils n'y ont reconnu aucun agent phyſique, capable de contribuer aux effets annoncés du Magnétiſme.

Manière d'exciter & de diriger le Magnétiſme.

Les malades rangés en très-grand nombre, & à pluſieurs rangs autour du baquet, reçoivent donc à la fois le Magnétiſme par tous ces moyens : par les branches de fer qui leur tranſmettent celui du baquet ; par la corde enlacée autour du corps, & par l'union des pouces qui leur communiquent celui de leurs voiſins ; par le ſon du *piano forte*, ou d'une voix agréable qui le répand dans l'air. Les malades ſont encore magnétiſés directement, au moyen du doigt & de la baguette de fer, promenés devant le viſage, deſſus ou derrière la tête & ſur les parties malades, toujours en obſervant la diſtinction des pôles ; on agit ſur eux par le regard & en les fixant. Mais ſurtout ils ſont magnétiſés par l'application des mains, & par la preſſion des doigts ſur les hypocondres & ſur les régions du bas-ventre ; application ſouvent continuée pendant long-temps, quelquefois pendant pluſieurs heures.

Effets obſervés ſur les malades.

Alors les malades offrent un tableau très-varié par les différens états où ils ſe trouvent. Quelques-uns ſont calmes, tranquilles & n'éprouvent rien ; d'autres touſſent,

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crachent, ſentent quelque légère douleur, une chaleur locale ou une chaleur univerſelle, & ont des ſueurs; d'autres ſont agités & tourmentés par des convulſions. Ces convulſions ſont extraordinaires par leur nombre, par leur durée & par leur force. Dès qu'une convulſion commence, pluſieurs autres ſe déclarent. Les Commiſſaires en ont vu durer plus de trois heures; elles ſont accompagnées d'expectorations d'une eau trouble & viſqueuſe, arrachée par la violence des efforts. On y a vu quelquefois des filets de ſang; & il y a entr'autres un jeune homme malade, qui en rend ſouvent avec abondance. Ces convulſions ſont caractériſées par les mouvemens précipités, involontaires de tous les membres & du corps entier, par le reſſerrement à la gorge, par des ſoubreſauts des hypocondres & de l'épigaſtre, par le trouble & l'égarement des yeux, par des cris perçans, des pleurs, des hoquets & des rires immodérés. Elles ſont précédées ou ſuivies d'un état de langueur & de rêverie, d'une ſorte d'abattement & même d'aſſoupiſſement. Le moindre bruit imprévu cauſe des treſſaillemens; & l'on a remarqué que le changement de ton & de meſure dans les airs joués ſur le *Piano forte*, influoit ſur les malades, en ſorte qu'un mouvement plus vif les agitoit davantage, & renouveloit la vivacité de leurs convulſions.

Il y a une ſalle matelaſſée & deſtinée primitivement aux malades tourmentés de ces convulſions, une ſalle nommée *des Criſes;* mais M. Deſſon ne juge pas à propos d'en faire uſage, & tous les malades, quels que ſoient leurs

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accidens, ſont également réunis dans les ſalles du traitement public.

Rien n'eſt plus étonnant que le ſpectacle de ces convulſions; quand on ne l'a point vu, on ne peut s'en faire une idée: & en le voyant, on eſt également ſurpris & du repos profond d'une partie de ces malades, & de l'agitation qui anime les autres; des accidens variés qui ſe répètent; des ſympathies qui s'établiſſent. On voit des malades ſe chercher excluſivement & en ſe précipitant l'un vers l'autre, ſe ſourire, ſe parler avec affection & adoucir mutuellement leurs criſes. Tous ſont ſoumis à celui qui magnétiſe; ils ont beau être dans un aſſoupiſſement apparent, ſa voix, un regard, un ſigne les en retire. On ne peut s'empêcher de reconnoître, à ces effets conſtans, une grande puiſſance qui agite les malades, les maîtriſe, & dont celui qui magnétiſe ſemble être le dépoſitaire.

Cet état convulſif eſt appelé improprement *Criſe* dans la théorie du Magnétiſme animal: ſuivant cette doctrine, il eſt regardé comme une criſe ſalutaire, du genre de celles que la Nature opère, ou que le Médecin habile a l'art de provoquer pour faciliter la cure des maladies. Les Commiſſaires adopteront cette expreſſion dans la ſuite de ce rapport, & lorſqu'ils ſe ſerviront du mot *criſe*, ils entendront toujours l'état ou de convulſions, ou d'aſſoupiſſement en quelque ſorte léthargique, produit par les procédés du Magnétiſme animal.

Les Commiſſaires ont obſervé que dans le nombre des malades en criſe, il y avoit toujours beaucoup de femmes

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& peu d'hommes ; que ces criſes étoient une ou deux heures à s'établir ; & que dès qu'il y en avoit une d'établie, toutes les autres commençoient ſucceſſivement & en peu de temps. Mais après ces remarques générales, les Commiſſaires ont bientôt jugé que le traitement public ne pouvoit pas devenir le lieu de leurs expériences. La multiplicité des effets eſt un premier obſtacle ; on voit trop de choſes à la fois pour en bien voir une en particulier. D'ailleurs des malades diſtingués, qui viennent au traitement pour leur ſanté, pourroient être importunés par les queſtions ; le ſoin de les obſerver pourroit ou les gêner ou leur déplaire ; les Commiſſaires eux-mêmes ſeroient gênés par leur diſcrétion. Ils ont donc arrêté que leur aſſiduité n'étant point néceſſaire à ce traitement, il ſuffiſoit que quelques-uns d'eux y vinſſent de temps en temps pour confirmer les premières obſervations générales, en faire de nouvelles s'il y avoit lieu, & en rendre compte à la commiſſion aſſemblée.

Remarques générales faites au traitement public.

Les Commiſſaires ne peuvent point y faire d'expériences.

Après avoir obſervé ces effets au traitement public, on a dû s'occuper d'en démêler les cauſes, & de chercher les preuves de l'exiſtence & de l'utilité du Magnétiſme. La queſtion de l'exiſtence eſt la première ; celle de l'utilité ne doit être traitée que lorſque l'autre aura été pleinement réſolue. Le Magnétiſme animal peut bien exiſter ſans être utile, mais il ne peut être utile s'il n'exiſte pas.

Ces expériences doivent avoir pour premier objet de conſtater l'exiſtence du Magnétiſme.

En conſéquence le principal objet de l'examen des Commiſſaires & le but eſſentiel de leurs premières expériences a dû être de s'aſſurer de cette exiſtence. Cet objet

En s'occupant de cette exiſtence, il faudroit

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objet étoit encore très-vaſte & avoit beſoin d'être ſimplifié. Le Magnétiſme animal embraſſe la Nature entière; il eſt, dit-on, le moyen de l'influence des corps céleſtes ſur nous; les Commiſſaires ont cru qu'ils devoient d'abord écarter cette grande influence, ne conſidérer que la partie de ce fluide répandue ſur la terre, ſans s'embarraſſer d'où il vient, & conſtater l'action qu'il exerce ſur nous, autour de nous & ſous nos yeux, avant d'examiner ſes rapports avec l'Univers.

d'abord écarter l'idée des influences céleſtes.

Le moyen le plus ſûr pour conſtater l'exiſtence du fluide magnétique animal, ſeroit de rendre ſa préſence ſenſible, mais il n'a pas fallu beaucoup de temps aux Commiſſaires pour reconnoître que ce fluide échappe à tous les ſens. Il n'eſt point lumineux & viſible comme l'électricité; ſon action ne ſe manifeſte pas à la vue comme l'attraction de l'aimant; il eſt ſans goût & ſans odeur; il marche ſans bruit, & vous entoure ou vous pénètre ſans que le tact vous avertiſſe de ſa préſence. S'il exiſte en nous & autour de nous, c'eſt donc d'une manière abſolument inſenſible. Parmi ceux qui profeſſent le Magnétiſme, il en eſt qui prétendent qu'on le voit quelquefois ſortir de l'extrémité des doigts, qui lui ſervent de conducteurs, ou qui croient ſentir ſon paſſage lorſqu'on promène le doigt devant le viſage & ſur la main. Dans le premier cas, l'émanation aperçue n'eſt que celle de la tranſpiration, qui devient tout-à-fait viſible lorſqu'elle eſt groſſie au microſcope ſolaire; dans le ſecond, l'impreſſion de froid ou de frais qu'on éprouve, impreſſion d'autant plus marquée

Le fluide Magnétique échappe à tous les ſens.

C'eſt par erreur qu'on a pu croire que la vue, le tact, pouvoient avertir de ſa préſence.

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qu'on a plus chaud, réſulte du mouvement de l'air qui ſuit le doigt, & dont la température eſt toujours au-deſſous du degré de la chaleur animale. Lorſqu'au contraire on approche le doigt de la peau du viſage, plus froide que le doigt, & qu'on le laiſſe en repos, on fait éprouver un ſentiment de chaleur, qui eſt la chaleur animale communiquée.

On prétend encore que ce fluide a de l'odeur, & qu'on la ſent lorſqu'on porte ſous le nez, ou le doigt ou un fer conducteur; on dit même que ces ſenſations ſont différentes ſous les deux narines ſelon qu'on dirige le doigt ou le fer à pôle direct ou à pôle oppoſé.

Il n'eſt pas plus ſenſible à l'odorat.

M. Deſſon a fait l'expérience ſur pluſieurs Commiſſaires; les Commiſſaires l'ont répétée ſur pluſieurs ſujets; aucun n'a éprouvé cette différence de ſenſation d'une narine à l'autre: & ſi, en y faiſant attention, on a en effet reconnu quelqu'odeur, c'eſt lorſqu'on préſente le fer, celle du fer même échauffé & frotté; & lorſqu'on préſente le doigt, celle des émanations de la tranſpiration, odeur ſouvent mêlée à celle du fer dont le doigt même eſt empreint. Ces effets ont été attribués par erreur au Magnétiſme, ils appartiennent tous à des cauſes naturelles & connues.

L'exiſtence de ce fluide ne peut être conſtatée que par ſon action ſur les corps animés.

Auſſi M. Deſſon n'a jamais inſiſté ſur ces impreſſions paſſagères, il n'a pas cru devoir les produire comme des preuves; & au contraire il a expreſſément déclaré aux Commiſſaires, qu'il ne pouvoit leur démontrer l'exiſtence du Magnétiſme que par l'action de ce fluide, opérant des changemens dans les corps animés. Cette

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exiſtence devient d'autant plus difficile à conſtater par des effets qui ſoient démonſtratifs & dont la cauſe ne ſoit pas équivoque; par des faits authentiques, ſur leſquels les circonſtances morales ne puiſſent pas influer; enfin par des preuves ſuſceptibles de frapper, de convaincre l'eſprit, les ſeules qui ſoient faites pour ſatisfaire les Phyſiciens éclairés.

Par le traitement ſuivi des maladies, ou par les effets momentanés ſur l'économie animale.

L'action du Magnétiſme ſur les corps animés, peut être obſervée de deux manières différentes; ou par cette action long-temps continuée & par ſes effets curatifs dans le traitement des maladies, ou par ſes effets momentanés ſur l'économie animale & par les changemens obſervables qu'elle y produit. M. Deſſon inſiſtoit pour qu'on employât principalement & preſque excluſivement la première de ces méthodes; les Commiſſaires n'ont pas cru devoir le faire & voici leurs raiſons:

Raiſons des Commiſſaires pour exclure le traitement des maladies.

La plupart des maladies ont leur ſiége dans l'intérieur du corps. La longue expérience d'un grand nombre de ſiècles a fait connoître les ſymptômes qui les annoncent & qui les caractériſent; la même expérience a indiqué la méthode de les traiter. Quel eſt dans cette méthode le but des efforts du Médecin! ce n'eſt point de contrarier & de dompter la Nature, c'eſt de l'aider dans ſes opérations. La Nature guérit les malades, a dit le Père de la Médecine; mais quelquefois elle rencontre des obſtacles qui la gênent dans ſon cours, qui conſument inutilement ſes forces. Le Médecin eſt le Miniſtre de la Nature; Obſervateur attentif, il étudie ſa marche. Si cette marche eſt ferme, ſûre, égale & ſans écarts, le Médecin l'obſerve

L'effet du remède a toujours quelque incertitude. Raiſon. Première

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en ſilence & ſe garde de la troubler par des remèdes au moins inutiles ; ſi cette marche eſt embarraſſée, il la facilite ; ſi elle eſt trop lente ou trop rapide, il l'accélère ou la retarde. Il ſe borne quelquefois à régler le régime pour remplir ſon objet ; quelquefois il emploie des médicamens. L'action d'un médicament introduit dans le corps humain, eſt une force nouvelle, combinée avec la grande force qui fait la vie : ſi le remède ſuit les mêmes voies que cette force a déjà ouvertes, pour l'expulſion des maux, il eſt utile, il eſt ſalutaire ; s'il tend à ouvrir des routes contraires & à détourner cette action intérieure, il eſt nuiſible. Cependant il faut convenir que cet effet ſalutaire ou nuiſible, tout réel qu'il eſt, peut échapper ſouvent à l'obſervation vulgaire. L'hiſtoire phyſique de l'homme offre des phénomènes très-ſinguliers à cet égard. On voit que les régimes les plus oppoſés, n'ont pas empêché d'atteindre à une grande vieilleſſe. On voit des hommes, attaqués ce ſemble de la même maladie, guéris en ſuivant des régimes contraires, & en prenant des remèdes entièrement différens ; la Nature eſt donc alors aſſez puiſſante pour entretenir la vie malgré le mauvais régime, & pour triompher à la fois & du mal & du remède. Si elle a cette puiſſance de réſiſter aux remèdes, à plus forte raiſon a-t-elle le pouvoir d'opérer ſans eux. L'expérience de leur efficacité a donc toujours quelque incertitude ; lorſqu'il s'agit du Magnétiſme, il y a une incertitude de plus ; c'eſt celle de ſon exiſtence. Or comment s'aſſurer par le traitement des maladies, de l'action d'un agent dont l'exiſtence eſt

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conteſtée, lorſqu'on peut douter de l'effet des médicamens dont l'exiſtence n'eſt pas un problème!

La cure que l'on cite le plus en faveur du Magnétiſme, eſt celle de M. le Baron de ***; la Cour & la ville en ont été également inſtruites. On n'entrera point ici dans la diſcuſſion des faits; on n'examinera pas ſi les remèdes précédemment employés ont pu contribuer à cette cure. On admet d'une part, le plus grand danger dans l'état du malade, & de l'autre l'inefficacité de tous les moyens de la Médecine ordinaire; le Magnétiſme a été mis en uſage & M. le Baron de *** a été complètement guéri. Mais une criſe de la Nature ne pouvoit-elle pas ſeule opérer cette cure! Une femme du peuple & très-pauvre, demeurant au Gros-caillou, a été attaquée en 1779 d'une fièvre maligne très-bien caractériſée; elle a refuſé conſtamment tous les ſecours, elle a demandé ſeulement qu'on lui tînt toujours plein d'eau un vaſe qui étoit auprès d'elle: elle eſt reſtée tranquille ſur la paille qui lui ſervoit de lit, buvant de l'eau tout le jour, & ne faiſant rien autre choſe. La maladie s'eſt développée, a paſſé ſucceſſivement par ſes différens périodes, & s'eſt terminée par une guériſon complète *(c)*. Mademoiſelle G *** demeurant aux Petites-écuries du Roi, portoit au ſein droit deux glandes qui l'inquiétoient beaucoup; un

La cure des maladies ne prouve pas davantage. Seconde Raiſon.

(c) Cette obſervation détaillée a été donnée à la Faculté de Médecine de Paris, dans une Aſſemblée *de prima menſis*, par M. Bourdois de la Mothe, Médecin de charité de Saint-Sulpice, qui a exactement viſité la malade tous les jours.

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Chirurgien lui conſeilla l'uſage de l'eau du Peintre, comme un excellent fondant; lui annonçant que ſi ce remède ne réuſſiſſoit pas dans un mois, il faudroit extirper les glandes. La Demoiſelle effrayée, conſulta M. Sallin, qui jugea que les glandes étoient ſuſceptibles de réſolution; M. Bouvart conſulté enſuite, porta le même jugement. Avant de commencer les remèdes, on lui conſeilla la diſſipation; quinze jours après elle fut priſe à l'Opéra d'une toux violente & d'une expectoration ſi abondante, qu'on fut obligé de la ramener chez elle; elle cracha dans l'eſpace de quatre heures, environ trois pintes d'une lymphe glaireuſe; une heure après M. Sallin examina le ſein, il n'y trouva plus aucun veſtige de glande. M. Bouvart appelé le lendemain, conſtata l'heureux effet de cette criſe naturelle. Si mademoiſelle G *** avoit pris de l'eau du Peintre, le Peintre auroit eu l'honneur de la cure.

L'obſervation conſtante de tous les ſiècles prouve, & les Médecins reconnoiſſent que la Nature ſeule & ſans aucun traitement, guérit un grand nombre de malades. Si le Magnétiſme étoit ſans action, les malades ſoumis à ſes procédés, ſeroient comme abandonnés à la Nature. Il ſeroit abſurde de choiſir pour conſtater l'exiſtence de cet agent, un moyen qui, en lui attribuant toutes les cures de la Nature, tendroit à prouver qu'il a une action utile & curative, lors même qu'il n'en auroit aucune.

Les Commiſſaires ſont en cela de l'avis de M. Meſmer. Il rejeta la cure des maladies, lorſque ce moyen de prouver le Magnétiſme lui fut propoſé par un Membre

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de l'Académie des Sciences : *c'eſt*, dit-il, *une erreur de croire que cette eſpèce de preuve ſoit ſans replique ; rien ne prouve démonſtrativement que le Médecin ou la Médecine guériſſent les malades (d).*

Les Commiſſaires doivent ſe borner aux preuves phyſiques.

Le traitement des maladies ne peut donc fournir que des réſultats toujours incertains & ſouvent trompeurs ; cette incertitude ne ſauroit être diſſipée, & toute cauſe d'illuſion compenſée, que par une infinité de cures, & peut-être par l'expérience de pluſieurs ſiècles. L'objet & l'importance de la Commiſſion demandent des moyens plus prompts. Les Commiſſaires ont dû ſe borner aux preuves purement phyſiques, c'eſt-à-dire, aux effets momentanés du fluide ſur le corps animal, en dépouillant ces effets de toutes les illuſions qui peuvent s'y mêler, & en s'aſſurant qu'ils ne peuvent être dûs à aucune autre cauſe que le Magnétiſme animal.

Expériences des Commiſſaires ſur différens ſujets.

Ils ſe ſont propoſé de faire des expériences ſur des ſujets iſolés, qui vouluſſent bien ſe prêter aux expériences variées qu'on pourroit imaginer ; & qui les uns par leur ſimplicité, les autres par leur intelligence, fuſſent capables de rendre un compte fidèle & exact de ce qu'ils auroient éprouvé. Ces expériences ne ſeront point préſentées ici ſuivant l'ordre des temps, mais ſuivant l'ordre des faits qu'elles doivent éclaircir.

Les Commiſſaires veulent faire la première ſur eux-mêmes.

Les Commiſſaires ont d'abord réſolu de faire ſur eux-mêmes leurs premières expériences, & de ſe ſoumettre à l'action du Magnétiſme. Ils étoient très-curieux de recon-

(d) M. Meſmer, Précis hiſtorique, *pages 35, 37.*

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Précaution qu'ils ont crue néceſſaire.

noître par leurs propres ſenſations les effets annoncés de cet agent. Ils ſe ſont donc ſoumis à ces effets, & avec une réſolution telle, qu'ils n'auroient point été fâchés d'éprouver des accidens & un dérangement de ſanté, qui bien reconnu pour être un effet certain du Magnétiſme, les auroit mis à même de réſoudre ſur le champ & par leur propre témoignage cette queſtion importante. Mais en ſe ſoumettant ainſi au Magnétiſme, les Commiſſaires ont uſé d'une précaution néceſſaire. Il n'y a point d'individu, dans l'état de la meilleure ſanté, qui s'il vouloit s'écouter attentivement, ne ſentît au-dedans de lui, une infinité de mouvemens & de variations, ſoit de douleur infiniment légère, ſoit de chaleur dans différentes parties de ſon corps; ces variations qui ont lieu dans tous les temps ſont indépendantes du Magnétiſme. Il n'eſt peut-être pas indifférent de porter & de fixer ainſi ſur ſoi ſon attention. Il y a tant de rapports, quel qu'en ſoit le moyen, entre la volonté de l'ame & les mouvemens du corps, qu'on ne ſauroit dire juſqu'où peut aller l'influence de l'attention, qui ne ſemble qu'une ſuite de volontés, dirigées conſtamment & ſans interruption vers le même objet. Quand on conſidère que la volonté remue le bras comme il lui plaît, doit-on être ſûr que l'attention, arrêtée ſur quelque partie intérieure du corps, ne peut y exciter de légers mouvemens, y porter de la chaleur, & en modifier l'état actuel de manière à y produire de nouvelles ſenſations! Le premier ſoin des Commiſſaires a dû être de ne ſe pas rendre trop attentifs à ce qui ſe paſſoit en eux. Si le Magnétiſme eſt une cauſe réelle & puiſſante,

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puiſſante, elle n'a pas beſoin qu'ils y penſent pour agir & pour ſe manifeſter; elle doit pour ainſi dire forcer, fixer leur attention, & ſe faire apercevoir d'un eſprit diſtrait même à deſſein.

Mais en prenant le parti de faire des expériences ſur eux-mêmes, les Commiſſaires ont unanimement réſolu de les faire entr'eux, ſans y admettre d'autre étranger que M. Deſſon pour les magnétiſer, ou des perſonnes choiſies par eux; ils ſe ſont également promis de ne point magnétiſer au traitement public, afin de pouvoir diſcuter librement leurs obſervations, & d'être dans tous les cas les ſeuls, ou du moins les premiers juges de ce qu'ils auroient obſervé.

Expérience faite ſur eux-mêmes, une fois chaque ſemaine.

En conſéquence on leur a conſacré chez M. Deſſon, une chambre ſéparée & un baquet particulier, & les Commiſſaires ont été s'y placer une fois chaque ſemaine; ils y ſont reſtés juſqu'à deux heures & demie de ſuite, la branche de fer appuyée ſur l'hypocondre gauche, entourés de la corde de communication, & faiſant de temps en temps la chaîne des pouces. Ils ont été magnétiſés, ſoit par M. Deſſon, ſoit par un de ſes Diſciples envoyé à ſa place, les uns plus long-temps & plus ſouvent, & c'étoient les Commiſſaires qui paroiſſoient devoir être les plus ſenſibles; ils ont été magnétiſés, tantôt avec le doigt & la baguette de fer préſentés & promenés ſur différentes parties du corps, tantôt par l'application des mains & par la preſſion des doigts, ou aux hypocondres, ou ſur le creux de l'eſtomac.

Aucun d'eux n'a rien ſenti, ou du moins n'a rien

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Ils n'ont rien éprouvé.

éprouvé qui fût de nature à être attribué à l'action du Magnétiſme. Quelques-uns des Commiſſaires ſont d'une conſtitution robuſte ; quelques autres ont une conſtitution moins forte, & ſont ſujets à des incommodités : un de ceux-ci a éprouvé une légère douleur au creux de l'eſtomac, à la ſuite de la forte preſſion qu'on y avoit exercée. Cette douleur a ſubſiſté tout le jour & le lendemain, elle a été accompagnée d'un ſentiment de fatigue & de mal-aiſe. Un ſecond a reſſenti l'après-midi d'un des jours où il a été touché, un léger agacement dans les nerfs, auquel il eſt fort ſujet. Un troiſième, doué d'une plus grande ſenſibilité, & ſur-tout d'une mobilité extrême dans les nerfs, a éprouvé plus de douleur & des agacemens plus marqués ; mais ces petits accidens ſont la ſuite des variations perpétuelles & ordinaires de l'état de ſanté, & par conſéquent étrangers au Magnétiſme, ou réſultent de la preſſion exercée ſur la région de l'eſtomac. Les Commiſſaires ne font même mention de ces légers détails, que par une fidélité ſcrupuleuſe ; ils les diſent parce qu'ils ſe ſont impoſé la loi de dire toujours & ſur toute choſe la vérité.

Différence des effets au traitement public, & à leur traitement particulier.

Les Commiſſaires n'ont pu qu'être frappés de la différence du traitement public avec leur traitement particulier au baquet. Le calme & le ſilence dans l'un, le mouvement & l'agitation dans l'autre ; là, des effets multipliés, des criſes violentes, l'état habituel du corps & de l'eſprit interrompu & troublé, la Nature exaltée ; ici, le corps ſans douleur, l'eſprit ſans trouble, la Nature conſervant ſon équilibre & ſon cours ordinaire, en un mot l'abſence

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de tous les effets : on ne retrouve plus cette grande puiſſance qui étonne au traitement public ; le Magnétiſme ſans énergie paroît dépouillé de toute action ſenſible.

Les Commiſſaires n'ayant d'abord été au baquet que tous les huit jours, ont voulu éprouver ſi la continuité ne produiroit pas quelque choſe ; ils y ont été trois jours de ſuite, mais leur inſenſibilité a été la même, & ils n'ont obtenu aucun effet. Cette expérience faite & répétée à la fois ſur huit ſujets, dont pluſieurs ont des incommodités habituelles, ſuffit pour conclure que le Magnétiſme n'a que peu ou point d'action dans l'état de ſanté, & même dans cet état de légères infirmités. On a réſolu de faire des épreuves ſur des perſonnes réellement malades, & on les a choiſies dans la claſſe du peuple.

Ils vont pluſieurs jours de ſuite au traitement, & n'éprouvent rien de plus.

Sept malades ont été raſſemblés à Paſſy chez M. Franklin ; ils ont été magnétiſés devant lui & devant les autres Commiſſaires par M. Deſſon.

La veuve Saint-Amand, aſthmatique, ayant le ventre, les cuiſſes & les jambes enflées ; & la femme Anſeaume, qui avoit une groſſeur à la cuiſſe, n'ont rien ſenti ; le petit Claude Renard, enfant de ſix ans, ſcrofuleux, preſque étique, ayant le genou gonflé, la jambe fléchie & l'articulation preſque ſans mouvement, enfant intéreſſant & plus raiſonnable que ſon âge ne le comporte, n'a également rien ſenti, ainſi que Geneviève Leroux, âgée de neuf ans, attaquée de convulſions & d'une maladie aſſez ſemblable à celle que l'on nomme *chorea ſancti Viti.* François Grenet a éprouvé quelques effets ; il a les yeux malades,

Deuxième expérience : malades de la claſſe du Peuple, éprouvés.

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particulièrement le droit dont il ne voit preſque pas, & où il a une tumeur conſidérable. Quand on a magnétiſé l'œil gauche en approchant, en agitant le pouce de près & aſſez long-temps, il a éprouvé de la douleur dans le globe de l'œil, & l'œil a larmoyé. Quand on a magnétiſé l'œil droit qui eſt le plus malade, il n'y a rien ſenti; il a ſenti la même douleur à l'œil gauche, & rien partout ailleurs.

La femme Charpentier qui a été jetée à terre contre une poutre, par une vache, il y a deux ans, a éprouvé pluſieurs ſuites de cet accident; elle a perdu la vue, l'a recouvrée en partie, mais elle eſt reſtée dans un état d'infirmités habituelles; elle a déclaré avoir deux deſcentes, & le ventre d'une ſenſibilité ſi grande qu'elle ne peut ſupporter les cordons de la ceinture de ſes jupes: cette ſenſibilité appartient à des nerfs agacés & rendus très-mobiles; la plus légère preſſion faite dans la région du ventre, peut déterminer cette mobilité & produire des effets dans tout le corps par la correſpondance des nerfs.

Cette femme a été magnétiſée comme les autres, par l'application & par la preſſion des doigts; la preſſion lui a été douloureuſe: enſuite en dirigeant le doigt vers la deſcente, elle s'eſt plainte de douleur à la tête; le doigt étant placé devant le viſage, elle a dit qu'elle perdoit la reſpiration. Au mouvement réitéré du doigt de haut en bas, elle avoit des mouvemens précipités de la tête & des épaules, comme on en a d'une ſurpriſe mêlée de frayeur, & ſemblables à ceux d'une perſonne à qui

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on jetteroit quelques gouttes d'eau froide au viſage. Il a ſemblé qu'elle éprouvoit les mêmes mouvemens ayant les yeux fermés. On lui a porté les doigts ſous le nez en lui faiſant fermer les yeux, & elle a dit qu'elle ſe trouveroit mal ſi on continuoit. Le ſeptième malade, Joſeph Ennuyé, a éprouvé des effets du même genre, mais beaucoup moins marqués.

Effets partagés. Les uns ſentent quelque choſe, les autres ne ſentent rien.

Sur ces ſept malades, il y en a quatre qui n'ont rien ſenti & les trois autres ont éprouvé des effets. Ces effets méritoient de fixer l'attention des Commiſſaires & demandoient un examen ſcrupuleux.

Troiſième expérience. On éprouve des malades d'une claſſe plus diſtinguée.

Les Commiſſaires pour s'éclairer & pour fixer leurs idées à cet égard, ont pris le parti d'éprouver des malades placés dans d'autres circonſtances, des malades choiſis dans la ſociété, qui ne puſſent être ſoupçonnés d'aucun intérêt & dont l'intelligence fût capable de diſcuter leurs propres ſenſations & d'en rendre compte. Meſdames de B** & de V**, Meſſieurs M** & R*** ont été admis au baquet particulier avec les Commiſſaires; on les a priés d'obſerver ce qu'ils ſentiroient, mais ſans y porter une attention trop ſuivie. M. M** & M.^me de V** ſont les ſeuls qui aient éprouvé quelque choſe. M. M** a une tumeur froide ſur toute l'articulation du genou & il ſent de la douleur à la rotule. Il a déclaré après avoir été magnétiſé, n'avoir rien éprouvé dans tout le corps, excepté au moment qu'on a promené le doigt devant le genou malade; il a cru ſentir alors une légère chaleur à l'endroit où il a habituellement de la douleur. M.^me de V** attaquée de

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maux de nerfs, a été plusieurs fois sur le point de s'endormir pendant qu'on la magnétisoit. Magnétisée pendant une heure dix-neuf minutes sans interruption, & le plus souvent par l'application des mains, elle a éprouvé seulement de l'agitation & du mal-aise. Ces deux malades ne sont venus qu'une fois au baquet. M. R** malade d'un reste d'engorgement dans le foie, à la suite d'une forte obstruction mal guérie, y est venu trois fois, & n'a rien senti. M.^me^ de B** gravement attaquée d'obstructions, y est venue constamment avec les Commissaires, elle n'a rien senti; & il faut observer qu'elle s'est soumise au Magnétisme avec une tranquillité parfaite, qui venoit d'une grande incrédulité.

Différens malades ont été éprouvés dans d'autres occasions, mais non autour du baquet. Un des Commissaires dans un accès de migraine a été magnétisé par M. Deslon pendant une demi-heure; un des symptômes de cette migraine est un froid excessif aux pieds. M. Deslon a approché son pied de celui du malade; le pied n'a point été réchauffé, la migraine a eu sa durée ordinaire; & le malade s'étant remis auprès du feu en a obtenu les effets salutaires que la chaleur lui a constamment procurés, sans avoir éprouvé ni pendant le jour ni la nuit suivante aucun effet du Magnétisme.

M. Franklin, quoique ses incommodités l'aient empêché de se transporter à Paris, & d'assister aux expériences qui y ont été faites, a été lui-même magnétisé par M. Deslon qui s'est rendu chez lui à Passy. L'assemblée étoit nombreuse; tous ceux qui étoient présens ont été

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magnétiſés. Quelques malades qui avoient accompagné M. Deſlon, ont reſſenti les effets du Magnétiſme, comme ils ont coutume de les reſſentir au traitement public; mais M.me de B**, M. Franklin, ſes deux Parentes, ſon Secrétaire, un Officier Américain, n'ont rien éprouvé, quoiqu'une des parentes de M. Franklin fut convaleſcente, & l'Officier Américain alors malade d'une fièvre réglée.

Ces différentes expériences fourniſſent des faits propres à être rapprochés & comparés, & dont les Commiſſaires ont pu tirer des concluſions. Sur quatorze malades, il y en a cinq qui ont paru éprouver des effets, & neuf qui n'en ont éprouvé aucun. Celui des Commiſſaires qui avoit la migraine & les pieds glacés, n'a point éprouvé de ſoulagement du Magnétiſme, & ſes pieds n'ont point été réchauffés. Cet agent n'a donc point la propriété qu'on lui attribue, de communiquer de la chaleur aux pieds. On annonce encore le Magnétiſme, comme propre à faire connoître l'eſpèce & ſurtout le ſiége du mal, par la douleur que l'action de ce fluide y porte immanquablement. Cet avantage ſeroit précieux; le fluide indicateur du mal, ſeroit un grand moyen dans les mains du Médecin, ſouvent trompé par des ſymptômes équivoques; mais François Grenet, n'a éprouvé quelque ſenſation & quelque douleur qu'à l'œil le moins malade. Si l'autre œil n'avoit pas été rouge & tuméfié, on auroit pu le croire intact en jugeant d'après l'effet du Magnétiſme. M. R** & M.ns de B**, tous les deux attaqués d'obſtructions, & M.me de B**

Comparaiſon des réſultats de ces trois expériences.

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très-gravement, n'ayant rien ſenti, n'auroient été avertis ni du ſiége, ni de l'eſpèce de leur mal. Les obſtructions ſont cependant des maladies que l'on annonce comme plus particulièrement ſoumiſes à l'action du Magnétiſme; puiſque ſuivant la nouvelle théorie, la circulation libre & rapide de ce fluide par les nerfs, eſt un moyen de débarraſſer les canaux & de détruire les obſtacles, c'eſt-à-dire, les engorgemens qu'il y rencontre. On dit en même temps que le Magnétiſme eſt la pierre de touche de la ſanté : ſi M. R** & M.^me^ de B** n'avoient pas éprouvé les dérangemens & les ſouffrances inſéparables des obſtructions, ils auroient été fondés à ſe croire dans la meilleure ſanté du monde. On en doit dire autant de l'Officier Américain : le Magnétiſme annoncé comme indicateur des maux, a donc abſolument manqué ſon effet.

La chaleur que M. M** a ſentie à la rotule, eſt un effet trop léger & trop fugitif pour en rien conclure. On peut ſoupçonner qu'il vient de la cauſe développée ci-deſſus, c'eſt-à-dire, de trop d'attention à s'obſerver : la même attention retrouveroit des ſenſations ſemblables dans tout autre moment où le Magnétiſme ne ſeroit pas employé. L'aſſoupiſſement éprouvé par M.^me^ de V**, vient ſans doute de la conſtance & de l'ennui de la même ſituation; ſi elle a eu quelque mouvement vaporeux, on ſait que le propre des affections de nerfs, eſt de tenir beaucoup à l'attention qu'on y fait; il ſuffit d'y penſer ou d'en entendre parler pour les faire renaître. On peut juger de ce qui doit arriver à une femme,

dont

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dont les nerfs ſont très-mobiles, & qui magnétiſée durant une heure dix-neuf minutes, n'a pendant ce temps d'autre penſée que celle des maux qui lui ſont habituels. Elle auroit pu avoir une criſe nerveuſe plus conſidérable, ſans qu'on dût en être ſurpris.

Quelques malades du peuple ſont les ſeuls qui aient éprouvé des effets.

Il ne reſte donc que les effets produits ſur la femme Charpentier, ſur François Grenet & ſur Joſeph Ennuyé, qui puiſſent paroître appartenir au Magnétiſme. Mais alors en comparant ces trois faits particuliers à tous les autres, les Commiſſaires ont été étonnés que ces trois malades de la claſſe du peuple, ſoient les ſeuls qui aient ſenti quelque choſe, tandis que ceux qui ſont dans une claſſe plus élevée, doués de plus de lumières, plus capables de rendre compte de leurs ſenſations n'ont rien éprouvé. Sans doute François Grenet a éprouvé de la douleur à l'œil & un larmoiement, parce qu'on a approché le pouce très-près de ſon œil; la femme Charpentier s'eſt plainte qu'en touchant à l'eſtomac la preſſion répondoit à ſa deſcente; & cette preſſion peut avoir produit une partie des effets que la femme a éprouvés; mais les Commiſſaires ont ſoupçonné que ces effets avoient été augmentés par des circonſtances morales.

Raiſons de douter que ces effets appartiennent au Magnétiſme.

Repréſentons-nous la poſition d'une perſonne du peuple, par conſéquent ignorante, attaquée d'une maladie & deſirant de guérir, amenée avec appareil devant une grande aſſemblée compoſée en partie de Médecins, où on lui adminiſtre un traitement tout-à-fait nouveau pour elle, & dont elle ſe perſuade d'avance qu'elle va éprouver des prodiges. Ajoutons que ſa complaiſance eſt payée, &

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qu'elle croit nous ſatisfaire davantage en diſant qu'elle éprouve des effets, & nous aurons des cauſes naturelles pour expliquer ces effets; nous aurons du moins des raiſons légitimes de douter que leur vraie cauſe ſoit le Magnétiſme.

Les enfans qui ne ſont pas ſuſceptibles de prévention, ne ſentent rien.

D'ailleurs on peut demander pourquoi le Magnétiſme a eu ces effets ſur des gens qui ſavoient ce qu'on leur faiſoit, qui pouvoient croire avoir intérêt à dire ce qu'ils ont dit, tandis qu'il n'a eu aucune priſe ſur le petit Claude Renard, ſur cette organiſation délicate de l'enfance, ſi mobile & ſi ſenſible! la raiſon & l'ingénuité de cet enfant aſſurent la vérité de ſon témoignage. Pourquoi cet agent n'a-t-il rien produit ſur Geneviève Leroux, qui étoit dans un état perpétuel de convulſions! Elle a certainement des nerfs mobiles, comment le Magnétiſme ne s'eſt-il pas manifeſté, ſoit en augmentant, ſoit en diminuant ſes convulſions! Son indifférence & ſon impaſſibilité portent à croire qu'elle n'a rien ſenti, parce que l'abſence de ſa raiſon ne lui a pas permis de juger qu'elle dût ſentir quelque choſe.

On ſoupçonne que l'imagination a part aux effets produits.

Ces faits ont permis aux Commiſſaires d'obſerver que le Magnétiſme a ſemblé être nul pour ceux des malades qui s'y ſont ſoumis avec quelque incrédulité; que les Commiſſaires, même ceux qui ont des nerfs plus mobiles ayant détourné exprès leur attention, s'étant armés du doute philoſophique qui doit accompagner tout examen, n'ont point éprouvé les impreſſions qu'ont reſſenties les trois malades de la claſſe du peuple, & ils ont dû ſoupçonner que ces impreſſions, en les ſuppoſant toutes

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réelles, étoient la ſuite d'une perſuaſion anticipée, & pouvoient être un effet de l'imagination. Il en a réſulté un autre plan d'expériences. Leurs recherches vont être déſormais dirigées vers un nouvel objet; il s'agit de détruire ou de confirmer ce ſoupçon, de déterminer juſqu'à quel point l'imagination peut influer ſur nos ſenſations, & de conſtater ſi elle peut être la cauſe en tout ou en partie des effets attribués au Magnétiſme.

On ſe propoſe de faire des expériences, pour détruire ou pour confirmer ce ſoupçon.

Alors les Commiſſaires ont entendu parler des Expériences qui ont été faites chez M. le Doyen de la Faculté, par M. Jumelin, Docteur en Médecine; ils ont deſiré de voir ces expériences, & ils ſe ſont raſſemblés avec lui chez l'un d'eux, M. Majault. M. Jumelin leur a déclaré qu'il n'étoit diſciple ni de M. Meſmer, ni de M. Deſſon, il n'a rien appris d'eux ſur le Magnétiſme animal; & ſur ce qu'il en a entendu dire, il a conçu des principes & s'eſt fait des procédés. Ses principes conſiſtent à regarder le fluide magnétique animal comme un fluide qui circule dans les corps, & qui en émane, mais qui eſt eſſentiellement le même que celui qui fait la chaleur; fluide qui comme tous les autres, tendant à l'équilibre, paſſe du corps qui en a le plus dans celui qui en a le moins. Ses procédés ſont également différens de ceux de M.rs Meſmer & Deſſon; il magnétiſe comme eux avec le doigt & la baguette de fer conducteurs, & par l'application des mains, mais ſans aucune diſtinction de pôles.

Méthode de M. Jumelin, pour magnétiſer, différente de celle de M.rs Meſmer & Deſſon.

Huit hommes & deux femmes, ont d'abord été

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Quatrième expérience : elle prouve que par cette méthode on produit les mêmes effets.

magnétiſés & n'ont rien ſenti; enfin une femme qui eſt Portière de M. Alphonſe le Roy, Docteur en Médecine, ayant été magnétiſée au front, mais ſans la toucher, a dit qu'elle ſentoit de la chaleur. M. Jumelin promenant ſa main, & préſentant les cinq extrémités de ſes doigts ſur tout le viſage de la femme, elle a dit qu'elle ſentoit comme une flamme qui ſe promenoit : magnétiſée à l'eſtomac, elle a dit y ſentir de la chaleur ; magnétiſée ſur le dos, elle a dit y ſentir la même chaleur: elle a déclaré de plus, qu'elle avoit chaud dans tout le corps & mal à la tête.

Les Commiſſaires voyant que ſur onze perſonnes ſoumiſes à l'expérience, une ſeule avoit été ſenſible au Magnétiſme de M. Jumelin, ont penſé que celle-ci n'avoit éprouvé quelque choſe que parce qu'elle avoit ſans doute l'imagination plus facile à ébranler; l'occaſion étoit favorable pour s'en éclaircir. La ſenſibilité de cette femme étant bien prouvée, il ne s'agiſſoit que de la mettre à l'abri de ſon imagination, ou du moins de mettre ſon imagination en défaut. Les Commiſſaires ont propoſé de lui bander les yeux, afin d'obſerver quelles ſeroient ſes ſenſations, lorſqu'on opéreroit à ſon inſu. On lui a bandé les yeux & on l'a magnétiſée; alors les phénomènes n'ont plus répondu aux endroits où on a dirigé le Magnétiſme. Magnétiſée ſucceſſivement ſur l'eſtomac & dans le dos, la femme n'a ſenti que de la chaleur à la tête, de la douleur dans l'œil droit, dans l'œil & dans l'oreille gauches.

On lui a débandé les yeux, & M. Jumelin lui ayant

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appliqué ſes mains ſur les hypocondres, elle a dit y ſentir de la chaleur; puis au bout de quelques minutes, elle a dit qu'elle alloit ſe trouver mal, & elle s'eſt trouvée mal en effet. Lorſqu'elle a été bien revenue à elle, on l'a repriſe, on lui a bandé les yeux, on a écarté M. Jumelin, recommandé le ſilence, & on a fait accroire à la femme qu'elle étoit magnétiſée. Les effets ont été les mêmes quoiqu'on n'agît ſur elle ni de près, ni de loin; elle a éprouvé la même chaleur, la même douleur dans les yeux & dans les oreilles; elle a ſenti de plus de la chaleur dans le dos & dans les reins.

Au bout d'un quart d'heure, on a fait ſigne à M. Jumelin de la magnétiſer à l'eſtomac, elle n'y a rien ſenti, au dos de même. Les ſenſations ont diminué au lieu d'augmenter. Les douleurs de la tête ſont reſtées, la chaleur du dos & des reins a ceſſé.

On conclut que la méthode eſt indifférente, que la diſtinction des pôles eſt chimérique.

On voit qu'il y a eu ici des effets produits, & ces effets ſont ſemblables à ceux qu'ont éprouvés les trois malades dont il a été queſtion ci-deſſus. Mais les uns & les autres ont été obtenus par des procédés différens; il s'enſuit que les procédés n'y ſont rien. La méthode de M.r Meſmer & Deſlon, & une méthode oppoſée donnent également les mêmes phénomènes. La diſtinction des pôles eſt donc chimérique.

Effets marqués de l'imagination.

On peut obſerver que quand la femme y voyoit, elle plaçoit ſes ſenſations préciſément à l'endroit magnétiſé; au lieu que quand elle n'y voyoit pas, elle les plaçoit au haſard, & dans des parties très-éloignées des endroits où on dirigeoit le Magnétiſme. Il a été naturel de conclure

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que l'imagination déterminoit ces ſenſations vraies ou fauſſes. On en a été convaincu quand on a vu qu'étant bien repoſée, ne ſentant plus rien, & ayant les yeux bandés, cette femme éprouvoit tous les mêmes effets, quoiqu'on ne la magnétiſât pas; mais la démonſtration a été complète, lorſqu'après une ſéance d'un quart-d'heure, ſon imagination s'étant ſans doute laſſée & refroidie, les effets au lieu d'augmenter ont diminué au moment où la femme a été réellement magnétiſée.

Si elle s'eſt trouvée mal, cet accident arrive quelquefois aux femmes, lorſqu'elles ſont ſerrées & gênées dans leurs vêtemens. L'application des mains aux hypocondres a pu produire le même effet ſur une femme exceſſivement ſenſible; mais on n'a pas même beſoin de cette cauſe pour expliquer le fait. Il faiſoit alors très-chaud, la femme avoit éprouvé ſans doute de l'émotion dans les premiers momens, elle a fait effort pour ſe ſoumettre à un traitement nouveau, inconnu, & après un effort trop long-temps ſoutenu, il n'eſt pas extraordinaire de tomber en foibleſſe.

Cet évanouiſſement a donc une cauſe naturelle & connue, mais les ſenſations qu'elle a éprouvées lorſqu'on ne la magnétiſoit pas, ne peuvent être que l'effet de l'imagination. Par des expériences ſemblables que M. Jumelin a faites au même lieu, le lendemain, en préſence des Commiſſaires, ſur un homme les yeux bandés, & ſur une femme les yeux découverts, on a eu les mêmes réſultats; on a reconnu que leurs réponſes étoient évidemment déterminées par les queſtions qu'on leur

Cinquième expérience, qui donne les mêmes réſultats, & montre également l'effet de l'imagination.

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faiſoit. La queſtion indiquoit où devoit être la ſenſation; au lieu de diriger ſur eux le Magnétiſme, on ne faiſoit que monter & diriger leur imagination. Un enfant de cinq ans, magnétiſé enſuite, n'a ſenti que la chaleur qu'il avoit précédemment contractée en jouant.

Ces expériences ont paru aſſez importantes aux Commiſſaires, pour leur faire deſirer de les répéter, afin d'obtenir de nouvelles lumières, & M. Jumelin a eu la complaiſance de s'y prêter. Il ſeroit inutile d'objecter que la méthode de M. Jumelin eſt mauvaiſe; car on ne ſe propoſoit pas dans ce moment d'éprouver le Magnétiſme, mais l'imagination.

Les Commiſſaires ſont convenus de bander les yeux des ſujets éprouvés, de ne point les magnétiſer le plus ſouvent, & de faire les queſtions avec aſſez d'adreſſe pour leur indiquer les réponſes. Cette marche ne devoit pas les induire en erreur, elle ne trompoit que leur imagination. En effet, lorſqu'ils ne ſont point magnétiſés, leur ſeule réponſe doit être qu'ils ne ſentent rien; & lorſqu'ils le ſont, c'eſt l'impreſſion ſentie qui doit dicter leur réponſe, & non la manière dont ils ſont interrogés.

Sixième expérience, qui confirme & qui donne encore les mêmes réſultats.

En conſéquence les Commiſſaires s'étant tranſportés chez M. Jumelin, on a commencé par éprouver ſon domeſtique. On lui a appliqué ſur les yeux un bandeau, préparé exprès, & qui a ſervi dans toutes les expériences ſuivantes. Ce bandeau étoit compoſé de deux calottes de gomme élaſtique, dont la concavité étoit remplie par de l'édredon; le tout enfermé & couſu dans deux morceaux d'étoffe taillés en rond. Ces deux pièces étoient attachées

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l'une à l'autre; elles avoient des cordons qui ſe lioient par-derrière. Placées ſur les yeux, elles laiſſoient dans leur intervalle la place du nez & toute liberté pour la reſpiration ſans qu'on pût rien voir, même la lumière du jour, ni au travers, ni au-deſſus, ni au-deſſous du bandeau. Ces précautions priſes pour la commodité des ſujets éprouvés & pour la certitude des réſultats, on a perſuadé au Domeſtique de M. Jumelin qu'il étoit magnétiſé. Alors il a ſenti une chaleur preſque générale, des mouvemens dans le ventre, la tête s'eſt appeſantie; peu-à-peu il s'eſt aſſoupi, & a paru ſur le point de s'endormir. Ce qui prouve, comme on l'a dit plus haut, que cet effet tient à la ſituation, à l'ennui, & non au magnétiſme.

Magnétiſé enſuite les yeux découverts, en lui préſentant la baguette de fer au front, il y ſent des picotemens: les yeux rebandés, quand on la lui préſente, il ne la ſent point; & quand on ne la lui préſente pas, interrogé s'il ne ſent rien au front, il déclare qu'il ſent quelque choſe aller & revenir dans la largeur du front.

M. B**, homme inſtruit, & particulièrement en Médecine, les yeux bandés, offre le même ſpectacle; éprouvant des effets lorſqu'on n'agit pas, n'éprouvant ſouvent rien lorſqu'on agit. Ces effets ont même été tels qu'avant d'avoir été magnétiſé en aucune manière, mais croyant l'être depuis dix minutes, il ſentoit dans les lombes une chaleur qu'il comparoit à celle d'un poêle. Il eſt évident que M. B** avoit une ſenſation forte, puiſque pour en donner l'idée il a eu beſoin de recourir à une pareille comparaiſon;

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comparaiſon ; & cette ſenſation il ne la devoit qu'à l'imagination, qui ſeule agiſſoit ſur lui.

Les Commiſſaires, ſur-tout les Médecins, ont fait une infinité d'expériences ſur différens ſujets qu'ils ont eux-mêmes magnétiſés, ou à qui ils ont fait croire qu'ils étoient magnétiſés. Ils ont indifféremment magnétiſé, ou à pôles oppoſés, ou à pôles directs & à contre-ſens, & dans tous les cas, ils ont obtenu les mêmes effets ; il n'y a eu dans toutes ces épreuves, d'autre différence que celle des imaginations plus ou moins ſenſibles *(e)*. Ils ſe ſont donc convaincus par les faits, que l'imagination

Il eſt évident que ces effets appartiennent à l'imagination.

(e) M. Sigault, Docteur en Médecine de la Faculté de Paris, connu pour avoir imaginé l'opération de la ſymphyſe, a fait pluſieurs expériences qui prouvent que le magnétiſme n'eſt que l'effet de l'imagination. Voici le détail qu'il en a donné dans une lettre datée du 30 Juillet, & adreſſée à l'un des Commiſſaires.

« Ayant laiſſé croire dans une grande maiſon, au Marais, que j'étois adepte de M. Meſmer, j'ai produit ſur une Dame, différens « effets. Le ton, l'air ſérieux que j'affectai, joint à des geſtes, lui « firent une très-grande impreſſion qu'elle voulut d'abord me « diſſimuler ; mais ayant porté ma main ſur la région du cœur, j'ai « ſenti qu'il palpitoit. Son état d'oppreſſion déſignoit d'ailleurs un « reſſerrement dans la poitrine. A ces ſymptômes, s'en joignirent « bientôt d'autres ; la face devint convulſive, les yeux ſe troublèrent ; « elle tomba enfin évanouie, vomit enſuite ſon dîner, eut pluſieurs « garde-robes, & s'eſt trouvée dans un état de foibleſſe & d'affaiſſe- « ment incroyable. J'ai répété le même manège ſur pluſieurs « perſonnes, avec plus ou moins de ſuccès, ſelon leur degré de « croyance & de ſenſibilité ».

« Un Artiſte célèbre, qui donne des leçons de deſſin aux Enfans d'un de nos Princes, ſe plaignoit depuis quelques jours d'une « grande migraine ; il m'en fit part ſur le Pont-royal ; lui ayant «

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ſeule peut produire différentes ſenſations & faire éprouver de la douleur, de la chaleur, même une chaleur conſidérable dans toutes les parties du corps, & ils ont

» perſuadé que j'étois initié dans les myſtères de M. Meſmer; » preſque auſſi-tôt, au moyen de quelques geſtes, j'enlevai ſa douleur à ſon grand étonnement ».

« J'ai produit les mêmes effets ſur un garçon Chapelier attaqué » auſſi d'une migraine; mais celui-ci n'éprouvant rien à mes premiers » geſtes, je lui portai ma main ſur les fauſſes côtes, en lui diſant » de me regarder. Dès-lors il éprouva un ſerrement de poitrine, » des palpitations, des baillemens, & un très-grand mal-aiſe. Il ne » douta plus dès ce moment, du pouvoir que j'avois ſur lui. En » effet, ayant porté mon doigt ſur la partie affectée, je l'interrogeai » ſur ce qu'il éprouvoit. Il me répondit que ſa douleur deſcendoit. » Je lui aſſurai que j'allois la diriger vers le bras & la faire ſortir » par le pouce, que je lui ſerrai vivement. Il me crut ſur ma parole, » & fut ſoulagé pendant deux heures. A cette époque, il m'arrêta » dans la rue, pour me dire que ſa douleur étoit revenue. Cet effet » eſt, ce me ſemble, le même que celui que produit le Dentiſte » ſur le moral de ceux qui vont chez lui pour ſe faire tirer une » dent ».

« Dernièrement encore, étant au parloir dans un Couvent, rue » du Colombier, F. S. G. une jeune Dame me dit: vous allez donc » chez M. Meſmer! Oui, lui dis-je; & à travers la grille je puis » vous magnétiſer. En même temps je lui préſentai le doigt; elle » s'effraya, ſe trouva ſaiſie, & me pria en grâce de ceſſer. Elle étoit » tellement émue, que ſi j'euſſe inſiſté davantage, elle ſeroit tombée » infailliblement en convulſions ».

M. Sigault a raconté qu'il avoit éprouvé lui-même le pouvoir de l'imagination. Un jour qu'il étoit queſtion de le magnétiſer pour le convaincre, il ſentit, au moment qu'on ſe détermina à le toucher, un reſſerrement de poitrine & des palpitations. Mais s'étant bientôt raſſuré, on employa vainement tous les geſtes & tous les procédés du magnétiſme, qui ne firent aucune impreſſion ſur lui.

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conclu qu'elle entre néceſſairement pour beaucoup dans les effets attribués au Magnétiſme animal. Mais il faut convenir que la pratique du Magnétiſme produit dans le corps animé, des changemens plus marqués & des dérangemens plus conſidérables que ceux qui viennent d'être rapportés. Aucun des ſujets qui ont cru être magnétiſés juſqu'ici, n'ont été ébranlés juſqu'à avoir des convulſions; c'étoit donc un nouvel objet d'expérience, que d'éprouver ſi en remuant ſeulement l'imagination, on pourroit produire des criſes ſemblables à celles qui ont lieu au traitement public.

On ſe propoſe d'éprouver ſi l'imagination dans ſes effets, peut aller juſqu'à produire des criſes.

Alors pluſieurs expériences ont été déterminées par cette vue. Lorſqu'un arbre a été touché ſuivant les principes & la méthode du Magnétiſme, toute perſonne qui s'y arrête doit éprouver plus ou moins les effets de cet agent; il en eſt même qui y perdent connoiſſance ou qui y éprouvent des convulſions. On en parla à M. Deſſon, qui répondit que l'expérience devoit réuſſir pourvu que le ſujet fût fort ſenſible, & on convint avec lui de la faire à Paſſy en préſence de M. Franklin. La néceſſité que le ſujet fût ſenſible, fit penſer aux Commiſſaires que pour rendre l'expérience déciſive & ſans replique, il falloit qu'elle fût faite ſur une perſonne choiſie par M. Deſſon, & dont il auroit éprouvé d'avance la ſenſibilité au Magnétiſme. M. Deſſon a donc amené avec lui un jeune homme d'environ douze ans; on a marqué dans le verger du jardin, un abricotier bien iſolé, & propre à conſerver le Magnétiſme qu'on lui auroit imprimé. On y a mené M. Deſſon ſeul, pour qu'il le magnétiſât, le

Septième expérience ſur un arbre magnétiſé.

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jeune homme étant reſté dans la maiſon & avec une perſonne qui ne l'a pas quitté. On auroit deſiré que M. Deſſon ne fût pas préſent à l'expérience, mais il a déclaré qu'elle pourroit manquer s'il ne dirigeoit pas ſa canne & ſes regards ſur cet arbre pour en augmenter l'action. On a pris le parti d'éloigner M. Deſſon le plus poſſible & de placer des Commiſſaires entre lui & le jeune homme, afin de s'aſſurer qu'il ne feroit point de ſignal, & de pouvoir répondre qu'il n'y avoit point eu d'intelligence. Ces précautions, dans une expérience qui doit être authentique, ſont indiſpenſables ſans être offenſantes.

On a enſuite amené le jeune homme, les yeux bandés, & on l'a préſenté ſucceſſivement à quatre arbres, qui n'étoient point magnétiſés en les lui faiſant embraſſer, chacun pendant deux minutes, ſuivant ce qui avoit été réglé par M. Deſſon lui-même.

M. Deſſon préſent & à une aſſez grande diſtance, dirigeoit ſa canne ſur l'arbre réellement magnétiſé.

Au premier arbre, le jeune homme interrogé au bout d'une minute, a déclaré qu'il ſuoit à groſſes gouttes; il a touſſé, craché, & il a dit ſentir une petite douleur ſur la tête; la diſtance à l'arbre magnétiſé étoit environ de vingt-ſept pieds.

Au ſecond arbre, il ſe ſent étourdi, même douleur ſur la tête; la diſtance étoit de trente-ſix pieds.

Au troiſième arbre, l'étourdiſſement redouble ainſi que le mal de tête; il dit qu'il croit approcher de l'arbre magnétiſé; il en étoit alors environ à trente-huit pieds.

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Enfin au quatrième arbre non magnétiſé, & à vingt-quatre pieds environ de diſtance de l'arbre qui l'avoit été, le jeune homme eſt tombé en criſe; il a perdu connoiſſance, ſes membres ſe ſont roidis, & on l'a porté ſur un gazon voiſin, où M. Deſlon lui a donné des ſecours & l'a fait revenir.

Le malade tombe en criſe ſous un arbre qui n'eſt pas magnétiſé.

Le réſultat de cette expérience eſt entièrement contraire au Magnétiſme. M. Deſlon a voulu expliquer le fait, en diſant que tous les arbres ſont magnétiſés par eux-mêmes, & que leur Magnétiſme étoit d'ailleurs renforcé par ſa préſence. Mais alors une perſonne ſenſible au Magnétiſme, ne pourroit haſarder d'aller dans un jardin ſans riſquer d'avoir des convulſions; cette aſſertion ſeroit démentie par l'expérience de tous les jours. La préſence de M. Deſlon n'a rien fait de plus que ce qu'elle a fait dans le carroſſe où le jeune homme eſt venu avec lui, placé vis-à-vis de lui, & où il n'a rien éprouvé. Si le jeune homme n'eût rien ſenti, même ſous l'arbre magnétiſé, on auroit pu dire qu'il n'étoit pas aſſez ſenſible, du moins ce jour-là: mais le jeune homme eſt tombé en criſe ſous un arbre qui n'étoit pas magnétiſé; c'eſt par conſéquent un effet qui n'a point de cauſe phyſique, de cauſe extérieure, & qui n'en peut avoir d'autre que l'imagination. L'expérience eſt donc tout-à-fait concluante: le jeune homme ſavoit qu'on le menoit à l'arbre magnétiſé, ſon imagination s'eſt frappée, ſucceſſivement exaltée, & au quatrième arbre elle a été montée au degré néceſſaire pour produire la criſe.

L'imagination a donc produit cette criſe.

D'autres expériences viennent à l'appui de celle-ci, &

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fourniſſent le même réſultat. Un jour que les Commiſſaires ſe ſont tous réunis à Paſſy chez M. Franklin, & avec M. Deſſon, ils avoient prié ce dernier d'amener avec lui des malades, & de choiſir dans le traitement des pauvres, ceux qui ſeroient le plus ſenſibles au Magnétiſme. M. Deſſon a amené deux femmes; & tandis qu'il étoit occupé à magnétiſer M. Franklin & pluſieurs perſonnes dans un autre appartement, on a ſéparé ces deux femmes, & on les a placées dans deux pièces différentes.

Huitième expérience qui donne le même réſultat. Une femme qui croit être magnétiſée, tombe en criſe.

L'une la femme P**, a des taies ſur les yeux; mais comme elle voit toujours un peu, on lui a cependant couvert les yeux du bandeau décrit ci-deſſus. On lui a perſuadé qu'on avoit amené M. Deſſon pour la magnétiſer: le ſilence étoit recommandé, trois Commiſſaires étoient préſens, l'un pour interroger, l'autre pour écrire, le troiſième pour repréſenter M. Deſſon. On a eu l'air d'adreſſer la parole à M. Deſſon, en le priant de commencer, mais on n'a point magnétiſé la femme; les trois Commiſſaires ſont reſtés tranquilles, occupés ſeulement à obſerver ce qui alloit ſe paſſer. Au bout de trois minutes la malade a commencé à ſentir un friſſon nerveux; puis ſucceſſivement elle a ſenti une douleur derrière la tête, dans les bras, un fourmillement dans les mains, c'eſt ſon expreſſion; elle ſe roidiſſoit, frappoit dans ſes mains, ſe levoit de ſon ſiége, frappoit des pieds: la criſe a été bien caractériſée. Deux autres Commiſſaires placés dans la pièce à côté, la porte fermée, ont entendu les battemens de pieds & de mains, & ſans rien voir ont été les témoins de cette ſcène bruyante.

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Neuvième expérience qui donne le même réſultat. Une femme qui croit être magnétiſée à travers une porte, tombe en criſe.

Ces deux Commiſſaires étoient avec l'autre malade, la D.lle B**, attaquée de maux de nerfs. On lui a laiſſé la vue libre & les yeux découverts; on l'a aſſiſe devant une porte fermée, en lui perſuadant que M. Deſlon étoit de l'autre côté, occupé à la magnétiſer. Il y avoit à peine une minute qu'elle étoit aſſiſe devant cette porte, quand elle a commencé à ſentir du friſſon; après une autre minute, elle a eu un claquement de dents, & cependant une chaleur générale; enfin après une troiſième minute, elle eſt tombée tout-à-fait en criſe. La reſpiration étoit précipitée, elle étendoit les deux bras derrière le dos, en les tordant fortement, & en penchant le corps en devant: il y a eu tremblement général de tout le corps; le claquement de dents eſt devenu ſi bruyant, qu'il pouvoit être entendu de dehors; elle s'eſt mordu la main & aſſez fort, pour que les dents ſoient reſté marquées.

Il eſt bon d'obſerver qu'on n'a touché en aucune manière ces deux malades; on ne leur a pas même tâté le pouls, afin qu'on ne pût pas dire qu'on leur avoit communiqué le Magnétiſme, & cependant les criſes ont été complètes. Les Commiſſaires qui ont voulu connoître l'effet du travail de l'imagination, & apprécier la part qu'elle pouvoit avoir aux criſes du Magnétiſme, ont obtenu tout ce qu'ils deſiroient. Il eſt impoſſible de voir l'effet de ce travail, plus à découvert & d'une manière plus évidente, que dans ces deux expériences. Si les malades ont déclaré que leurs criſes ſont plus fortes au traitement, c'eſt que l'ébranlement des nerfs ſe

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communique, & qu'en général toute émotion propre & individuelle, eſt augmentée par le ſpectacle d'émotions ſemblables.

On a eu occaſion d'éprouver une ſeconde fois la femme P**, & de reconnoître combien elle étoit dominée par ſon imagination. On vouloit faire l'expérience de la taſſe magnétiſée: cette expérience conſiſte à choiſir dans un nombre de taſſes, une taſſe que l'on magnétiſe. On les préſente ſucceſſivement à un malade ſenſible au Magnétiſme; il doit tomber en criſe, ou du moins éprouver des effets ſenſibles lorſqu'on lui préſente la taſſe magnétiſée, il doit être indifférent à toutes celles qui ne le ſont pas. Il faut ſeulement, comme l'a recommandé M. Deſlon, les lui préſenter à pôle direct, afin que celui qui tient la taſſe ne magnétiſe pas le malade, & qu'on ne puiſſe avoir d'autre effet que celui du Magnétiſme de la taſſe.

La femme P** a été mandée à l'Arſenal chez M. Lavoiſier où étoit M. Deſlon; elle a commencé par tomber en criſe dans l'antichambre, avant d'avoir vu ni les Commiſſaires ni M. Deſlon; mais elle ſavoit qu'elle devoit le voir, & c'eſt un effet bien marqué de l'imagination.

Dixième expérience de la taſſe magnétiſée: même réſultat.

Lorſque la criſe a été calmée, on a amené la femme dans le lieu de l'expérience. On lui a préſenté pluſieurs taſſes de porcelaine qui n'étoient point magnétiſées; la ſeconde taſſe a commencé à l'émouvoir, & à la quatrième elle eſt tombée tout-à-fait en criſe. On peut répondre que ſon état actuel étoit un état de criſe, qui avoit commencé dès l'antichambre & qui ſe renouveloit de lui-même;

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lui-même; mais ce qui eſt déciſif, c'eſt qu'ayant demandé à boire, on lui en a donné dans la taſſe magnétiſée par M. Deſlon lui-même; elle a bu tranquillement & a dit qu'elle étoit bien ſoulagée. La taſſe & le Magnétiſme ont donc manqué leur effet, puiſque la criſe a été calmée au lieu d'être augmentée.

Onzième expérience avec cette taſſe; même réſultat.

Quelque temps après, pendant que M. Majault examinoit les taies qu'elle a ſur les yeux, on lui a préſenté derrière la tête la taſſe magnétiſée, & cela pendant douze minutes; elle ne s'en eſt point aperçue & n'a éprouvé aucun effet, elle n'a même dans aucun moment été plus tranquille, parce que ſon imagination étoit diſtraite, & occupée de l'examen qu'on faiſoit de ſes yeux.

Effet marqué de l'imagination & de la prévention.

On a raconté aux Commiſſaires que cette femme étant ſeule dans l'antichambre, différentes perſonnes étrangères au Magnétiſme s'étoient approchées d'elle, & que les mouvemens convulſifs avoient recommencé. On lui a fait obſerver qu'on ne la magnétiſoit pas; mais ſon imagination étoit tellement frappée, qu'elle a répondu: ſi vous ne me faiſiez rien je ne ſerois pas dans l'état où je ſuis. Elle ſavoit qu'elle étoit venue pour être ſoumiſe à des expériences; l'approche de quelqu'un, le moindre bruit attiroit ſon attention, réveilloit l'idée du Magnétiſme, & renouveloit les convulſions.

L'imagination pour agir puiſſamment a ſouvent beſoin que l'on touche pluſieurs cordes à la fois. L'imagination répond à tous les ſens; ſa réaction doit être proportionnée & au nombre de ſens qui l'ébranlent, & à celui des ſenſations reçues: c'eſt ce que les Commiſſaires ont

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reconnu par une expérience dont ils vont rendre compte.

Douzième expérience; cet effet va juſqu'à faire perdre la parole.

M. Jumelin leur avoit parlé d'une demoiſelle, âgée de 20 ans, à qui il a fait perdre la parole par le pouvoir du Magnétiſme; les Commiſſaires ont répété cette expérience chez lui, la demoiſelle a conſenti à s'y prêter & à ſe laiſſer bander les yeux.

On a d'abord tâché d'obtenir le même effet ſans la magnétiſer; mais quoiqu'elle ait ſenti ou cru ſentir des effets du Magnétiſme, on n'a pu parvenir à frapper aſſez ſon imagination pour que l'expérience réuſsît. Quand on l'a magnétiſée réellement, en lui laiſſant les yeux bandés, on n'a pas eu plus de ſuccès. On lui a débandé les yeux; alors l'imagination a été ébranlée à la fois par la vue & par l'ouïe, les effets ont été plus marqués; mais quoique la tête commençât à s'appeſantir, quoiqu'elle ſentît de l'embarras à la racine du nez, & une grande partie des ſymptômes qu'elle avoit éprouvés la première fois, cependant la parole ne ſe perdoit pas. Elle a obſervé elle-même qu'il falloit que la main qui la magnétiſoit au front, deſcendît vis-à-vis du nez, ſe ſouvenant que la main étoit ainſi placée lorſqu'elle a perdu la voix. On a fait ce qu'elle demandoit, & en trois quarts de minute, elle eſt devenue muette; on n'entendoit plus que quelques ſons inarticulés & ſourds, malgré les efforts viſibles du goſier pour pouſſer le ſon, & ceux de la langue & des lèvres pour l'articuler. Cet état a duré ſeulement une minute: on voit que ſe trouvant préciſément dans les mêmes circonſtances, la ſéduction de l'eſprit & ſon effet ſur les organes de la

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voix ont été les mêmes. Mais ce n'étoit pas aſſez que la parole l'avertît qu'elle étoit magnétiſée, il a fallu que la vue lui portât un témoignage plus fort & plus capable d'ébranler, il a fallu encore qu'un geſte déjà connu, réveillât ſes idées. Il ſemble que cette Expérience montre merveilleuſement comment l'imagination agit, ſe monte par degrés & a beſoin de plus de ſecours extérieurs pour être plus efficacement ébranlée.

Le regard ſert à frapper l'imagination.

Ce pouvoir de la vue ſur l'imagination explique les effets que la doctrine du Magnétiſme attribue au regard. Le regard a éminemment la puiſſance de magnétiſer; les ſignes, les geſtes employés ne ſont communément rien, a-t-on dit aux Commiſſaires, que ſur un ſujet dont on s'eſt précédemment emparé, en lui jetant un regard. La raiſon en eſt ſimple; c'eſt dans les yeux, où ſont dépoſés les traits les plus expreſſifs des paſſions, c'eſt-là que ſe déploie tout ce que le caractère a de plus impoſant & de plus ſéducteur. Les yeux doivent donc avoir un grand pouvoir ſur nous; mais ils n'ont ce pouvoir que parce qu'ils ébranlent l'imagination, & d'une manière ou plus ou moins exagérée ſuivant la force de cette imagination. C'eſt donc au regard à commencer tout l'ouvrage du Magnétiſme; & l'effet en eſt ſi puiſſant, il a des traces ſi profondes, qu'une femme nouvellement arrivée chez M. Deſlon, ayant rencontré en ſortant de criſe, les regards d'un de ſes Diſciples qui la magnétiſoit, le fixa pendant trois quarts d'heure. Elle a été long-temps pourſuivie par ce regard; elle voyoit toujours devant elle ce même œil attaché à la regarder; & elle

Treizième expérience, qui prouve cet effet du regard.

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l'a porté conſtamment dans ſon imagination pendant trois jours, dans le ſommeil comme dans la veille. On voit tout ce que peut produire une imagination capable de conſerver ſi long-temps la même impreſſion, c'eſt-à-dire, de renouveler elle-même & par ſa propre puiſſance, la même ſenſation pendant trois jours.

Ces expériences ſont uniformes & déciſives; elles prouvent que l'imagination ſuffit pour produire les effets attribués au Magnétiſme.

Les expériences qu'on vient de rapporter ſont uniformes & ſont également déciſives; elles autoriſent à conclure que l'imagination eſt la véritable cauſe des effets attribués au Magnétiſme. Mais les Partiſans de ce nouvel agent, répondront peut-être que l'identité des effets ne prouve pas toujours l'identité des cauſes. Ils accorderont que l'imagination peut exciter ces impreſſions ſans Magnétiſme; mais ils ſoutiendront que le Magnétiſme peut auſſi les exciter ſans elle. Les Commiſſaires détruiroient facilement cette aſſertion par le raiſonnement & par les principes de la Phyſique: le premier de tous eſt de ne point admettre de nouvelles cauſes, ſans une néceſſité abſolue. Lorſque les effets obſervés peuvent avoir été produits par une cauſe exiſtante, & que d'autres phénomènes ont déjà manifeſtée, la ſaine phyſique enſeigne que les effets obſervés doivent lui être attribués; & lorſqu'on annonce avoir découvert une cauſe juſqu'alors inconnue, la ſaine phyſique exige également qu'elle ſoit établie, démontrée par des effets qui n'appartiennent à aucune cauſe connue, & qui ne puiſſent être expliqués que par la cauſe nouvelle. Ce ſeroit donc aux Partiſans du Magnétiſme à préſenter d'autres preuves, & à chercher des effets qui fuſſent entièrement dépouillés des

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illuſions de l'imagination. Mais comme les faits ſont plus démonſtratifs que le raiſonnement, & ont une évidence qui frappe davantage, les Commiſſaires ont voulu éprouver par l'expérience, ce que feroit le Magnétiſme lorſque l'imagination n'agiroit pas.

Quatorzième expérience, qui prouve que le Magnétiſme ne produit rien ſans l'imagination.

On a diſpoſé dans un appartement deux pièces contiguës, & unies par une porte de communication. On avoit enlevé la porte & on lui avoit ſubſtitué un chaſſis, couvert & tendu d'un double papier. Dans l'une de ces pièces étoit un des Commiſſaires pour écrire tout ce qui ſe paſſeroit, & une Dame annoncée pour être de Province, & pour avoir du linge à faire travailler. On avoit mandé la D.lle B**, Ouvrière en linge, déjà employée dans les expériences de Paſſy, & dont on connoiſſoit la ſenſibilité au Magnétiſme. Lorſqu'elle eſt arrivée tout étoit arrangé de manière qu'il n'y avoit qu'un ſeul ſiége où elle pût s'aſſeoir, & ce ſiége étoit placé dans l'embraſure de la porte de communication où elle s'eſt trouvée comme dans une niche.

Les Commiſſaires étoient dans l'autre pièce, & l'un d'eux, Médecin, exercé à magnétiſer, & ayant déjà produit des effets, a été chargé de magnétiſer la D.lle B** à travers le chaſſis de papier. C'eſt un principe de la théorie du Magnétiſme, que cet agent paſſe à travers les portes de bois, les murs, &c. Un chaſſis de papier ne pouvoit lui faire obſtacle; d'ailleurs M. Deſlon a établi poſitivement que le Magnétiſme paſſe à travers le papier; & la D.lle B** étoit magnétiſée comme ſi elle eût été à découvert & en ſa préſence.

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Elle l'a été en effet, pendant une demi-heure, à un pied & demi de diſtance à pôles oppoſés, en ſuivant toutes les règles enſeignées par M. Deſſon, & que les Commiſſaires ont vu pratiquer chez lui. Pendant tout ce temps, la D.lle B** a fait gaiement la converſation; interrogée ſur ſa ſanté elle a répondu librement qu'elle ſe portoit fort bien: à Paſſy elle eſt tombée en criſe au bout de trois minutes; ici elle a ſupporté le Magnétiſme ſans aucun effet pendant trente minutes. C'eſt qu'ici elle ignoroit être magnétiſée, & qu'à Paſſy elle croyoit l'être. On voit donc que l'imagination ſeule produit tous les effets attribués au Magnétiſme; & lorſque l'imagination n'agit pas, il n'y a plus d'effets.

Quinzième expérience, qui prouve que l'imagination agit pour produire des criſes.

On ne peut faire qu'une objection à cette Expérience; c'eſt que la D.lle B** pouvoit être mal diſpoſée, & ſe trouver moins ſenſible dans ce moment au Magnétiſme. Les Commiſſaires ont prévu l'objection & ont fait en conſéquence l'Expérience ſuivante. Auſſi-tôt qu'on a ceſſé de magnétiſer á travers le papier, le même Médecin-commiſſaire a paſſé dans l'autre pièce; il lui a été facile d'engager la D.lle B** à ſe laiſſer magnétiſer. Alors il a commencé à la magnétiſer, en obſervant comme dans l'Expérience précédente, de ſe tenir à un pied & demi de diſtance, de n'employer que des geſtes, & les mouvemens du doigt index & de la baguette de fer, car s'il eût appliqué les mains & touché les hypocondres, on auroit pu dire que le Magnétiſme avoit agi par cette application plus immédiate. La ſeule différence qu'il y a eu entre ces deux Expériences, c'eſt que dans

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la première, il a magnétiſé à pôles oppoſés en ſuivant les règles, au lieu que dans la ſeconde, il a magnétiſé à pôles directs & à contre-ſens. En agiſſant ainſi, on ne devoit produire aucun effet, ſuivant la théorie du Magnétiſme.

Cependant après trois minutes, la D.lle B** a ſenti un mal-aiſe, de l'étouffement; il eſt ſurvenu ſucceſſivement un hoquet entre-coupé, un claquement de dents, un ſerrement à la gorge, un grand mal de tête; elle s'eſt agitée avec inquiétude ſur ſa chaiſe; elle s'eſt plainte des reins; elle frappoit quelquefois preſtement de ſon pied ſur le parquet; puis elle étendoit ſes bras derrière le dos, en les tordant fortement comme à Paſſy; en un mot la criſe convulſive a été complète & parfaitement caractériſée. Elle a eu tous ces accidens en douze minutes, tandis que le même traitement employé pendant trente minutes l'a trouvée inſenſible. Il n'y a de plus ici que l'imagination, c'eſt donc à elle que ces effets appartiennent.

Si l'imagination a fait commencer la criſe, c'eſt encore l'imagination qui l'a fait ceſſer. Le Commiſſaire qui la magnétiſoit a dit qu'il étoit temps de finir; il lui a préſenté ſes deux doigts index en croix; & il eſt bon d'obſerver que par-là il la magnétiſoit à pôles directs comme il avoit fait juſqu'alors; il n'y avoit donc rien de changé, le même traitement devoit continuer les mêmes impreſſions. Mais l'intention a ſuffi pour calmer la criſe; la chaleur & le mal de tête ſe ſont diſſipés. On a toujours pourſuivi le mal de place en place, en

Seizième expérience, qui prouve que l'imagination agit également pour faire ceſſer les criſes.

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annonçant qu'il alloit diſparoître. C'eſt ainſi qu'à la voix qui commandoit à l'imagination, la douleur du cou a ceſſé, puis ſucceſſivement les accidens à la poitrine, à l'eſtomac & aux bras. Il n'a fallu que trois minutes; après leſquelles la D.^lle B** a déclaré ne plus rien ſentir & être abſolument dans ſon état naturel.

L'imagination fait tout, le Magnétiſme eſt nul....

Ces dernières expériences ainſi que pluſieurs de celles qui ont été faites chez M. Jumelin, ont le double avantage de démontrer à la fois, & la puiſſance de l'imagination & la nullité du Magnétiſme dans les effets produits.

Concours de pluſieurs cauſes pour augmenter les criſes au traitement public.

Si les effets ſont encore plus marqués, ſi les criſes ſemblent plus violentes au traitement public, c'eſt que pluſieurs cauſes ſe joignent à l'imagination pour opérer avec elle, pour multiplier & pour agrandir ſes effets. On commence par le regard à s'emparer des eſprits; l'attouchement, l'application des mains ſuit bientôt; & il convient d'en développer ici les effets phyſiques.

Effets de l'attouchem.^t & de la preſſion.

Ces effets ſont plus ou moins conſidérables: les moindres ſont des hoquets, des ſoulèvemens d'eſtomac, des purgations; les plus conſidérables ſont les convulſions que l'on nomme *criſes*. L'endroit où l'attouchement ſe porte eſt aux hypocondres, au creux de l'eſtomac, & quelquefois ſur les ovaires, quand ce ſont des femmes que l'on touche. Les mains, les doigts preſſent, & compriment plus ou moins ces différentes régions.

Sur le colon.

Le colon, un de nos gros inteſtins, parcourt les deux régions des hypocondres & la région épigaſtrique qui les ſépare. Il eſt placé immédiatement ſous les tégumens. C'eſt donc ſur cet inteſtin que l'attouchement ſe porte, ſur

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ſur cet inteſtin ſenſible & très-irritable. Le mouvement ſeul, le mouvement répété ſans autre agent, excite l'action muſculaire de l'inteſtin & procure quelquefois des évacuations. La Nature ſemble indiquer comme par inſtinct cette manœuvre aux hypocondriaques. La pratique du Magnétiſme n'eſt que cette manœuvre même; & les purgations qu'elle peut produire ſont encore facilitées dans le traitement magnétique, par l'uſage fréquent & preſque habituel d'un vrai purgatif, la crême de tartre en boiſſon.

Mais lorſque le mouvement excite principalement l'irritabilité du colon, cet inteſtin offre d'autres phénomènes. Il ſe gonfle plus ou moins, & prend quelquefois un volume conſidérable. Alors il communique au diaphragme une telle irritation, que cet organe entre plus ou moins en convulſion, & c'eſt ce qu'on appelle *criſe* dans le traitement du Magnétiſme animal. Un des Commiſſaires a vu une femme ſujette à une eſpèce de vomiſſement ſpaſmodique, répété pluſieurs fois chaque jour. Les efforts ne produiſoient qu'une eau trouble & viſqueuſe, ſemblable à celle que jettent les malades en criſe dans la pratique du Magnétiſme. La convulſion avoit ſon ſiége dans le diaphragme; & la région du colon étoit ſi ſenſible, que le plus léger attouchement ſur cette partie, une forte commotion de l'air, la ſurpriſe cauſée par un bruit imprévu, ſuffiſoient pour exciter la convulſion. Cette femme avoit donc des criſes ſans Magnétiſme par la ſeule irritabilité du colon & du diaphragme, & les femmes qui ſont magnétiſées ont leurs criſes par la même cauſe & par cette irritabilité.

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Sur l'eſtomac. L'application des mains ſur l'eſtomac a des effets phyſiques également remarquables. L'application ſe fait directement ſur cet organe. On y opère tantôt une compreſſion forte & continue, tantôt des compreſſions légères & réitérées, quelquefois un frémiſſement par un mouvement de rotation de la baguette de fer, appliquée ſur cette partie; enfin en y paſſant ſucceſſivement & rapidement les pouces l'un après l'autre. Ces manœuvres portent promptement à l'eſtomac un agacement plus ou moins fort & plus ou moins durable, ſelon que le ſujet eſt plus ou moins ſenſible & irritable. On prépare, on diſpoſe l'eſtomac à cet agacement en le comprimant préalablement. Cette compreſſion le met dans le cas d'agir ſur le diaphragme, & de lui communiquer les impreſſions qu'il reçoit. Il ne peut s'irriter que le diaphragme ne s'irrite, & de-là réſultent comme par l'action du colon, les accidens nerveux dont on vient de parler.

Chez les femmes ſenſibles ſi l'on vient à comprimer ſimplement les deux hypocondres ſans aucun autre mouvement, l'eſtomac ſe trouve ſerré, & ces femmes tombent en foibleſſe. C'eſt ce qui eſt arrivé à la femme magnétiſée par M. Jumelin; & ce qui arrive ſouvent ſans autre cauſe lorſque les femmes ſont trop ſerrées dans leurs vêtemens. Il n'y a point de criſe alors, parce que l'eſtomac eſt comprimé ſans être agacé, & que le diaphragme reſte dans ſon état naturel. Ces mêmes manœuvres pratiquées chez les femmes ſur les ovaires, outre les effets qui leur ſont particuliers, produiſent bien plus puiſſamment encore les mêmes accidens. On

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connoît l'influence & l'empire de l'utérus ſur l'économie animale.

Centre nerveux qui établit une correſpondance générale.

Le rapport intime de l'inteſtin colon, de l'eſtomac & de l'utérus avec le diaphragme eſt une des cauſes des effets attribués au Magnétiſme. Les régions du bas-ventre, ſoumiſes aux différens attouchemens, répondent à différens plexus qui y conſtituent un véritable centre nerveux, au moyen duquel, abſtraction faite de tout ſyſtème, il exiſte très-certainement une ſimpathie, une communication, une correſpondance entre toutes les parties du corps, une action & une réaction telles que les ſenſations excitées dans ce centre, ébranlent les autres parties du corps; & que réciproquement une ſenſation éprouvée dans une partie ébranle & met en jeu le centre nerveux, qui ſouvent tranſmet cette impreſſion à toutes les autres parties.

Effets de l'imagination ſur ce centre nerveux.

Ceci explique non-ſeulement les effets de l'attouchement magnétique, mais encore les effets phyſiques de l'imagination. On a toujours obſervé que les affections de l'ame portent leur première impreſſion ſur ce centre nerveux, ce qui fait dire communément qu'on a un poids ſur l'eſtomac & qu'on ſe ſent ſuffoqué. Le diaphragme entre en jeu, d'où les ſoupirs, les pleurs, les ris. On éprouve alors une réaction ſur les viſcères du bas-ventre; & c'eſt ainſi que l'on peut rendre raiſon des déſordres phyſiques produits par l'imagination. Le ſaiſiſſement occaſionne la colique, la frayeur cauſe la diarrhée, le chagrin donne la jauniſſe. L'hiſtoire de la Médecine renferme une infinité d'exemples du pouvoir

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de l'imagination & des affections de l'ame. La crainte du feu, un desir violent, une espérance ferme & soutenue, un accès de colère rendent l'usage des jambes à un goutteux perclus, à un paralitique ; une joie vive & inopinée dissipe une fièvre quarte de deux mois ; une forte attention arrête le hoquet ; des muets par accident, recouvrent la parole à la suite d'une vive émotion de l'ame. L'histoire montre que cette émotion suffit pour faire recouvrer la parole, & les Commissaires ont vu que l'imagination frappée avoit suffi pour en suspendre l'usage. L'action & la réaction du physique sur le moral, & du moral sur le physique sont démontrées depuis que l'on observe en Médecine, c'est-à-dire, depuis son origine.

Les crises naissent & de l'attouchement & de l'imagination.

Les pleurs, les ris, la toux, les hoquets, & en général tous les effets observés dans ce qu'on appelle les crises du traitement public, naissent donc, ou de ce que les fonctions du diaphragme sont troublées par un moyen physique, tel que l'attouchement & la pression, ou de la puissance dont l'imagination est douée pour agir sur cet organe & pour troubler ses fonctions.

L'imagination déploie ses effets plus en grand dans les traitemens publics, parce que les impressions & les mouvemens se communiquent.

Si l'on objectoit que l'attouchement n'est pas toujours nécessaire à ces effets, on répondroit que l'imagination peut avoir assez de ressources pour produire tout par elle-même ; sur-tout l'imagination agissant dans un traitement public, doublement excitée alors par son propre mouvement & par celui des imaginations qui l'environnent. On a vu ce qu'elle produit dans les Expériences faites par les Commissaires sur des sujets isolés ; on peut juger de ses effets multipliés sur des malades réunis dans

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le traitement public. Ces malades y ſont raſſemblés dans un lieu ſerré, relativement à leur nombre: l'air y eſt chaud, quoiqu'on ait ſoin de le renouveler; & il eſt toujours plus ou moins chargé de gas méphitique dont l'action ſe porte particulièrement à la tête & ſur le genre nerveux. S'il y a de la muſique, c'eſt un moyen de plus pour agir ſur les nerfs & pour les émouvoir.

Effets de l'imagination & de l'imitation dans les aſſemblées nombreuſes.

Pluſieurs femmes ſont magnétiſées à la fois & n'éprouvent d'abord que des effets ſemblables à ceux que les Commiſſaires ont obtenus dans pluſieurs de leurs Expériences. Ils ont reconnu que même au traitement, ce n'eſt le plus ſouvent qu'au bout de deux heures que les criſes commencent. Peu à peu les impreſſions ſe communiquent & ſe renforcent, comme on le remarque aux repréſentations théâtrales, où les impreſſions ſont plus grandes lorſqu'il y a beaucoup de ſpectateurs, & ſur-tout dans les lieux où l'on a la liberté d'applaudir. Ce ſigne des émotions particulières établit une émotion générale que chacun partage au degré dont il eſt ſuſceptible. C'eſt ce qu'on obſerve encore dans les armées un jour de bataille, où l'enthouſiaſme du courage comme les terreurs paniques ſe propagent avec tant de rapidité. Le ſon du tambour & de la muſique militaire, le bruit du canon, la mouſqueterie, les cris, le déſordre ébranlent les organes, donnent aux eſprits le même mouvement, & montent les imaginations au même degré. Dans cette unité d'ivreſſe une impreſſion manifeſtée, devient univerſelle; elle encourage à charger, ou elle détermine à fuir. La même cauſe fait naître les révoltes; l'imagination gouverne la multitude: les hommes réunis en

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nombre, ſont plus ſoumis à leurs ſens, la raiſon a moins d'empire ſur eux; & lorſque le fanatiſme préſide à ces aſſemblées, il produit les Trembleurs des Cévennes *(e)*.

(e) M. le Maréchal de Villars, qui termina les troubles des Cevennes, dit: « j'ai vu dans ce genre, des choſes que je n'aurois » pas crues, ſi elles ne s'étoient point paſſées ſous mes yeux; une » Ville entière, dont toutes les femmes & les filles, ſans exception, » paroiſſoient poſſédées du Diable. Elles trembloient & prophéti- » ſoient publiquement dans les rues... Une eut la hardieſſe de trembler, » & de prophétiſer pendant une heure devant moi. Mais, de toutes » ces folies, la plus ſurprenante fut celle que me raconta M. » l'Evêque d'Alais, & que je mandai à M. de Chamillard, en ces » termes.

« Un Monſieur de Mandagors, Seigneur de la terre de ce nom, » Maire d'Alais, poſſédant les premières charges dans la Ville & » dans le Comté, ayant d'ailleurs été quelque temps Subdélégué » de M. de Bâville, vient de faire une choſe extraordinaire. C'eſt » un homme de ſoixante ans, ſage par ſes mœurs, de beaucoup » d'eſprit, ayant compoſé & fait imprimer pluſieurs Ouvrages. » J'en ai lû quelques-uns, mais dans leſquels, avant que de ſavoir » ce que je viens d'apprendre de lui, j'ai trouvé une imagination » bien vive.

» Une Prophéteſſe, âgée de 27 à 28 ans, fut arrêtée, il y a » environ dix-huit mois, & menée devant M. d'Alais. Il l'interrogea » en préſence de pluſieurs Eccléſiaſtiques. Cette créature, après » l'avoir écouté, lui répond d'un air modeſte, & l'exhorte à ne plus » tourmenter les vrais Enfans de Dieu, & puis lui parle pendant une » heure de ſuite une langue étrangère à laquelle il ne comprit pas » un mot; comme nous avons vu le Duc de la Ferté autrefois, » quand il avoit un peu bu, parler Anglois devant des Anglois. J'en » ai vu dire, j'entends bien qu'il parle Anglois, mais je ne com- » prends pas un mot de ce qu'il dit. Cela eût été difficile auſſi à » comprendre, car jamais il n'avoit ſu un mot d'Anglois. Cette fille » parloit Grec, Hébreu de même.

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Ç'eſt pour arrêter ce mouvement ſi facilement communiqué aux eſprits que dans les villes ſéditieuſes on défend

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Vous croyez bien que M. d'Alais fit enfermer la Prophéteſſe. « Après pluſieurs mois, cette fille paroiſſant revenue de ſes égare- « mens par les ſoins & avis du ſieur de Mandagors, qui la fréquentoit, « on la laiſſa en liberté; & de cette liberté, & de celle que le ſieur « Mandagors prenoit avec elle, il en eſt arrivé que cette Prophéteſſe « eſt groſſe. «

Mais le fait préſent eſt que le ſieur de Mandagors s'eſt défait de « toutes ſes charges, les a remiſes à ſon fils, & a dit à quelques « Particuliers & à M. l'Évêque lui-même, que c'étoit par le com- « mandement de Dieu qu'il avoit connu cette Prophéteſſe, & que « l'enfant qui en naîtra ſera le vrai Sauveur du Monde. De tout « cela & en un autre Pays que celui-ci, l'on ne feroit autre choſe « que d'envoyer M. le Maire & la Prophéteſſe aux petites Maiſons. « M. l'Évêque m'a propoſé de le faire arrêter. J'ai voulu auparavant « en conférer avec M. de Bâville; ordonnant cependant de l'obſerver « & la Prophéteſſe auſſi, de manière qu'ils ne puiſſent s'échapper: « ma penſée étant qu'au milieu des fous, ce qui regarde un fou de « cette importance, doit faire le moins de bruit qu'il eſt poſſible; « qu'il falloit par conſéquent tâcher de le dépaïſer tout doucement, « & s'en aſſurer enſuite. Car vous jugez bien que de déclarer publi- « quement pour Prophète, un Maire d'Alais, un Seigneur de terres « aſſez conſidérables, ancien Subdélégué de l'Intendant, Auteur « & juſqu'alors réputé ſage, au milieu de gens qui ſont accoutumés « à l'eſtimer & à le reſpecter, tout cela pourroit en pervertir plus « qu'en corriger. D'autant plus que hors la folie de croire que Dieu « lui a ordonné de connoître cette fille, il eſt très-ſage dans ſes « diſcours, comme étoit Don Guichotte très-ſage, hors quand il « étoit queſtion de Chevalerie. L'avis de M. de Bâville fut comme « le mien, de ne pas bruſquer. Ses enfans le menèrent ſans éclat « dans un de ſes Châteaux, où on le retint, & la Prophéteſſe fut « renfermée ». *Vie du Maréchal Duc de Villars. Page 325 & « ſuiv.*

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les attroupemens. Par-tout l'exemple agit ſur le moral, l'imitation machinale met en jeu le phyſique : en iſolant les individus, on calme les eſprits; en les ſéparant, on fait ceſſer également les convulſions, toujours contagieuſes de leur nature : on en a un exemple récent dans les jeunes filles de Saint-Roch, qui ſéparées ont été guéries des convulſions qu'elles avoient étant réunies *(f)*.

On retrouve donc le Magnétiſme, ou plutôt l'imagination agiſſant au ſpectacle, à l'armée, dans les aſſemblées nombreuſes comme au baquet, agiſſant par des moyens différens, mais produiſant des effets ſemblables. Le baquet eſt entouré d'une foule de malades; les ſenſations ſont continuellement communiquées & rendues;

(f) Le jour de la Cérémonie de la première communion, faite en la Paroiſſe Saint-Roch, il y a quelques années (1780), après l'Office du ſoir, on fit, ainſi qu'il eſt d'uſage, la Proceſſion en dehors. A peine les enfans furent-ils rentrés à l'égliſe, & rendus à leurs places, qu'une jeune fille se trouve mal, & eut des convulſions. Cette affection ſe propagea avec une telle rapidité, que dans l'eſpace d'une demi-heure, 50 ou 60 jeunes filles, de 12 à 19 ans, tombèrent dans les mêmes convulſions; c'eſt-à-dire, ſerrement à la gorge, gonflement à l'eſtomac, l'étouffement, le hoquet & les convulſions plus ou moins fortes. Ces accidens reparurent à quelques-unes dans le courant de la ſemaine; mais le Dimanche ſuivant, étant aſſemblées chez les Dames de Sainte-Anne, dont l'inſtitution eſt d'enſeigner les jeunes filles, douze retombèrent dans les mêmes convulſions, & il en ſeroit tombé davantage, ſi on n'eût eu la précaution de renvoyer ſur le champ, chaque enfant chez ſes parens. On fut obligé de multiplier les écoles. En ſéparant ainſi les enfans, & ne les tenant aſſemblés qu'en petit nombre, trois ſemaines ſuffirent pour diſſiper entièrement cette affection convulſive épidémique. *Voyez* pour des exemples ſemblables, le Naturaliſme des convulſions, par M. Hecquet.

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les nerfs à la longue doivent ſe fatiguer de cet exercice, ils s'irritent & la femme la plus ſenſible donne le ſignal. Alors les cordes par-tout tendues au même degré & à l'uniſſon, ſe répondent, & les criſes ſe multiplient; elles ſe renforcent mutuellement, elles deviennent violentes. En même temps les hommes témoins de ces émotions, les partagent, à proportion de leur ſenſibilité nerveuſe; & ceux chez qui cette ſenſibilité eſt plus grande & plus mobile, tombent eux-mêmes en criſe.

Cette grande mobilité en partie naturelle & en partie acquiſe, tant chez les hommes que chez les femmes, devient habitude. Ces ſenſations une ou pluſieurs fois éprouvées, il ne s'agit plus que d'en rappeler le ſouvenir, de monter l'imagination au même degré pour opérer les mêmes effets. C'eſt ce qu'il eſt toujours facile de faire en plaçant le ſujet dans les mêmes circonſtances. Alors il n'eſt plus beſoin du traitement public, on n'a qu'à toucher les hypocondres, promener le doigt & la baguette de fer devant le viſage; ces ſignes ſont connus. Il n'eſt pas même néceſſaire qu'ils ſoient employés, il ſuffit que les malades, les yeux bandés, croient que ces ſignes ſont répétés ſur eux, ſe perſuadent qu'on les magnétiſe; les idées ſe réveillent, les ſenſations ſe reproduiſent, l'imagination employant ſes moyens accoutumés, & reprenant les mêmes voies, fait reparoître les mêmes phénomènes. C'eſt ce qui arrive à des malades de M. Deſlon, qui tombent en criſe ſans baquet, & ſans être excités par le ſpectacle du traitement public.

Attouchement, imagination, imitation, telles ſont

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Attouchem.', imagination, imitation, ſont les vraies cauſes des effets attribués au Magnétiſme.

donc les vraies cauſes des effets attribués à cet agent nouveau, connu ſous le nom de *Magnétiſme animal*, à ce fluide que l'on dit circuler dans le corps & ſe communiquer d'individu à individu; tel eſt le réſultat des expériences des Commiſſaires, & des obſervations qu'ils ont faites ſur les moyens employés, & ſur les effets produits. Cet agent, ce fluide n'exiſte pas, mais tout chimérique qu'il eſt, l'idée n'en eſt pas nouvelle. Quelques auteurs, quelques Médecins du ſiècle dernier en ont expreſſément traité dans pluſieurs Ouvrages. Les recherches curieuſes & intéreſſantes de M. Thouret, prouvent au Public que la théorie, les procédés, les effets du Magnétiſme animal, propoſés dans le ſiècle dernier, étoient à peu-près ſemblables à ceux qu'on renouvelle dans celui-ci. Le Magnétiſme n'eſt donc qu'une vieille erreur. Cette théorie eſt, préſentée aujourd'hui avec un appareil plus impoſant, néceſſaire dans un ſiècle plus éclairé; mais elle n'en eſt pas moins fauſſe. L'homme ſaiſit, quitte, reprend l'erreur qui le flatte. Il eſt des erreurs qui ſeront éternellement chères à l'humanité. Combien l'Aſtrologie n'a-t-elle pas reparu de fois ſur la terre! Le Magnétiſme tendroit à nous y ramener. On a voulu le lier aux influences céleſtes, pour qu'il ſéduiſît davantage & qu'il attirât les hommes par les deux eſpérances qui les touchent le plus, celle de ſavoir leur avenir, & celle de prolonger leurs jours.

L'imagination ſemble la plus puiſſante; l'attouchem.'

Il y a lieu de croire que l'imagination eſt la principale des trois cauſes que l'on vient d'aſſigner au Magnétiſme. On a vu par les expériences citées qu'elle ſuffit ſeule

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pour produire des criſes. La preſſion, l'attouchement, ſemblent donc lui ſervir de préparations; c'eſt par l'attouchement que les nerfs commencent à s'ébranler, l'imitation communique & répand les impreſſions. Mais l'imagination eſt cette puiſſance active & terrible qui opère les grands effets que l'on obſerve avec étonnement dans le traitement public. Ces effets frappent les yeux de tout le monde, tandis que la cauſe eſt obſcure & cachée. Quand on conſidère que ces effets ont ſéduit dans les ſiècles derniers des hommes eſtimables par leur mérite, par leurs connoiſſances, & même par leur génie, tels que Paracelſe, Vanhelmont, Kirker, &c. on ne doit pas s'étonner ſi aujourd'hui des perſonnes inſtruites, éclairées, ſi même un grand nombre de Médecins y ont été trompés. Les Commiſſaires admis ſeulement au traitement public où l'on n'a ni le temps ni la facilité de faire des expériences déciſives, auroient pu eux-mêmes être induits en erreur. Il faut avoir eu la liberté d'iſoler les effets pour en diſtinguer les cauſes; il faut avoir vû comme eux l'imagination agir, en quelque ſorte partiellement, produire ſes effets ſéparés & en détail, pour concevoir l'accumulation de ces effets, pour ſavoir ſe faire une idée de ſa puiſſance entière & ſe rendre compte de ſes prodiges. Mais cet examen demande un ſacrifice de temps, & un nombre de recherches ſuivies qu'on n'a pas toujours le loiſir d'entreprendre pour ſon inſtruction ou ſa curioſité particulière, qu'on n'a pas même le droit de ſuivre, à moins d'être comme les Commiſſaires chargés des ordres du Roi, & honorés de la confiance publique.

ſert à l'ébranler, & l'imitation répand ſes impreſſions.

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M. Deſlon ne s'éloigne pas de ces principes, & il croit utile d'employer le pouvoir de l'imagination dans la pratique de la Médecine.

M. Deſlon ne s'éloigne pas de ces principes. Il a déclaré dans le comité tenu chez M. Franklin le 19 juin, qu'il croyoit pouvoir poſer en fait que l'imagination avoit la plus grande part dans les effets du Magnétiſme animal; il a dit que cet agent nouveau n'étoit peut-être que l'imagination elle-même, dont le pouvoir eſt auſſi puiſſant qu'il eſt peu connu: il aſſure avoir conſtamment reconnu ce pouvoir dans le traitement de ſes malades, & il aſſure également que pluſieurs ont été ou guéris ou infiniment ſoulagés. Il a obſervé aux Commiſſaires que l'imagination ainſi dirigée au ſoulagement de l'humanité ſouffrante, feroit un grand bien dans la pratique de la Médecine *(f)*; & perſuadé de cette vérité du pouvoir de l'imagination, il les a invités à en étudier chez lui la marche & les effets. Si M. Deſlon eſt encore attaché à la première idée que ces effets ſont dûs à l'action d'un fluide, qui ſe communique d'individu à individu par l'attouchement ou par la direction d'un conducteur, il ne tardera pas à reconnoître avec les Commiſſaires qu'il ne faut qu'une cauſe pour un effet, & que puiſque l'imagination ſuffit, le fluide eſt inutile. Sans doute nous ſommes entourés d'un fluide qui nous appartient, la tranſpiration inſenſible forme autour de nous une atmo-

(f) M. Deſlon avoit déjà dit en 1780. « Si M. Meſmer n'avoit » d'autre ſecret que celui de faire agir l'imagination efficacement pour » la ſanté, n'en auroit-il pas toujours un bien merveilleux! Car ſi la » Médecine d'imagination étoit la meilleure, pourquoi ne ferions-nous pas la Médecine d'imagination! » *Obſervation ſur le Magnétiſme animal, pages 46 & 47.*

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ſphère de vapeurs également inſenſibles; mais ce fluide n'agit que comme les atmoſphères, ne peut ſe communiquer qu'infiniment peu par l'attouchement, ne ſe dirige ni par des conducteurs, ni par le regard, ni par l'intention, n'eſt point propagé par le ſon, ni réfléchi par les glaces, & n'eſt ſuſceptible dans aucun cas des effets qu'on lui attribue.

L'imagination eſt preſque toujours nuiſible quand elle produit des effets violens & des convulſions.

Il reſte à examiner ſi les criſes ou les convulſions produites par les procédés de ce prétendu Magnétiſme, dans les aſſemblées autour du baquet, peuvent être utiles, & guérir ou ſoulager les malades. Sans doute l'imagination des malades influe ſouvent beaucoup dans la cure de leurs maladies. L'effet n'en eſt connu que par une expérience générale & n'a point été déterminé par des expériences poſitives; mais il ne ſemble pas qu'on en puiſſe douter. C'eſt un adage connu que la foi ſauve en Médecine; cette foi eſt le produit de l'imagination: alors l'imagination n'agit que par des moyens doux; c'eſt en répandant le calme dans tous les ſens, en rétabliſſant l'ordre dans les fonctions, en ranimant tout par l'eſpérance. L'eſpérance eſt la vie de l'homme; qui peut lui rendre l'une contribue à lui rendre l'autre. Mais lorſque l'imagination produit des convulſions, elle agit par des moyens violens; ces moyens ſont preſque toujours deſtructeurs. Il eſt des cas très-rares où ils peuvent être utiles; il eſt des cas déſeſpérés où il faut tout troubler pour ordonner tout de nouveau. Ces ſecouſſes dangereuſes ne peuvent être d'uſage en Médecine que comme les poiſons. Il faut que la néceſſité les commande &

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que l'économie les emploie. Ce beſoin eſt momentané, la ſecouſſe doit être unique. Loin de la répéter, le Médecin ſage s'occupe des moyens de réparer le mal néceſſaire qu'elle a produit; mais au traitement public du Magnétiſme, les criſes ſe répètent tous les jours, elles ſont longues, violentes; l'état de ces criſes étant nuiſible, l'habitude n'en peut être que funeſte. Comment concevoir qu'une femme dont la poitrine eſt attaquée puiſſe ſans danger avoir des criſes d'une toux convulſive, des expectorations forcées; & par des efforts violens & répétés fatiguer, peut-être déchirer le poumon, où l'on a tant de peine à porter le baume & les adouciſſemens! Comment imaginer qu'un homme, quelle que ſoit ſa maladie, ait beſoin pour la guérir de tomber dans des criſes où la vue ſemble ſe perdre, où les membres ſe roidiſſent, où dans des mouvemens précipités & involontaires, il ſe frappe rudement la poitrine; criſes qui finiſſent par un crachement abondant de glaires & de ſang! Ce ſang n'eſt ni vicié ni corrompu; ce ſang ſort des vaiſſeaux d'où il eſt arraché par les efforts, & d'où il ſort contre le vœu de la Nature. Ces effets ſont donc un mal réel & non un mal curatif; c'eſt un mal ajouté à la maladie quelle qu'elle ſoit.

Ces convulſions peuvent devenir habituelles, ſe répandre dans les villes, & ſe communiquer aux enfans.

Ces criſes ont encore un autre danger. L'homme eſt ſans ceſſe maîtriſé par la coutume; l'habitude modifie la Nature par degrés ſucceſſifs, mais elle en diſpoſe ſi puiſſamment que ſouvent elle la change preſque entièrement & la rend méconnoiſſable. Qui nous aſſure que cet état de criſes, d'abord imprimé à volonté, ne deviendra

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pas-habituel ! Et ſi cette habitude, ainſi contractée, reproduiſoit ſouvent les mêmes accidens malgré la volonté, & preſque ſans le ſecours de l'imagination, quel ſeroit le ſort d'un individu aſſujetti à ces criſes violentes, tourmenté phyſiquement & moralement de leur impreſſion malheureuſe, dont les jours ſeroient partagés entre l'appréhenſion & la douleur, & dont la vie ne ſeroit qu'un ſupplice durable ! Ces maladies de nerfs, lorſqu'elles ſont naturelles, ſont le déſeſpoir des Médecins; ce n'eſt pas à l'Art à les produire. Cet Art eſt funeſte, qui trouble les fonctions de l'économie animale, pouſſe la Nature à des écarts, & multiplie les victimes de ſes dérèglemens. Cet Art eſt d'autant plus dangereux, que non-ſeulement il aggrave les maux de nerfs en en rappelant les accidens, en les faiſant dégénérer en habitude, Mais ſi ce mal eſt contagieux, comme on peut le ſoupçonner, l'uſage de provoquer des convulſions nerveuſes, & de les exciter en public dans les traitemens, eſt un moyen de les répandre dans les grandes Villes; & même d'en affliger les générations à venir, puiſque les maux & les habitudes des parens ſe tranſmettent à leur poſtérité.

Conclusion. Le fluide magnétique n'exiſte pas, & les moyens employés pour le mettre en action ſont dangereux.

Les Commiſſaires ayant reconnu que ce fluide magnétique animal ne peut être aperçu par aucun de nos ſens, qu'il n'a eu aucune action, ni ſur eux-mêmes, ni ſur les malades qu'ils lui ont ſoumis; s'étant aſſurés que les preſſions & les attouchemens occaſionnent des changemens rarement favorables dans l'économie animale, & des ébranlemens toujours fâcheux dans l'imagination; ayant enfin démontré

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par des expériences décisives que l'imagination sans Magnétisme produit des convulsions, & que le Magnétisme sans l'imagination ne produit rien; ils ont conclu d'une voix unanime, sur la question de l'existence & de l'utilité du Magnétisme, que rien ne prouve l'existence du fluide magnétique animal; que ce fluide sans existence est par conséquent sans utilité; que les violens effets que l'on observe au traitement public, appartiennent à l'attouchement, à l'imagination mise en action, & à cette imitation machinale qui nous porte malgré nous à répéter ce qui frappe nos sens. Et en même temps ils se croient obligés d'ajouter, comme une observation importante, que les attouchemens, l'action répétée de l'imagination, pour produire des crises peuvent être nuisibles; que le spectacle de ces crises est également dangereux à cause de cette imitation dont la Nature semble nous avoir fait une loi; & que par conséquent tout traitement public où les moyens du Magnétisme seront employés, ne peut avoir à la longue que des effets funestes *(g)*.

A Paris, ce onze Août mil sept cent quatre-vingt-quatre. *Signé* B. FRANKLIN, MAJAULT, LE ROY, SALLIN, BAILLY, D'ARCET, DE BORY, GUILLOTIN, LAVOISIER.

(g) Si l'on objectoit aux Commissaires que cette conclusion porte sur le Magnétisme en général, au lieu de porter seulement sur le Magnétisme pratiqué par M. Deslon, les Commissaires répondroient que l'intention du Roi a été d'avoir leur avis sur le Magnétisme animal;

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animal; ils n'ont point par conſéquent excédé les bornes de leur commiſſion. Ils répondroient encore que M. Deſſon leur a paru inſtruit de ce qu'on appelle les principes du Magnétiſme, & qu'il poſsède certainement les moyens de produire des effets & d'exciter des criſes.

Ces principes de M. Deſſon ſont les mêmes que ceux qui ſont renfermés dans les vingt-ſept propoſitions, que M. Meſmer a rendues publiques par la voie de l'impreſſion en 1779. Si M. Meſmer annonce aujourd'hui une théorie plus vaſte, les Commiſſaires n'ont point eu beſoin de connoître cette théorie, pour décider de l'exiſtence & de l'utilité du Magnétiſme; ils n'ont dû conſidérer que les effets. C'eſt par les effets que l'exiſtence d'une cauſe ſe manifeſte; c'eſt par les mêmes effets, que ſon utilité peut être démontrée. Les phénomènes ſont connus par obſervation, long-temps avant qu'on puiſſe parvenir à la théorie qui les enchaîne & qui les explique. La théorie de l'aimant n'exiſte pas encore, & ſes phénomènes ſont conſtatés par l'expérience de pluſieurs ſiècles. La théorie de M. Meſmer eſt ici indifférente & ſuperflue; les pratiques, les effets, voilà ce qu'il s'agiſſoit d'examiner. Or il eſt aiſé de prouver que les pratiques eſſentielles du Magnétiſme ſont connues de M. Deſſon.

M. Deſſon a été pendant pluſieurs années Diſciple de M. Meſmer. Il a vu conſtamment pendant ce temps, employer les pratiques du Magnétiſme animal, & les moyens de l'exciter & de le diriger. M. Deſſon a lui-même traité des malades devant M. Meſmer; éloigné, il a opéré les mêmes effets que chez M. Meſmer. Enſuite rapprochés, l'un & l'autre ont réuni leurs malades, l'un & l'autre ont traité indiſtinctement ces malades, & par conſéquent en ſuivant les mêmes procédés. La méthode que ſuit aujourd'hui M. Deſſon, ne peut donc être que celle de M. Meſmer.

Les effets ſe correſpondent également. Il y a des criſes auſſi violentes, auſſi multipliées, & annoncées par des ſymptômes ſemblables chez M. Deſſon & chez M. Meſmer; ces effets n'appartiennent donc point à une pratique particulière, mais à la pratique du Magnétiſme en général. Les expériences des Commiſſaires démontrent

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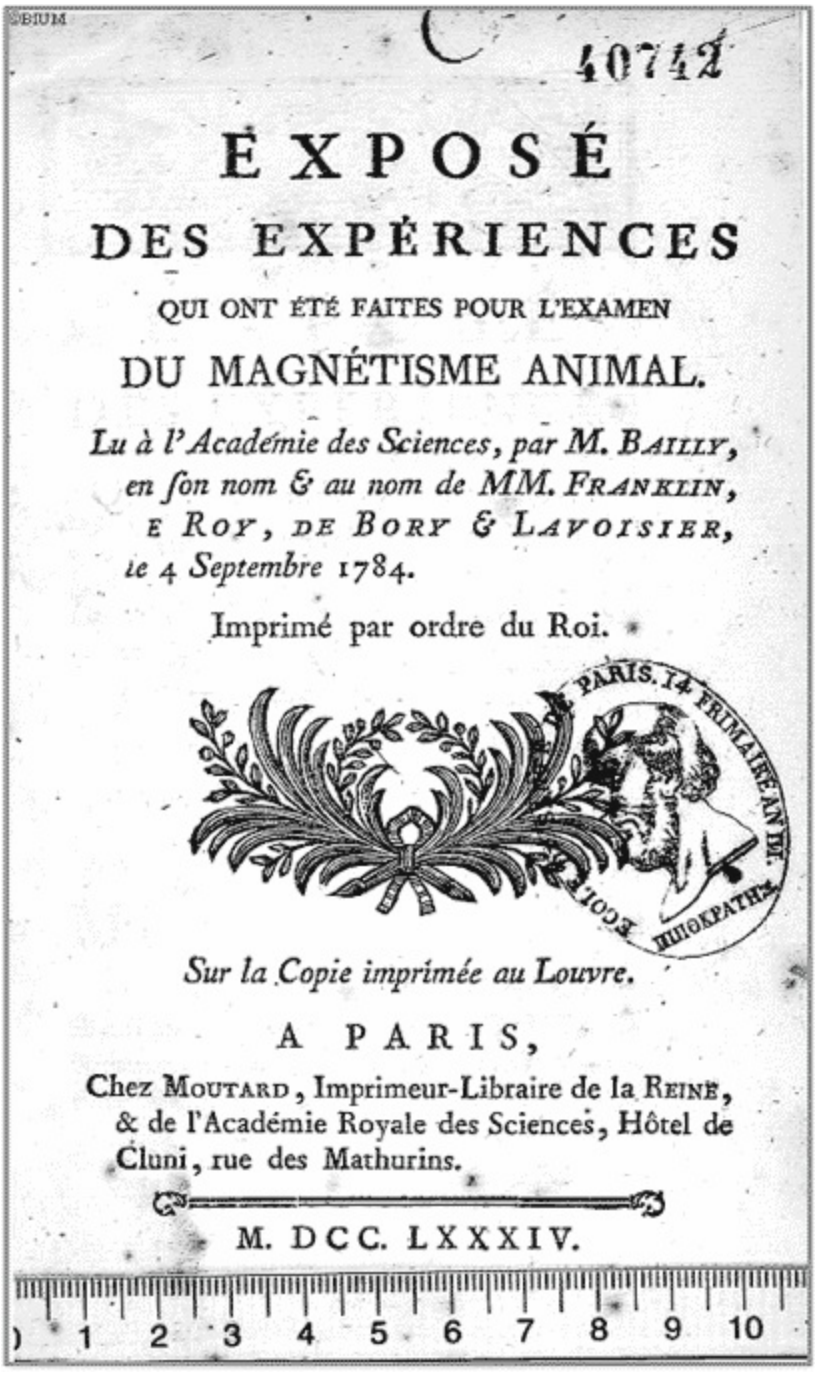
que les effets obtenus par M. Deſlon, ſont dûs à l'attouchement, à l'imagination, à l'imitation. Ces cauſes ſont donc celles du Magnétiſme en général. Les obſervations des Commiſſaires les ont convaincus que ces criſes convulſives & les moyens violens, ne peuvent être utiles en Médecine que comme les poiſons ; & ils ont jugé, indépendamment de toute théorie, que par-tout où l'on cherchera à exciter des convulſions, elles pourront devenir habituelles & nuiſibles ; elles pourront ſe répandre en épidémie, & peut-être s'étendre aux générations futures.

Les Commiſſaires ont dû conclure en conſéquence que non-ſeulement les procédés d'une pratique particulière, mais les procédés du Magnétiſme en général, pouvoient à la longue devenir funeſtes.

FIN.

⇒ translation title



EXPOSÉ
DES EXPÉRIENCES
QUI ONT ÉTÉ FAITES POUR L'EXAMEN
DU MAGNÉTISME ANIMAL.

Lu à l'Académie des Sciences, par M. BAILLY, *en son nom & au nom de MM.* FRANKLIN, LE ROY, DE BORY & LAVOISIER, *le 4 Septembre* 1784.

Imprimé par ordre du Roi.

Sur la Copie imprimée au Louvre.

A PARIS,

Chez MOUTARD, Imprimeur-Libraire de la REINE, & de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, Hôtel de Cluni, rue des Mathurins.

M. DCC. LXXXIV.

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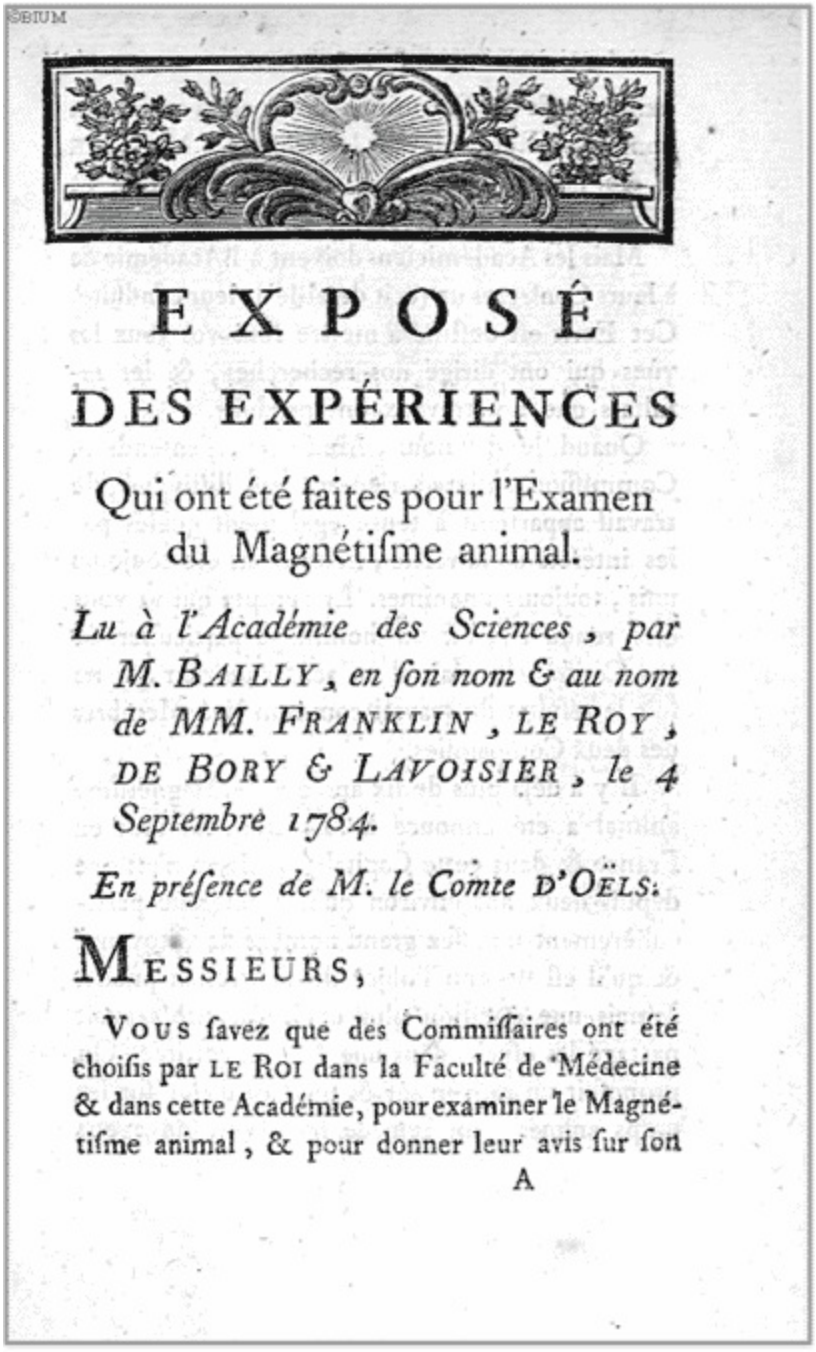

EXPOSÉ
DES EXPÉRIENCES

Qui ont été faites pour l'Examen du Magnétiſme animal.

Lu à l'Académie des Sciences, par M. BAILLY, en ſon nom & au nom de MM. FRANKLIN, LE ROY, DE BORY & LAVOISIER, le 4 Septembre 1784.

En préſence de M. le Comte D'OËLS.

MESSIEURS,

VOUS ſavez que des Commiſſaires ont été choiſis par LE ROI dans la Faculté de Médecine & dans cette Académie, pour examiner le Magnétiſme animal, & pour donner leur avis ſur ſon

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⇒ translation page 2

exiſtence & ſur ſon utilité. Nous en avons rendu compte au Roi & devant le Public. SA MAJESTÉ a été ſatisfaite de notre travail ; le Public & l'Europe vont le juger.

Mais les Académiciens doivent à l'Académie & à leurs Confrères un récit détaillé de leur conduite. Cet Ecrit eſt deſtiné à mettre ſous vos yeux les vûes qui ont dirigé nos recherches, & les réſultats que nos travaux ont produits.

Quand je dis nous, Meſſieurs, j'entends la Commiſſion entière ; rien n'a été diſtingué, le travail appartient à tous : également guidés par les intérêts de la vérité, nous avons été toujours unis, toujours unanimes. Le compte qui va vous être rendu ici, eſt un hommage particulier de vos Confrères ; mais il ne renferme rien qui ne ſoit le réſultat du travail commun des Membres des deux Compagnies.

Il y a déjà plus de ſix ans que le Magnétiſme animal a été annoncé à l'Europe, ſur-tout en France & dans cette Capitale ; mais ce n'eſt que depuis deux ans environ qu'il a intéreſſé particulièrement un aſſez grand nombre de Citoyens, & qu'il eſt devenu l'objet de l'entretien public. Jamais une queſtion plus extraordinaire n'avoit partagé les eſprits dans une Nation éclairée. On propoſoit un moyen sûr & puiſſant d'agir ſur les corps animés, un remède nouveau, un agent

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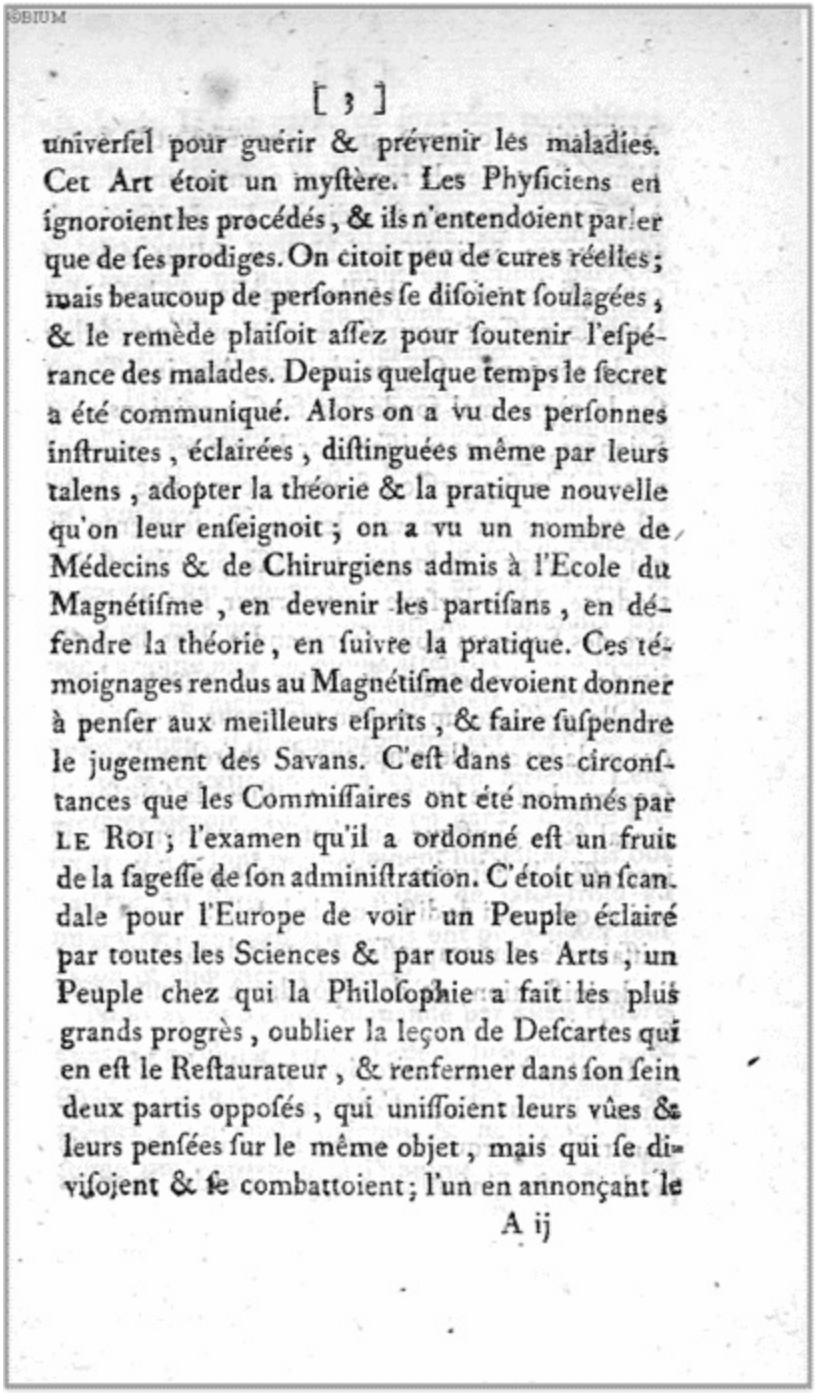

universel pour guérir & prévenir les maladies. Cet Art étoit un myſtère. Les Phyſiciens en ignoroient les procédés, & ils n'entendoient parler que de ſes prodiges. On citoit peu de cures réelles; mais beaucoup de perſonnes ſe diſoient ſoulagées, & le remède plaiſoit aſſez pour ſoutenir l'eſpérance des malades. Depuis quelque temps le ſecret a été communiqué. Alors on a vu des perſonnes inſtruites, éclairées, diſtinguées même par leurs talens, adopter la théorie & la pratique nouvelle qu'on leur enſeignoit; on a vu un nombre de Médecins & de Chirurgiens admis à l'Ecole du Magnétiſme, en devenir les partiſans, en défendre la théorie, en ſuivre la pratique. Ces témoignages rendus au Magnétiſme devoient donner à penſer aux meilleurs eſprits, & faire ſuſpendre le jugement des Savans. C'eſt dans ces circonſtances que les Commiſſaires ont été nommés par LE ROI; l'examen qu'il a ordonné eſt un fruit de la ſageſſe de ſon adminiſtration. C'étoit un ſcandale pour l'Europe de voir un Peuple éclairé par toutes les Sciences & par tous les Arts, un Peuple chez qui la Philoſophie a fait les plus grands progrès, oublier la leçon de Deſcartes qui en eſt le Reſtaurateur, & renfermer dans ſon ſein deux partis oppoſés, qui uniſſoient leurs vûes & leurs penſées ſur le même objet, mais qui ſe diviſoient & ſe combattoient; l'un en annonçant le

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Magnétiſme comme une découverte utile & ſublime, l'autre en le regardant comme une illuſion à la fois dangereuſe & ridicule. La déciſion étoit importante & indiſpenſable ; il falloit éclairer ceux qui doutoient, il falloit établir une baſe, ſur laquelle puſſent venir ſe repoſer ou l'incrédulité ou la confiance. On ne doit pas être indifférent ſur le règne mal-fondé des fauſſes opinions ; les Sciences, qui s'accroiſſent par les vérités, gagnent encore à la ſuppreſſion d'une erreur : une erreur eſt toujours un mauvais levain qui fermente & qui corrompt à la longue la maſſe où elle eſt introduite. Mais lorſque cette erreur ſort de l'empire des Sciences pour ſe répandre dans la multitude, pour partager & agiter les eſprits, lorſqu'elle préſente un moyen trompeur de guérir à des malades qu'elle empêche de chercher d'autres ſecours, lorſque ſur-tout elle influe à la fois ſur le moral & le phyſique, un bon Gouvernement eſt intéreſſé à la détruire. C'eſt un bel emploi de l'autorité, que celui de diſtribuer la lumière ! Les Commiſſaires ſe ſont empreſſés d'entrer dans les vûes de l'Adminiſtration, & de répondre à l'honneur de ſon choix.

Tranſportés au traitement public du Magnétiſme, ils ont d'abord été frappés d'une oppoſition très-remarquable entre la nature des effets produits, & l'inſuffiſance apparente des moyens

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employés. D'une part, ce ſont des convulſions violentes, longues & multipliées ; de l'autre, de ſimples attouchemens, des geſtes & des ſignes : & cependant le traitement public fait reconnoître une grande puiſſance miſe en action par ces moyens, tout foibles qu'ils ſont. Un pareil ſpectacle ſemble nous tranſporter au temps & au règne de la féerie : cet empire exercé ſur un nombre d'individus, l'homme qui en diſpoſe, la baguette qui lui ſert d'inſtrument, tout reſſemble en effet aux enchantemens de nos Fables ; ce ſont leurs récits mis en action. Mais ſi ce ſpectacle étonne, il ne doit pas ſubjuguer. S'il a pu ſurprendre la foi d'un nombre de Spectateurs, conduits par une curioſité plus ou moins attentive ; s'il a ſéduit ſur-tout les malades, toujours prêts à ſe tromper eux-mêmes, il n'a pu produire cet effet ſur des hommes choiſis pour un examen ſérieux. Leur premier devoir étoit d'être en garde contre l'illuſion. Ils ſe ſont mutuellement ſurveillés ; ils ont obſervé en ſilence ; & reſtés de ſang-froid au milieu de l'enthouſiaſme, ils ont pu écouter leur raiſon & chercher la lumière.

Nous avons d'abord demandé par quels reſſorts étoient produits tant d'effets ſurprenans, & quelles étoient les raiſons qui les faiſoient attribuer à un fluide inconnu & nouveau, à un fluide qui appartient à l'homme & qui agit ſur

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l'homme. Plus cette découverte étoit grande & extraordinaire, plus on devoit être difficile ſur le choix des preuves. Enſuite, procédant en Phyſiciens, nous avons cherché à reconnoître la préſence du fluide ; mais ce fluide échappe à tous les ſens. On nous a déclaré que ſon action ſur les corps animés, étoit la ſeule preuve que l'on pût adminiſtrer de ſon exiſtence. Vous avez vu, Meſſieurs, dans notre Rapport, les raiſons ſolides, qui, parmi les effets prétendus de cette action, nous ont fait rejeter abſolument la cure des maladies. La Nature agit en même temps que le remède ; on ne ſait ſi le ſoulagement appartient au remède ou à la Nature. La Nature guérit quelquefois ſans remède ; comment ſe convaincre de l'exiſtence d'un remède inviſible, par des guériſons que la Nature peut opérer ſans lui ? Nous avons donc été forcés de nous borner à obſerver l'action phyſique du fluide, opérant ſur l'économie animale des changemens momentanés. Mais alors, Meſſieurs, nous ſommes entrés dans un dédale de difficultés. Si les premières cauſes de la Nature ſont ſimples, les derniers reſultats ſont le produit d'une vaſte complication. L'homme ne fait pas un mouvement qui ne puiſſe être dû à une infinité de cauſes. Etre moral & phyſique, ſes affections, ſes maux, ſes mouvemens dépendent autant de ſa penſée que de l'irritabilité de ſes

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organes. Les expériences que nous avons faites ſur nous-mêmes, nous ont fait reconnoître que, lorſqu'on détourne ſon attention, il n'y a plus aucun effet. Les épreuves faites ſur les malades nous ont appris que l'enfance, qui n'eſt pas ſuſceptible de prévention, n'éprouve rien, que l'aliénation d'eſprit s'oppoſe à l'action du Magnétiſme, même dans un état habituel de convulſions & de mobilité de nerfs où cette action devroit être le plus ſenſible. Dans un nombre de malades, ſi les uns reſſentent des effets légers & équivoques, les autres ne ſentent rien, & nous avons dû en être ſurpris. Le Magnétiſme n'eſt-il pas annoncé comme un fluide univerſel, comme le principe de la vie & le grand reſſort de la Nature ! Qu'eſt-ce qu'un agent qui n'agit pas toujours dans des circonſtances ſemblables ? L'abſence de ſon action dans certains cas, n'indique-t-elle pas que dans les autres l'action qu'on lui attribue appartient à d'autres cauſes ? Il a manqué ſon effet, quand nous l'avons employé pour porter de la chaleur aux pieds. Il a manqué ſon effet, quand nous l'avons interrogé comme capable d'indiquer les maux. On a eſſayé différentes méthodes de magnétiſer, en obſervant, en négligeant la diſtinction des pôles ; elles ont eu les mêmes effets. Les pôles ſont donc une chimère, qui n'a d'autre objet que d'aſſimiler le nouveau Magnétiſme au

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véritable Magnétiſme, qui eſt un des phénomènes de la Nature. C'eſt ainſi qu'en avançant dans notre examen, nous voyions diſparoître l'une après l'autre les propriétés attribuées à ce prétendu fluide, & que l'édifice entier, poſé ſur une baſe idéale, s'écrouloit devant nous.

Forcés de renoncer aux preuves phyſiques, nous avons été obligés de chercher les cauſes des effets réels dans les circonſtances morales. Nous avons, dans la ſuite de nos opérations, ceſſé d'être Phyſiciens, pour n'être plus que Philoſophes, & nous avons ſoumis à l'examen les affections de l'eſprit & les idées des individus expoſés à l'action du Magnétiſme. Alors en opérant ſur des ſujets qui avoient les yeux bandés, nous avons vu d'une manière évidente cette action naître des idées que nous excitions, & les effets ſuivre la même marche que nos queſtions. En ne magnétiſant pas, les effets étoient les mêmes, & répondoient de même à nos queſtions.

A ces effets variés & indépendans du Magnétiſme, nous avons dû reconnoître l'influence de l'imagination; mais dans l'examen moral où nous conduiſoit la nature de la queſtion, nous avons ſuivi, autant qu'il a été poſſible, la marche certaine & méthodique des Sciences: obſervant en Philoſophes, nous avons encore emprunté les procédés de la Phyſique. Nous avons opéré,

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comme on fait en Chimie, où, après avoir décompoſé les ſubſtances, découvert leurs principes, on s'aſſure de l'exactitude de l'analyſe, en recompoſant les mêmes ſubſtances à l'aide de ces principes réunis. Nous avons dit : Les effets qu'on attribue au Magnétiſme & à un fluide que rien ne manifeſte, n'ont lieu que lorſque l'imagination eſt avertie & peut être frappée ; l'imagination ſemble donc en être le principe : il faut voir ſi on reproduira ces effets par le pouvoir de l'imagination ſeule. Nous l'avons tenté, & nous avons pleinement réuſſi. Sans toucher & ſans employer aucun ſigne, les ſujets qui ont cru être magnétiſés ont ſenti de la douleur, de la chaleur, & une chaleur très-grande. Sur des ſujets doués de nerfs plus mobiles, nous avons produit des convulſions & ce qu'on appelle des *criſes*. Nous avons vu l'imagination aſſez exaltée devenue aſſez puiſſante pour faire perdre en un inſtant la parole. Nous avons en même temps prouvé la nullité du Magnétiſme, en le mettant en oppoſition avec l'imagination. Le Magnétiſme ſeul employé pendant trente minutes, n'a rien produit ; & auſſitôt l'imagination miſe en action a produit ſur la même perſonne, avec les mêmes moyens, dans des circonſtances abſolument ſemblables, une convulſion très-forte & très-bien caractériſée. Enfin, pour compléter la démonſtration, pour

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achever le tableau des effets de l'imagination, également capable d'agiter & de calmer, nous avons fait ceſſer la convulſion par le même charme qui l'avoit produite, par le pouvoir de l'imagination.

Si nous n'avons pas fait d'expériences ſur les animaux, que l'on regarde comme privés de l'imagination, c'eſt que les expériences auroient été plus difficiles & plus délicates, ſans être plus concluantes. D'abord la cure des maladies des animaux ne prouve pas davantage que la cure des maladies des hommes; & quand nous nous bornerons à agir ſur les animaux momentanément, comment connoîtrons-nous ce qu'ils éprouvent? Ne pouvant les interroger, leurs mouvemens ne peuvent être qu'équivoques. D'ailleurs une grande raiſon pour rejeter cette eſpèce de preuve, eſt qu'on annonce un fluide univerſel, un fluide agiſſant ſur l'homme, & propre à guérir ſes maux; il ſeroit ſingulier qu'on en vantât les bons effets ſur l'eſpèce humaine, & qu'on ne pût les rendre ſenſibles que ſur l'eſpèce animale. C'eſt donc ſur l'homme que nous avons dû éprouver le Magnétiſme, & nos expériences ne nous ont fait découvrir que le pouvoir de l'imagination. Nous avons procédé par des preuves négatives, & cette marche étoit déterminée par la nature des choſes. Une opinion eſt attaquée &

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défendue par des moyens contraires. Un agent réel doit être démontré par des preuves poſitives, tandis qu'un agent chimérique ne peut être exclus que par le manque d'effets & par la démonſtration de ſa nullité.

La ſuite d'expériences que nous avons faites, nous a permis de conclure & d'établir que rien ne prouve l'exiſtence du fluide magnétique animal. La ſaine Phyſique ne permet pas de recourir à un fluide inconnu & inſenſible, pour expliquer des effets qui peuvent tous être produits par l'imagination, ou ſeule, ou combinée avec l'attouchement & l'imitation.

Telles ſont les cauſes des effets attribués au Magnétiſme : tel eſt le réſultat de notre travail. Mais les phénomènes obſervés permettent encore quelques réſultats que nous allons propoſer. Ces réſultats concernent l'imitation & l'imagination, deux de nos plus étonnantes facultés : ce ſont des faits pour une ſcience encore neuve, celle de l'influence du moral ſur le phyſique, & nous demandons qu'il nous ſoit permis d'entrer à cet égard dans quelques détails préliminaires & purement philoſophiques.

L'homme moral, comme l'homme phyſique, n'exiſte & ne devient tel qu'il eſt que par ces

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deux facultés : il ſe forme, il ſe perfectionne par l'imitation ; il agit, il devient puiſſant par l'imagination. L'imitation eſt donc le premier moyen de ſa perfectibilité ; elle le modifie, depuis la naiſſance juſqu'à la mort. Sans l'imitation, les progrès d'un individu ſeroient perdus pour tous les autres : c'eſt par elle que dans la ſociété polie & habituelle les caractères s'effacent, & que tous les individus ont la même phyſionomie ; c'eſt par elle que les enfans apprennent nos uſages, nos conventions, ſe plient à nos habitudes, s'inſtruiſent de la langue. La prononciation, adoucie par un long uſage, eſt un effet de la même cauſe. Cette imitation agit également ſur les eſprits : elle n'introduit pas les vérités nouvelles, mais elle conſerve les idées reçues ; elle forme & conſtitue l'eſprit national ; & comme le plus ſouvent elle fait croire ſans examen, c'eſt ſur ſon pouvoir irréſiſtible que ſont fondés les préjugés qui ont une durée ſi longue & une réſiſtance ſi puiſſante.

Avec cette faculté tout reſteroit au même terme, tout ſeroit communiqué ; mais le niveau des connoiſſances & des inſtitutions ne s'éleveroit jamais. L'imagination eſt la faculté progreſſive : c'eſt par elle que les hommes ont parcouru les différens états de la ſociété perfectionnée ; faculté éminemment active, auteur des biens &

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des maux, tout eſt devant elle, l'avenir comme le préſent, les mondes de l'Univers comme le point où nous ſommes. Elle agrandit tout ce qu'elle touche; elle va ſans ceſſe exagérant, & cette exagération fait ſa force. C'eſt par cette force qu'elle déploie les reſſources morales & qu'elle multiplie les forces phyſiques: à ſa voix la Nature obéit & ſe développe toute entière. Auſſi, quand l'imagination parle à la multitude, la multitude ne connoît plus de dangers ni d'obſtacles. Un ſeul homme commande, & les autres ne ſont que des inſtrumens. Les Nations ſont ce que veulent les Souverains, les Armées ce que ſont leurs Généraux; & c'eſt une vérité connue depuis Alexandre juſqu'à FRÉDÉRIC & SON ILLUSTRE FRÈRE.

L'imitation, telle que nous venons de la peindre, Meſſieurs, ſemble avoir une marche lente & graduée; elle ne s'établit que par des leçons répétées: mais ſi dans la ſociété elle a des progrès inſenſibles, dans le traitement du Magnétiſme elle ſe manifeſte par des phénomènes frappans. Les criſes y ſont d'autant plus multipliées qu'elles ſont plus violentes, elles commencent toutes à peu près dans le même temps. Il ſemble que ce ſoit une étincelle qui allume un incendie. Cette facilité de communication eſt très-remarquable. Nous ſavions que

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l'homme, machinal dans un grand nombre de ſes mouvemens, ſe plie à la longue à répéter ce qu'il voit & ce qu'il entend ; mais les convulſions du Magnétiſme nous montrent que le même effet a lieu inſtantanément, en grand, & de manière qu'un nombre d'individus, convenablement diſpoſés, ſont des inſtrumens montés à l'uniſſon, & dont un ſeul fait mouvoir tous les autres.

Quant à l'imagination, on connoît les dérangemens qu'une impreſſion vive & ſubite a ſouvent occaſionnés dans la machine de l'homme. L'imagination renouvelle ou ſuſpend les fonctions animales ; elle ranime par l'eſpérance, ou elle glace par la terreur. Dans une nuit elle fait blanchir les cheveux, dans un inſtant elle rend ou l'uſage des jambes, ou la parole ; elle détruit ou elle développe le germe des maux ; elle donne même la mort. Mais ces effets ſurprenans appartiennent à des révolutions inopinées. C'eſt le concours des circonſtances qui les amène, & le haſard qui ſemble les produire ; ils ne paroiſſent point dépendre de la puiſſance & de la volonté de l'homme. Ce que nous avons appris, ou du moins ce qui nous a été confirmé d'une manière démonſtrative & évidente, par l'examen des procédés du Magnétiſme, c'eſt que l'homme peut agir ſur l'homme, à tous momens, & preſque à volonté, en frappant ſon imagination ; c'eſt que les geſtes & les ſignes les plus ſimples peuvent

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avoir les plus puiſſans effets ; c'eſt que l'action que l'homme a ſur l'imagination peut être réduite en Art, & conduite par une méthode ſur des ſujets qui ont la foi. On parle du Magnétiſme d'intention ; ſans doute l'intention peut ſuffire, pourvu qu'elle ſoit réciproque ; elle établit entre deux individus une relation & une dépendance néceſſaires. L'intention que je dirige, c'eſt mon imagination qui commande ; l'intention qui me répond, c'eſt l'imagination qui s'exalte & qui obéit. La recherche d'un agent qui n'exiſte pas, ſert donc à faire connoître une puiſſance réelle de l'homme ; l'homme a le pouvoir d'agir ſur ſon ſemblable, d'ébranler le ſyſtême de ſes nerfs, & de lui imprimer des convulſions. Mais cette action ne peut être regardée comme phyſique ; nous ne voyons pas qu'elle dépende d'un fluide communiqué ; elle eſt entièrement morale, c'eſt celle de l'imagination ſur l'imagination. Action preſque toujours dangereuſe, que l'on peut obſerver en Philoſophe, & qu'il n'eſt bon de connoître que pour en prévenir les effets.

Le Magnétiſme n'aura pas été tout-à-fait inutile à la Philoſophie qui le condamne ; c'eſt un fait de plus à conſigner dans l'hiſtoire des erreurs de l'eſprit humain, & une grande expérience ſur le pouvoir de l'imagination.

FIN.

Aphorisms

of

M. Mesmer

Dictated at the assembly of his Pupils
and in which will be found his principles,
his theory & the means of magnetising; the whole forming a body of Doctrine set out in 344 paragraphs, to facilitate
the application of the Commentaries to Animal Magnetism:
The work published by M.C. de V.
Doctor in the household of MONSIEUR.

Scilicet ut possem curvo dignoscere
rectum,
Atque inter silvas Acadæmi quærere
verum.
Horat. Liv. II. Ep.2.

At PARIS

And is to be found at the house of M. QUINTET,
the elder, Master of Pharmacy, rue du marché aux
Poirées, at the corner of the gate of the former Corn Hall.
1785 *With permission*

English translations of extracts from the *Aphorisms de M. Mesmer* Paris, 1785.

An unauthorised publication by one of his pupils of Mesmer's teachings on Animal Magnetism.

Translated by IML Donaldson

APHORISMES
DE
M. MESMER,
DICTÉS à l'aſſemblée de ſes Eleves, & dans leſquels on trouve ſes principes, ſa théorie & les moyens de magnétiſer ; le tout formant un corps de Doctrine developpé en 344 paragraphes, pour faciliter l'application des Commentaires au Magnétiſme animal ;
Ouvrage mis au jour par M. C. de V. Médecin de la Maiſon de MONSIEUR.

Scilicet ut poſſem curvo dignoſcere rectum,
Atque inter ſilvas Academi quærere verum.
Horat. Liv. II. Ep. 2.

A PARIS.
Et ſe trouve chez M. QUINQUET, l'aîné, Maître en Pharmacie, rue du marché aux Poirées, au coin de la porte de l'ancienne halle au bled. 1785. *Avec permiſſion.*

Title page. From a digital copy of the work on the Gallica server of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (http://gallica.bnf.fr/)

Aphorisms

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Translator's introduction

Though he was happy to write in general terms of his theory of Animal Magnetism and its use in the treatment of disease, Mesmer was very secretive indeed about the details of his methods. He wanted to keep the very profitable practice of Animal Magnetism to himself and was only prepared to reveal his methods - in exchange for large fees - to a group of pupils whom he believed that he had bound by solemn undertakings not to reveal them. It turned out that the pupils' understanding of the undertakings were rather different from Mesmer's; not surprisingly they expected to be allowed to practise Animal Magnetism in exchange for the large sums of money with which they had parted in fees. Not surprisingly, the details leaked out but Mesmer's secrecy has meant that there are few sources easily available of the details of his beliefs and even fewer of the instructions for their practical application to the treatment of patients.

However, knowledge of some of the details of the practice of the 'magnetisers' is helpful in understanding parts of the Report of the Royal Commission set up by Louis XVI in 1784 to examine 'Animal Magnetism'. For this reason it seems worthwhile to present this short series of translations from a work that was published, without Mesmer's permission, by one of his pupils, Caullet de Veaumorel. Though Mesmer himself repudiated this account of his methods there is no reason to doubt the claim that it is closely based on the Mesmer's lectures to his 'pupils'. The author, Louis Caullet de Vaumorel (born 1743) is described as 'Doctor in the household of MONSIEUR'; presumably this was the household of Louis-Stanislas-Xavier, Comte de Provence, eldest brother of Louis XVI to survive the Revolution, who later became Louis XVIII; he was heir presumptive to the French throne at the time of the book's publication.

Extracts from the text of Mesmer's *Aphorisms*

The nature of Animal Magnetism:

pp 52 – 58 *(paras 158 – 175)*

158. The vital principle, being a part of the universal movement and obeying the common laws of the universal fluid, is thus subject to all the impressions of the influence of the celestial bodies, of the earth and of the particular bodies that surround it.

159. This faculty or property of Man of being susceptible to all these relationships is that which we call *Magnetism*.

160. Man, who is continually placed in currents, universal and particular, is penetrated by these currents; the movement of the fluid modified by the various organisations becomes tonic. In this state it follows the continuity of the body as long as possible, that is to say it flows towards the most salient parts.

161. Currents enter and leave these most salient parts, the extremities, when any body capable of receiving them is opposed to them. In these cases the currents re-entering a point are reinforced.

162. These points of current flow or of tonic current are those that we call *poles*. These poles are analogous to the ones that are seen in the magnet.

163. Thus there are currents leaving and re-entering, poles that destroy themselves and that reinforce themselves as in the magnet; their communication is the same. It suffices to create one pole for another, its opposite, to be formed at the same time.

164. On an imaginary line joining the poles there is a centre or point of equilibrium where there is no action, that is to say, where no direction predominates.

165. These currents can be propagated and communicated over a considerable distance either by a continuum or by contiguous bodies or by a fluid such as water or air.

166. All bodies whose shape contains a point or angle serve to receive the currents and become *conductors* of them.

167. One may regard conductors as the openings of holes or canals which serve to make the currents flow.

168. The currents, always conserving the tonic character that they have received, can penetrate all solid bodies and liquids.

169. The currents can be communicated and propagated by all the means in which there is continuity be they solid or fluid and in rays of light and by the continuity of the oscillations of sounds.

170. The currents can be reinforced.

171. 1st By all causes of common movement such as the movements of the intestines and parts of the body, sounds, noises, the wind, friction, of electric and other kinds, and by bodies already endowed with movement such as the magnet and living bodies.

172. 2nd By communication of the currents to hard bodies in which they can be concentrated and assembled as in a reservoir to be distributed later in various directions.

173. 3rd By the quantity of bodies to which the currents are communicated; as this principle is not a substance but a modification, its effect increases like fire according to how much it is communicated.

174. If the current of Magnetism is consistent in its direction with the general current or with the Magnetic current of the world, the overall effect that results is the increase in intensity of all the currents.

175. These currents can also be reflected in mirrors according to the laws of light.

Theory of the techniques

Pp 81 – 90 *(paras. 236 – 240)*

236. In the theory of the general system it was set out that universal currents are the cause of the existence of bodies, and that anything that can accelerate these currents produces the intensity or increase of the properties of these bodies. According to this principle, it is easy to conclude that of it were within our power to accelerate the currents we could, by increasing the energy of Nature extend at will the properties of any body and even re-establish those that had been weakened by some accident; but, as the waters of a river cannot return to their source to increase the speed of their flow, in the same way the constituent parts of the earth, subject to the laws of universal currents, cannot act upon the original source of their existence. If we cannot act immediately upon the universal currents, does there not exist for all bodies in general, particular means of acting on one or the other by accelerating reciprocally the flows of the currents that traverse their interstices.

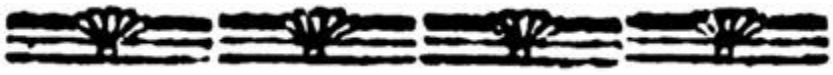
237. As universal and reciprocal gravitation exists between all celestial and terrestrial bodies, there exists in the same way a particular and reciprocal gravitation between the constituent parts of the earth and the whole and between the whole and each one of the parts and, finally, of all the parts on each other. This reciprocal action between all bodies take place by entering and leaving currents in a more or less direct manner, following the analogy of the bodies. Thus of all bodies the one which can act most effectively on Man is his own likeness. It suffices that a man be near another man to act on him by increasing the intensity of his properties.

238. The respective positions of the two beings who act on each other is not without importance. To decide what this position should be we must consider each as composed of various parts each possessing a form or particular tonic movement; by this means one concludes that the two beings have the greatest possible influence on each other when they are place so that their analogous parts act on each other in the most exact opposition. For two men to act as strongly as possible on each other it is thus necessary that they are placed facing each other. In this position they provoke the intensity of their properties in a harmonic manner and they can be considered to form but a single whole. In a single isolated man when one part suffers all the action of life is directed towards that part to destroy the cause of the suffering; in the same way when two men act on each other, the entire action of this union acts on the affected part with a force proportional to the increase in its mass. Thus one can say in general that the action of Magnetism increases by virtue of masses. It is possible to direct the action of Magnetism more particularly on to this or that part; to do this it suffices to establish the most precise continuity between the parts that must be touched and the individual who touches. Our arms can be considered as *conductors* suitable for establishing continuity. It follows, therefore, form what has been said about the most advantageous

position for two beings acting on each other, that, to maintain the harmony of the whole, one must touch parts on the right with the left arm and vice versa. From this necessity arises the opposition of poles in the human body. These poles, as one sees in the magnet, oppose each other: they can be changed, communicated, destroyed or reinforced.

239. To understand the opposition of poles Man must be considered as divided in two by a line drawn from above downwards. All the points on the left can be considered to be poles opposed to the corresponding points on the right side. But since the emission of currents occurs more strongly at the extremities, in fact we only consider the extremities as poles. The left hand becomes the pole opposed to the right hand, and so on. Then, considering these same extremities as a whole, and considering opposing poles within each, in the hand the little finger is the pole opposed to the thumb, and the second finger participates in the properties of the thumb and the fourth in those of the little finger and the middle finger which appears to be the centre or equator of the magnet, is devoid of any special property. The poles of the human body can be communicated to animate and inanimate bodies which are variously more or less susceptible according to their greater or lesser analogies with Man and according to the thinness of their parts. It suffices to set up one pole within any body for the opposing pole to be established immediately. The pole established is destroyed when the same part of the body is touched in the inverse sense to that with which one first touched and one reinforces the pole already established by touching the opposite pole with the other hand.

240. The action of animal Magnetism can be reinforced and propagated by bodies animate and inanimate. Since this action is augmented by masses, the more one adds magnetic bodies one to the other in such a way the poles do not oppose each other, that they touch by opposite poles, the more one reinforces the action of the Magnetism. The most suitable bodies for propagating and reinforcing Magnetism are living bodies [animals], followed by vegetable bodies and among inanimate bodies, iron and glass are those which act most intensely.



The *bacquet*, magnetising trees and related matters.

pp. 131 - 151 *(paras. 296 – 308)*

296. A bacquet [1] is a sort of round vessel, square or oval, of a diameter proportionate to the number of patients that one wishes to treat. Thick staves are assembled, painted and jointed in such a way as to be hold water; it is about a foot deep, the upper part is one or two inches wider than the bottom and is covered by a lid in two pieces which encloses the assembly in the vessel, with its edge applied immediately to that of the vessel to which it is fixed by two large screws. In the interior you arrange bottles in radial spokes converging from the circumference to the centre; you place more all the way round, the bottoms against the vessel wall, one layer thick, leaving between them the necessary space to receive the neck of another. Once this first arrangement is complete you put in the middle of the vessel a bottle, upright or lying down, from which all the rows radiate, first using half-bottles then with larger ones when the divergence of the rows permits this: the bottom of the first is at the centre, its neck is in the bottom of the next in such a way that the neck of the last one touches the circumference. The bottles must be filled with water, corked and magnetised in the same way, it is desirable that this is all done by the

same person. To increase the activity of the bacquet, a second and third layer of bottles are put on top of the first. However, commonly, one makes a second layer which, beginning in the centre, covers a third, half or three quarters of the first layer. One then fills the vessel with water to a certain depth, but always enough to cover the bottles; to this can be added iron filings, or powdered glass or similar material, about which I have various [different] opinions.

297. Bacquets are also made without water by filling the space between the bottles with glass, filings and sand. Before putting in the water or other materials one marks on the lid the places where holes are to be made to receive the iron [rods] which must rest between the bottoms of the first bottles, at four or five inches from the wall of the bacquet. The irons are a kind of rod made of pliable iron which enter in a straight line almost to the bottom of the bacquet and are bent where they come out in such a way that they can rest against a point obtuse to that which one wants to touch, such as the forehead, the eye, the stomach etc. etc.

298. From the inside or the outside of the bacquet, attached to a piece of iron, arises a very long cord that the patients apply to the part in which they are suffering; they form chains by holding this cord and putting the left thumb on their neighbour's right thumb, or vice versa in such a way that the inside of one thumb touches the other. They come as close together as they can, to touch each other at the thighs, knees and feet so that they form, so to speak, a single continuous body in which the magnetic fluid circulates continually and is reinforced by the various points of contact. This is added to by the position of the patients who are facing each other. There are also iron rods long enough to reach the second row [of patients] through the gaps in the first row.

299. Individual bacquets are also made, called *magic* or *magnetic boxes*, for the use of patients who are not able to come to the treatment or those who, because of the nature of their illness, require continuous treatment. These boxes are more or less complex; the simplest contain only one bottle lying down, filled with water or powdered glass, enclosed in the box from which emerges a rod or a cord. A simple bottle on its own that one applies to the affected part is even more useful. Several of these can be placed underneath a bed, upright and containing iron [rods] sealed into the neck; they produce a very considerable effect. The most usual boxes are rectangular coffers, of height and length proportionate to what they are to hold. The height should not usually exceed that of a couch, which is about ten or twelve inches. In them are placed four or more bottles as desired, prepared and arranged as in a bacquet. If the box is to be put under a bed half-bottles are used, half of them filled with water and half with [powdered] glass. Those full of water are corked, those holding glass have a little iron conductor sticking out of the bottle, in the neck of which it is sealed, and passing through and protruding from the lid of the box by an inch. The space between the bottles is filled with powdered glass either dry or dampened; a cord wound around the neck of each bottle makes them communicate and leaves the box through a hole in its wall. The lid is sliding and fixed by a screw. The box is placed under the bed and the cords that come out on the right and left are taken on to the bed or between the sheets, or on to the covers, to reach the patient.

300. Boxes that are to be used during the day are made with bottles filled with water or glass, prepared and stacked as in the large bacquets; a cord and iron rods can be put in them to make family boxes.

301. The more dense the material filling the bottles the more active it is. If one could fill them with mercury they would be very much more powerful.

302. There are several ways of increasing the number and activity of the currents. If you want to 'touch' a patient very forcefully, collect together in his room as many people as possible, set up a chain that begins

with the patient and ends with the magnetiser; a person at his back or with a hand on his shoulder increases his action. There are very many other ways, impossible to detail, like sound, music, the gaze, mirrors, etc.

303. The magnetic current keeps its effect for a little time after it leaves the body, a little like the sound of a flute that dies away with distance. Magnetism at a certain distance produces a larger effect than if it is applied immediately.

304. After Man and the animals, it is plants and above all trees that are most susceptible to animal magnetism. To magnetise a tree under which you want to set up treatment you choose a young one that is vigorous, branched and, as far as possible, without knots and with straight fibres. Although any kind of tree can be used, the oak, elm or hornbeam are to be preferred. Having chosen your tree you put yourself some distance to the south of it and you establish a right and a left side that will form the two poles, and the midline will be the equator. Using the finger, an iron [rod] or a stick you follow from the leaves along the ramifications and branches to a large branch, you conduct the currents to the trunk and right down to the roots. You begin again until you have magnetised the whole side then you magnetise the other in the same way and using the same hand, because the rays that diverge as they come out of the conductor converge at a certain distance and are not subject to repulsion. The north is then magnetised using the same procedures. When this has been done you come close to the tree and, after magnetising the roots if any are visible, you embrace it and present to it all your poles successively. The tree is now endowed with all the virtues of magnetism. Healthy people, when they remain for some time close to the tree can feel its effect and the sick, especially those who have already been magnetised, will be violently affected and will have crises. To set up treatment there, you attach cords at a convenient height to the trunk and the principal branches, in number and length proportional to the people who are to assemble there and who, facing the tree and placed in a circle - either on chairs or on straw – and putting the cords around the affected parts as they would at the bacquet, and making chains when this is possible, have crises as at the bacquet, but more gently. The curative effect is much more prompt and active in proportion to the number of patients who increase the energy by multiplying the currents, the forces and the contacts. The wind, stirring the branches of the tree, adds to its action. The same effect is produced by a stream or waterfall if one is lucky enough to have one in the place chosen. If several trees are close together, one magnetises them and puts them into communication by cords that pass from one to another. Patients find an odour that they cannot define at the trees, it is most disagreeable to them; they retain it for some time after leaving them and smell it again when they return. One cannot be certain how long a tree retains its magnetism. It is believed that it may last several months; the most prudent thing is to renew it from time to time.

305. To magnetise a bottle you take it by its two extremities which you rub with your fingers, carrying the movement to the edges. You remove the hand from one extremity after the other while compressing the fluid, so to speak. You deal with a glass or a vase in the same fashion and magnetise thus the fluid that it contains. You take care in presenting it to whoever is to drink it, to hold it between the thumb and the little finger and to make them drink it in this direction; the patient will find in it a non-existent taste if it is drunk in the opposite direction.

306. A flower or any object is to be magnetised by touch in a principled and vigorous fashion.

307. A bath is magnetised by rubbing its two ends with the fingers, the rod or the cane and bringing them down to the water in which one describes a line in the same direction and repeats this several times. The water can also be agitated in different directions, but always insisting on the direct line whose large current

unites the small ones alongside it and is reinforced by them. If the patient in the bath finds the water too cold, one plunges a cane into it and directs current into it by rubbing; this action makes the patient feel a sensation of heat that he attributes to the water. In places where there is a bacquet or trees one brings a cord from them which supplements all the other preparations. If one cannot magnetise [the bath] oneself I believe that several bottles of magnetised water poured into the bath may produce the same effect. A little sea salt thrown into the bath increases its tonicity.

308. A cylindrical glass, or one of another shape, with an opening at the top may be placed in the centre of the bacquet. The opening is suitable for a conductor coming from outside or inside the room, an iron rod of length proportional to the height of the ceiling, of which the lower end terminates in a funnel or digitation that passes through a hole in the opening of the bacquet where it is sealed to the opening in the glass vessel whose circumfèrence is pierced by several lateral holes that communicate with the layers of bottles; the conductor can also be made of glass.

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[1]. Bacquet: Spelled thus the word appears in Nicot's *Thresor de la langue française* (1606) and in the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française*, (1694), but not in later editions, meaning 'a type of little barrel with very low sides'. Baquet in modern French has the corresponding meaning. IMLD.