

MY METHOD

*E. Cowe*  




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MY METHOD  
INCLUDING  
AMERICAN IMPRESSIONS





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# *MY METHOD*

*Including  
American Impressions*

*By Emile Coué*



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## SOME OF THE FACTS OF MONSIEUR COUÉ'S LIFE

Émile Coué was born on the 26th of February, 1857, in Troyes, in the Aube, France. His mother came from Champagne. His father was a Breton and worked for the Eastern R. R. Company. He attended the town school until the age of fifteen and then went to the high school (Lycée). Here he succeeded in completing the scientific course in less than the allotted time.

At the age of nineteen he became an apprentice in a drug store in Troyes and later went to Paris to study chemistry at the École de Pharmacie. In 1882 he returned to Troyes and became the proprietor of a drug store. In 1884 he married the daughter of a well-known horticulturist of Nancy in Lorraine. A year after their marriage, while they were visiting his wife's parents in Nancy, his wife

suggested that he should go and hear Doctor Liebault at the Nancy School of Hypnotism. What Liebault said interested him greatly, but did not satisfy him entirely.

In 1896, having laid by enough to live upon, together with his wife's property, he decided to retire from business. Accordingly he turned the active direction of his pharmacy over to a friend.

His friend did not make a success of the business, however, and he was obliged to re-assume the active management in 1901. He had by then become deeply interested in the study of hypnotism. He had found the procedure of Doctor Liebault unsatisfactory because of its lack of method. He continued the study of hypnotism and took an American correspondence course, and it was then that he became acquainted with the hand-clasping experiment which he has used ever since as a demonstration of the dominance of the imagination over the will and around which he gradually built up his own method of conscious auto-suggestion.

His drug business automatically furnished him with subjects. He began to hold small clinics right in the store. In these he employed hypnotism. He finally discovered that only about one tenth of his hypnotized patients were in fact completely hypnotized. He also found that certain drugs had a beneficial effect which could not be explained by any medical potency in the drugs themselves. In other words, it was apparent that the benefit must have been brought about through the mind of the patient and not through the drugs. Combining these two observations he gradually came to the conclusion that hypnotism was not necessary. Also many people were afraid of hypnotism and declined to subject themselves to it. Hence its use greatly limited one's possible field of usefulness.

Working and thinking along these lines he gradually abandoned the use of hypnotism and for it substituted suggestion and finally conscious auto-suggestion. As you know the hypnotist suggests to his patient while the patient is unconscious; Monsieur Coué re-

quires his patients to suggest to themselves while conscious.

In 1910 he retired permanently from business, and moved with his wife to Nancy where they built their present home at 186 Rue Jeanne D'Arc.

People came to him to be helped in ever-increasing numbers until by the time the war started he was treating as many as 15,000 people a year. The first circumstance which brought him any measure of what the world calls fame was the attention which the celebrated psychologist Charles Baudouin called to his work by the publication of his book, "Suggestion and Auto-Suggestion." He heard of Monsieur Coué's work while visiting his mother who lived at Nancy where he attended some of Monsieur Coué's lectures and studied his method.

During the war Monsieur Coué remained in Nancy even while the city was being shelled and divided his time between the conferences with his patients and his gardening—his hobby.



In 1921 Doctor Monier-Williams of London came to Nancy and studied Monsieur Coué's method for several weeks. He was the first British physician to pay him an extended visit. He told him he had been led to come to him by the fact that he had cured himself of insomnia by auto-suggestion and by his sense of responsibility toward his patients whom he could not help by any purely medical means.

Doctor Monier-Williams became such a convert to the method that after his return to London he opened a free clinic for the practice of conscious auto-suggestion which has been in successful operation ever since. In the same year at the invitation of Doctor Monier-Williams and many other people who had visited him at Nancy, he went to London to deliver a series of lectures and demonstrations.

As always a good many cures resulted. As these cures were thought to be remarkable and even in some cases to be miracles (they were, of course, no such thing) reports of them found their way into the newspapers. Almost overnight Monsieur Coué found himself possessed

of all the advantages and labouring under the burdens of what the world calls fame. As a result of this trip the Coué Institute for the Practice of Conscious Auto-Suggestion was established in London and is being conducted under the efficient leadership of Miss Richardson. They are now treating thousands of patients a year.

On the twenty-second of last October Monsieur Coué had the satisfaction of seeing an institute opened in Paris for the practice of his method. This is under the direction of his former student, Mademoiselle Anne Villeneuve.

Before he left America preliminary steps had been taken for the establishment of an institute in New York City to be known as the National Coué Institute. The proceeds of his American lecture tour, less his actual expenses, have gone to the Paris institute and to help establish this American institute.

ALFRED M. MURRAY.

PART I  
MY METHOD

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THE REALITY OF AUTO-  
SUGGESTION



## CHAPTER I

### THE REALITY OF AUTO-SUGGESTION

I WISH to say how glad I was to come into personal contact with the great American public on their own side of the Atlantic. And at the same time I could not help feeling just a little embarrassed. I had an idea that people on that continent expected from me some wonderful revelation, bordering on the miraculous, whereas, in reality, the message I have to give is so simple that many are tempted at first to consider it almost insignificant. Let me say right here, however, that simple as my message may be, it will teach those who consent to hear it and to give it fair thought a key to permanent physical and moral well-being which can never be lost.

Auto-suggestion disconcerting in its simplicity. To the uninitiated, auto-suggestion or self-mastery is likely to appear disconcerting

in its simplicity. But does not every discovery, every invention, seem simple and ordinary once it has become vulgarized and the details or mechanism of it known to the man in the street? Not that I am claiming auto-suggestion as my discovery. Far from it. Auto-suggestion is as old as the hills; only we had forgotten to practise it, and so we needed to learn it all over again.

Think of all the forces of the Universe ready to serve us. Yet centuries elapsed before man penetrated their secret and discovered the means of utilizing them. It is the same in the domain of thought and mind: we have at our service forces of transcendent value of which we are either completely ignorant or else only vaguely conscious.

Power of auto-suggestion known in the Middle Ages. The power of thought, of idea, is incommensurable, is immeasurable. The world is dominated by thought. The human being individually is also entirely governed by his own thoughts, good or bad. The powerful action of the mind over the body, which ex-

plains the effects of suggestion, was well known to the great thinkers of the Middle Ages, whose vigorous intelligence embraced the sum of human knowledge.

Every idea conceived by the mind, says Saint Thomas, is an order which the organism obeys. It can also, he adds, engender a disease or cure it.

The efficaciousness of auto-suggestion could not be more plainly stated.

Pythagoras and Aristotle taught auto-suggestion. We know, indeed, that the whole human organism is governed by the nervous system, the centre of which is the brain—the seat of thought. In other words, the brain, or mind, controls every cell, every organ, every function of the body. That being so, is it not clear that by means of thought we are the absolute masters of our physical organism and that, as the Ancients showed centuries ago, thought—or suggestion—can and does produce disease or cure it? Pythagoras taught the principles of auto-suggestion to his disciples. He wrote: “God the Father, deliver

them from their sufferings, and show them what supernatural power is at their call.”

Even more definite is the doctrine of Aristotle, which taught that “a vivid imagination compels the body to obey it, for it is a natural principle of movement. Imagination, indeed, governs all the forces of sensibility, while the latter, in its turn, controls the beating of the heart, and through it sets in motion all vital functions; thus the entire organism may be rapidly modified. Nevertheless, however vivid the imagination, it cannot change the form of a hand or foot or other member.”

I have particular satisfaction in recalling this element of Aristotle’s teaching, because it contains two of the most important, nay, essential principles of my own method of auto-suggestion:

1. The dominating rôle of the imagination.

2. The results to be expected from the practice of auto-suggestion must necessarily be limited to those coming within the bounds of physical possibility.



I shall deal with these essential points in greater detail in another chapter.

Unfortunately, all these great truths, handed down from antiquity, have been transmitted in the cloudy garb of abstract notions, or shrouded in the mystery of esoteric secrecy, and thus have appeared inaccessible to the ordinary mortal. If I have had the privilege of discerning the hidden meaning of the old philosophers, or extracting the essence of a vital principle, and of formulating it in a manner extremely simple and comprehensible to modern humanity, I have also had the joy of seeing it practised with success by thousands of sufferers for more than a score of years.

Slaves of suggestion and masters of ourselves. Mark well, I am no healer. I can only teach others to cure themselves and to maintain perfect health.

I hope to show, moreover, that the domain of application of auto-suggestion is practically unlimited. Not only are we able to control and modify our physical functions, but we can develop in any desired direction our moral

and mental faculties merely by the proper exercise of suggestion: in the field of education there is vast scope for suggestion.

From our birth to our death we are all the slaves of suggestion. Our destinies are decided by suggestion. It is an all-powerful tyrant of which, unless we take heed, we are the blind instruments. Now, it is in our power to turn the tables and to discipline suggestion, and direct it in the way we ourselves wish; then it becomes auto-suggestion: we have taken the reins into our own hands, and have become masters of the most marvellous instrument conceivable. Nothing is impossible to us, except, of course, that which is contrary to the laws of Nature and the Universe.

How are we to attain this command? We must first thoroughly grasp at least the elements of the mechanism of the mental portion of what constitutes the human being. The mental personality is composed of the conscious and the subconscious. It is generally believed that the power and acts of a man de-

pend almost exclusively upon his conscious self. It is beginning to be understood, however, that compared with the immensity of the rôle of the subconscious, that of the conscious self is as a little islet in a vast ocean, subject to storm and tempest.

**Dominance of the subconscious over the conscious.** The subconscious is a permanent, ultra-sensitive photographic plate which nothing escapes. It registers all things, all thoughts, from the most insignificant to the most sublime. But it is more than that. It is the source of creation and inspiration; it is the mysterious power that germinates ideas and effects their materialization in the conscious form of action. If we agree that the point of departure of our joys, our sorrows, our ills, our well-being, our aspirations, of all our emotions, is in our subconscious self, then we may logically deduct that every idea germinated in our mind has a tendency to realization.

Hundreds of examples drawn from little incidents of every-day existence enable us to verify the truth of all this. To illustrate the

action of thought on the emotive faculties we have but to remember any grave accident or harrowing spectacle of which we have been a witness immediately to feel the sensations of pain or horror, with greater or less intensity, according to our individual temperament.

Imagine you are sucking a lemon. A simpler and perhaps even more striking example is the classic one of the lemon. Imagine that you are sucking a juicy, sour lemon, and your mouth will inevitably and instantaneously begin to water. What has happened? Simply this: under the influence of the idea the glands have gone to work and secreted an abundant quantity of saliva—almost as much, in fact, as if you had actually taken a bite at a real lemon. Again, just think of a scratching pencil being drawn perpendicularly over a slate, and you cannot avoid shuddering and screwing up your face under the shock, while contracted nerves send a shiver from the back of the head all down your spine.

Impossible to separate the physical from the **mental**. We must therefore realize that it is

impossible to separate the physical from the mental, the body from the mind; that they are dependent upon each other; that they are really one. The mental element, however, is always dominant. Our physical organism is governed by it. So that we actually make or mar our own health and destinies according to the ideas at work in our subconscious. I mean by this that we are absolutely free to implant whatever ideas we desire in our subconscious self, which is a never-flagging recorder, and those ideas determine the whole trend of our material, mental, and moral being. It is just as easy to whisper into our receptive subconscious self the idea of health as it is to moan over our troubles; and those who do may be certain of the result, because, as I hope I have convinced them, it is based on Nature's laws.



# THE RÔLE OF THE IMAGINATION





## CHAPTER II

### THE RÔLE OF THE IMAGINATION

**B**EFORE beginning to explain the practical application of auto-suggestion and the extremely simple method by which it is possible for every one to gain complete mastery over his or her physical organism, I must speak of the all-important rôle of the imagination.

**Dominance of the imagination over the will.** Contrary to the generally accepted theory the will is not the invincible force it is claimed to be; in fact, whenever imagination and will come into conflict it is always imagination that triumphs. Try to do something while you are repeating: "I cannot do it"—and you will see this truth confirmed. The mere idea of inability to accomplish a thing paralyzes the will power.

Self-mastery is attained when the imagination has been directed and trained to conform

with our desires—for although, in one sense, the imagination is inclined in the subconscious, yet it dominates the latter, and therefore, if we know how to guide it, our subconscious self will take charge of our material being and do its work just as we wish it to be done; or, in other words, exactly in conformity with our conscious suggestions.

I cannot too strongly insist that in the practice of auto-suggestion the exercise of will must be strictly avoided, except in the initial phase of directing or guiding the imagination on the desired lines. This is absolutely the only manifestation of will necessary, or even desirable. Any other voluntary effort is positively harmful in connection with auto-suggestion, and will almost certainly have an effect contrary to the one desired.

Analyze the so-called strong-willed characters of history, Cæsar, Napoleon, etc. You will find that they were all men of big imagination. Certain ideas were implanted in their minds, and their tenacious suggestions impelled them to action.

This, however, is a digression.

**Law of converted effort.** What I want to drive home for the moment is the law of what my friend Charles Baudouin calls "converted effort." Suppose a man suffering from insomnia decides to try the effect of auto-suggestion. Unless previously warned, he will repeat to himself phrases like this: I want to sleep; I will sleep; I am going to sleep. And all the time he will be making desperate efforts to coax sleep. That is fatal. The very fact of exerting effort has converted the latter into a force acting in a sense contrary to the original suggestion, with the result that the poor man tosses and turns in his bed in sleepless wretchedness.

The imagination should be unhindered. Let the imagination do its work alone, unhindered. Be quite passive. Through mysterious, still unexplained processes, our subconscious self accomplishes marvellous things. Think of the very commonest movements of the human body and ask yourselves how they are operated. What has set in motion the

complicated mechanism when you stretch your arm to reach a glass on a table or when you take a cigarette from your case? No one knows. But if we cannot explain the phenomenon we do know that, in actual fact, it is an order resulting from a mere suggestion which is transmitted through the nervous system, and translated into action at a speed infinitely greater than that of lightning.

**Examples of the power of the imagination.** Thousands of examples of the power of imagination may be found in every-day life. There is the one given by Pascal, and so often cited, which I cannot help repeating here, because it is such a perfect illustration. No one would have the slightest difficulty in walking along a foot-wide plank placed on the ground. But put the same plank across a street at the height of one of your American skyscrapers. Blondel himself would not have dared trust himself on it. Any one who did would assuredly fall to death. No clearer proof of the power of an idea could be desired. There is, however, another striking example in the

impunity with which sleep-walkers perform the most perilous feats, such as wandering about on a roof, hugging the extreme edge of it, to the terror of their friends who may happen to perceive them. If awakened suddenly a sleep-walker in such a position would inevitably fall.

Here is another. Doctor Pinaud in his book "*De la Philosophie et de la Longévit *" relates that in the middle of a large dinner party the cook rushed in to announce that she had made a mistake and mixed arsenic with the food instead of some other ingredient! Several persons were immediately seized with pains and sickness, which only ceased when the cook came back to say that it was a false alarm: there had been no such dreadful error!

I have said enough to prove the irresistible influence of the idea, or imagination, over the physical organism. It determines pain, movement, emotions, sensations. Its effect is both moral and physical. We may logically conclude, therefore, that human ailments, which are nothing but disturbances of the natural

equilibrium of all the elements of our being, can be cured by the right kind of idea or suggestion.

**The moral factor in all disease.** To begin with, there is in every disease, of no matter what nature, a moral factor which no doctor can afford to ignore. Some medical authorities in France estimate this moral factor as representing from 40 to 50 per cent. of the chances of recovery. A patient who says to himself "I am getting better" vastly increases his vital forces and hastens his recovery. By gently putting our imagination on the right track we are sure of aiding Nature, who manifests herself through the medium of our subconscious self. The instinct of self-preservation is but a manifestation of Nature. At the first sound of alarm she hastens to the rescue. A cut finger or other wound is followed by a rush of red globules to the injured part. That wonderful subconscious self of ours does it. For it knows and commands every movement of our being, every contraction of our heart, the minutest vibration of every cell in our

organism. It is the sublime instrument which we are so apt to misuse by allowing bad, disturbing, or discouraging thoughts to interfere with its work, instead of allowing it to function smoothly and harmoniously.

Miracles are attributed to the Fakirs of India. Legend or fact, I know not, but it is certainly true that they do some most wonderful things simply because they are taught from their infancy to know and make use of the limitless unseen and yet unexplained forces latent in us—which can be awakened by thought.

**The limitations of auto-suggestion unknown.** I am often asked: What are the limitations of auto-suggestion? I reply: I really do not know. The cures I have seen have appeared sometimes so amazing, so incredible, that I decline theoretically to place any limit at all, although, of course, I must insist, nothing must be expected from auto-suggestion which is obviously outside the domain of material possibilities. For instance, it would be absurd to ask for the growth of a new arm or a

new leg—despite the fact that the lobster seems to know how to grow a new claw when it is necessary!

There are persons who, by long practice and concentration, have acquired an amazing power over their bodily functions. Cases are known to the Medical Faculty of Paris of men able to increase at will the speed of their heart-beats from 90 to 120, or diminish it to such a degree that the heart seems almost to stop.

In another chapter I shall talk of the diseases actually cured by auto-suggestion, and in general of its sphere of curative possibilities. Let it be thoroughly realized that thought, or suggestion, is able to mould the human body as a sculptor chisels his clay. Thought is an act; it is more than Bernheim believed when he wrote: "Suggestion is an idea which can be transformed into action."

Certain it is that cases declared to be incurable have been cured by auto-suggestion. And not only diseases of a functional nature. Sores and wounds of long standing which had resisted all other treatments have been healed



rapidly by suggestion. Was it not Doctor Carnot who said "the wounds of victorious soldiers heal more rapidly than those of the vanquished"?

I can declare without hesitation that whatever the illness, the practice of rational auto-suggestion will always effect an appreciable improvement in the patient's condition, even if the disease itself be incurable.



AUTO-SUGGESTION IN PRACTICE



## CHAPTER III

### AUTO-SUGGESTION IN PRACTICE

**A**FTER the preceding explanations of the theory of auto-suggestion my readers are certainly anxious to be initiated in the method of putting it into actual practice. We have seen that our physical organism is completely dominated by our subconscious self which, obeying every suggestion, of no matter what nature, transmits it as an order to every fibre of the body, and that the latter responds or reacts immediately. The only obstacle to the perfect accomplishment of the operation is the intervention of the conscious will or reason at the same time. What we want to know, therefore, is the mechanism by which we may acquire control of our subconscious self—in other words, achieve self-mastery.

Simplicity of controlling the subconscious.

The method is simplicity itself. So simple that it has been scoffed at, as all simple solutions of seemingly complicated problems have been scoffed at. But its logic is irrefutable, and its effects are demonstrated every day of our lives.

All that is necessary is to place oneself in a condition of mental passiveness, silence the voice of conscious analysis, and then deposit in the ever-awake subconscious the idea or suggestion which one desires to be realized.

Every night, when you have comfortably settled yourself in bed and are on the point of dropping off to sleep, murmur in a low but clear voice, just loud enough to be heard by yourself, this little formula: "Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better." Recite the phrase like a litany, twenty times or more: and in order to avoid distracting your attention by the effort of counting, it is an excellent idea to tick the number off on a piece of string tied in twenty knots.

"Puerile!" Perhaps. Yet it suffices to set in motion in the desired direction the stupen-

dous forces of which we may be masters if we will. It is a mere suggestion, but that suggestion cast into the mysterious laboratory of the subconscious self is instantaneously translated into an active, living force.

Like the Oracles of the Ancients. The Ancients well knew the power—often the terrible power—contained in the repetition of a phrase or a formula. The secret of the undeniable influence they exercised through the old Oracles resided probably, nay, certainly, in the force of suggestion.

Yes, my method of self-cure, by auto-suggestion, is undoubtedly simple. It is easy to understand and just as easy to practise. Yet the human mind is to-day what it was in the days of Oracles: it insists on associating the healing of the body or mind with complicated theories and processes which, in reality, are quite unnecessary. Why complain if things are made easy for you?

People may wonder why I am content to prescribe such a general and apparently vague formula as “Every day, in every way, I am

getting better and better" for all and every ailment. The reason is, strange as it may seem, that our subconscious mind does not need the details. The general suggestion that everything "in every way" is going well is quite sufficient to set up the procedure of persuasion which will carry its effects to the different organs and improve every function. I have had remarkable demonstration of this in the course of my long teaching and experiments. Time and again I have seen patients cured, not only of the particular disease for which they sought relief, but also of minor disabilities which they had almost forgotten.

Why a general suggestion is better than specific suggestions. The fact is, our subconscious knows much more than we can ever know ourselves about our physical organism. Fortunately for us! Just think what a mess we should make of things if we had to look after every function: breathing, digestion, for instance. Who is it that takes charge of such a complicated job? The subconscious mind, and if it ever does its work badly, it is always



because, in some way or another, we have voluntarily meddled with it. Every organ or function is connected with and depends in some degree upon others, and if the ordinary man or woman were to begin ordering the subconscious tinkering with a particular organ, he or she would certainly be obeyed, only the chances are that something else would then go wrong as a result of insufficient knowledge or perhaps complete ignorance of physiology on the part of the conscious mind.

**Don't concentrate.** So just leave it to the subconscious. Avoid all effort. When you recite your phrase "Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better" you must relax all strain and tension. Do not seek to concentrate your thoughts. Concentration is very valuable and necessary when conscious reasoning is to be done, but fatal to the success of auto-suggestion. Isolate yourself from everything likely to distract your attention, however. Close your eyes if possible. You can obtain mental isolation in a crowd, in a street car, if need be, and there is no reason

why you should not practise auto-suggestion in such conditions in the daytime, always providing you succeed in putting yourself in the right state of passiveness. At the risk of being accused of tedious repetition, I must insist on the necessity of passiveness and inertia. Do not think you must *struggle* to impose your suggestion. The very fact of making it an effort will bring into play the conscious will, and that will actually raises a barrier between the subconscious and the suggestion and prevents the latter from penetrating.

Now, from what I have said of the superiority of a general formula of auto-suggestion, it must not be thought that I altogether discourage the application of suggestion to specific complaints. On the contrary, it is to be recommended unreservedly in all cases, where it is desired to relieve pain, correct functional disorders, or alleviate their symptoms.

**How to banish pain.** For such purposes here is my procedure: to cause pain to vanish, rub the affected spot lightly but rapidly with

your hand, at the same time repeating in an undertone, so swiftly as to make of it a mere gabble the words "ca passe" (pronounce "*sah pass*"). In a few minutes the pain should disappear, or at the very least, be considerably diminished. The reason for *gabbling* the words is to avoid the risk of any other extraneous or contrary thought slipping in through fissures which might result from a more distinct but slower diction. For the same reason I advise English-speaking people to stick to the French version: it being much easier to say "ca passe" quickly than the longer and more awkward expression "it is passing" or "it is going."

**How to go to sleep.** Sufferers from sleeplessness will proceed in another way. Having settled themselves comfortably in bed they will repeat (not gabble), "I am going to sleep, I am going to sleep," in a quiet, placid, even voice, avoiding, of course, the slightest mental effort to attain the desired result. The soporific effect of this droning repetition of the suggestion soon makes itself felt; whereas, if one actually tries to sleep, the spirit of wakeful-

ness is kept alive by the negative idea, according to the law of converted effort. Insomnia indeed affords a striking demonstration of the disastrous effect of the exertion of the will, the result of which is just the contrary to the one desired.

Stammering, lack of confidence, and paralysis cured. Stammering, again, is a painful affliction which readily yields to auto-suggestion. I have known cases of cures being effected in one sitting, though this, naturally, is rare. What is the cause of stammering? Merely the fear or the idea that one is going to stammer. If you can substitute for that idea the conviction or the suggestion that you are not going to stutter, that if you can say ten words without stuttering there is no reason why you should stumble over the eleventh, then you are cured.

Nervousness, timidity, lack of confidence, and still worse, nervous phenomena, can be eradicated by the practice of auto-suggestion, for they are simply the consequences of self-suggestion of a wrong, unnatural character.

Those who suffer from such infirmities must set up a different train of suggestions by saying: "I am not nervous; I am well and full of confidence; all is going well." In a fit of anger, try the effect of suddenly murmuring "I am calm," and you will be surprised.

There are quite a number of cases of paralysis which are due only to the patient's belief in his or her inability to use the affected limb or member. They can all be cured, easily, certainly. Implant the notion: "I can walk, I can move my arm (or leg, or finger)," and the cure is accomplished. Why? Because, although the lesion which originally produced the paralysis has healed already, the patient has lost the habit of using his limb, and still thinks he is unable to do so. It is obvious that, strong as that subconscious notion may be in its effects, those of a contrary notion must be equally strong if only the suggestion can be conveyed to the subconscious mind. That is the whole secret.



DISEASES THAT CAN BE CURED





## CHAPTER IV

### DISEASES THAT CAN BE CURED

**L**ET us now talk a little about specific diseases which can be cured by auto-suggestion.

I must repeat what I have said in a previous chapter—that it is very difficult to place any limit to the powers of auto-suggestion (within the bounds of possibility, of course), for, even in cases of maladies described as incurable I have had occasion to observe such extraordinary improvement effected in the patients' condition that the most extravagant hopes would seem to be justified.

**Organic diseases can be influenced.** It can be affirmed without hesitation that even organic disorders come within the influence of auto-suggestion. I am aware that this contradicts the theory of a number of doctors who, perhaps, judge the matter rather too hastily.

But my affirmation is supported by many other eminent members of the fraternity in France and elsewhere who have found its truth demonstrated by actual facts. Doctor Vachet, professor at the School of Psycho-Therapeutics at Paris, and a distinguished member of the growing corps of physicians who have begun to employ auto-suggestion and suggestion as an adjunct to the ordinary resources of medicine, cited recently the case of a young woman cured of ulcers in the stomach by the new method. There was no diagnostic error. X-ray photographs had been taken. A surgical operation had been prescribed. By means of suggestion, unaided by drugs or other treatment, the patient was cured within two months. In the first week the vomiting had ceased.

The same practitioner mentions the rapid disappearance of a tumor on the tenth rib, the sufferer being a young girl who was also afflicted with a fissure of the anus. The girl had been ill for two years, and in bed for three months. Her temperature was high, and her

general condition bad. The power of suggestion cured her in a fortnight, the tumor disappearing completely and the fissure healing without leaving a trace.

Showing how symptoms may be cured even when the disease itself may not. In the course of my own experience, one of the most remarkable cases which I can call to mind is that of a boy who, if not actually cured of a serious heart affection—endocarditis—at least got rid of all the symptoms, and lives and enjoys life as though in perfect health. One day the door of my study was opened and a pale, thin youth entered, leaning heavily on the arm of his father. At every step he paused, and every breath he took was like the painful gasp of an exhausted animal. Poor little chap! I did not expect to be able to do much for him. However, after his father had explained his malady I took him in hand, demonstrating the force of auto-suggestion by means of a few simple experiments such as I usually make during my lectures. For instance, I made him clasp his hands tightly,

and then showed him that he could not unclasp them while thinking and saying, "I cannot, I cannot." The boy was convinced. He went away full of confidence, promising to recite my formula regularly and to practise conscientiously the principles of auto-suggestion. I saw him a few weeks afterward. There was already a considerable change. He could walk better; his breathing was easier; but he was still in a pitiful condition. The lad persevered, however, and he did, indeed, "get better and better every day," and when I heard of him next he was playing football! He was exempted from military service during the war, for medical examination showed him to be still suffering from his heart trouble, although to all intents and purposes he was a well-grown, muscular young man. Which proves that symptoms can always be relieved by auto-suggestion, even when the disease itself is incurable.

**Diabetes.** Take diabetes. According to certain modern authorities this affection may sometimes have its origin in nervous trouble.

Generally, of course, it is organic. In any case, I have known it frequently to yield to auto-suggestion practised with perseverance. Recently a patient succeeded in reducing the amount of sugar from 80 grams to 59 in less than a month, while several painful symptoms disappeared.

Tuberculosis may be helped. Without venturing to declare that tuberculosis can be cured by auto-suggestion, I do say that in many cases it can be fought successfully. By the practice of auto-suggestion the resistance of the organism is strengthened, and the patient aids Nature's own tendency to react against disease. This is true, indeed, in all cases of general debility. I know a lady of sixty who had been ailing for the best part of her life, and who, when she came to me first, believed she was near death. She weighed barely ninety-eight pounds. Auto-suggestion transformed her. The idea of health implanted in her subconscious gave her self-confidence unknown to her previously. Her health improved to such an extent that she

recovered from an attack of pulmonary congestion which her doctor believed she could not possibly resist, and she has increased her weight by twenty-six pounds.

Sciatica, gastric troubles, constipation, asthma, and headaches readily helped. Sciatica, gastric troubles, constipation, asthma, and headaches readily give way to auto-suggestion. There is a man who had suffered from headaches for thirty years, taking aspirin and similar drugs regularly on certain days of the week. (Notice the power of suggestion: he was convinced he would have a headache on such and such a day, and he did have one.) Now he has set his mind working along other lines, and has cured himself of his chronic headaches. I also know a man who suffered from sciatica, and who, according to a letter which he wrote the other day, has had practically no pain since the day he came to hear me explain the practice of auto-suggestion. And a young woman who now thinks nothing of walking eight miles, although by her doctor's orders she had considered herself an "invalid"

for many years, scarcely daring to stir from her bed or her sofa.

Wasted tissue may be repaired. Astonishing as these results may appear, they are perfectly logical and natural, since it has been demonstrated that, in certain conditions, wasted tissue may be repaired by the exercise of auto-suggestion.

Women may hold and enhance their beauty. And now, here is a word of comfort for my fair readers who are fearful (and how many are not?) of losing their good looks. Of course you are right to want to remain young and fresh and good-looking. And you can do so if you only realize that you possess the secret yourselves. It is that little fairy who dwells in your subconscious and who asks nothing better than to smooth away those impertinent wrinkles, to put firm cushions of healthy flesh under sagging cheeks, or restore the laughing sparkle to dulled eyes. Yes, just train your imagination to visualize your face or body as you would like it to be, and you will have a very good chance of seeing them approach

pretty near your ideal. Mind, I don't tell you that you can change the colour of your eyes or hair, or modify the shape of your chin or nose: we must always keep to the materially possible. But you can really improve your appearance and ward off the attacks of age and fatigue. Fatigue, by the way, ought not to be possible if you practise auto-suggestion. It is so largely a matter of imagination. Suppose you have a task to perform. If you think to yourself beforehand, "This is going to be difficult and tiring," it surely will be so, and you will yawn over it and feel quite tired and bored. But if you are in a different frame of mind, and say, "This is going to be easy, I shall enjoy doing it," then you will not feel the slightest trace of fatigue. The best way of making a hard job easy is to buckle down and do it.

One must observe the ordinary rules of health. It goes without saying that the practice of auto-suggestion will not dispense one from the observance of the ordinary rules of health and hygiene. Remember, we are using the forces of Nature, so it would be silly



to attempt to fight them at the same time. Lead a rational life. Do not overeat. Masticate your food thoroughly. Take sufficient exercise. Avoid excesses. They are Nature's Laws. Their observance, combined with the knowledge of the all-powerful effects of auto-suggestion, will keep you in good physical and moral health, and enable you to combat successfully any of the ills to which the human body is heir through tradition and heredity.

**The doctor a necessity.** Let me add most emphatically that I do not advise you to dispense with a doctor's services. Obviously there are many cases in which his advice and medicine and care are absolutely indispensable. And always a doctor's presence and prestige and cheering words are helpful to the patient, especially if he also takes advantage of the wonderful instrument at his disposition, and accompanies his prescription with the proper suggestions. The results will be attained with much greater rapidity. I want both patients and doctors to understand that auto-suggestion is a most formidable weapon against disease.



MORAL POWER OF AUTO-  
SUGGESTION



## CHAPTER V

### MORAL POWER OF AUTO-SUGGESTION

LEAVING for awhile the subject of physical health cures effected by auto-suggestion, let us discuss the rôle of the latter in relation to our moral well-being. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," said the Man of Wisdom thousands of years ago; and his words are as true now as they were then. And what is such "training" if not the art of implanting a mass of suggestions in the young, receptive mind? Those suggestions may be good or bad, and upon them depends the child's whole destiny.

I shall have more to say on the subject of the rational and scientific education of children later on, but for the moment I should like to insist upon the importance of suggestion and auto-suggestion for society. Moral health is

essential to physical health, and it is to the interest of the community at large to improve the moral health of its feebler elements. Granted the efficacy of auto-suggestion in the accomplishment of this task, it must be clear to all that the new method opens up a magnificent vista of possibilities in the direction of social progress.

It furnishes us the means of combatting victoriously the bad streaks in our nature, whether inherited or acquired, and of developing our intelligence; of curbing a wayward imagination, of adding balance to our judgment, modifying our mentality, correcting our moral weaknesses, while curing our bodily ills. Its generalization must conduce to individual and social reform, and the time may come when, freed of the evil suggestions which are so many poisons debilitating humanity both spiritually and physically, the world having purged itself of all its morbid elements—the criminal classes—may embark upon a new and glorious phase of fuller harmony.

**Psychic culture as necessary as physical.**

We all recognize the value of physical culture. It is not too much to say that to its renaissance in my own country and the consequent building up of a generation of robust, strong-limbed young men, full of stamina and resistance, is due in a considerable measure our victory in the Great War. Well, psychic culture is equally necessary. It will teach us to think simply, sanely. It will teach us to realize that we can be, and should be, the masters of events, and not their playthings. Psychic culture, through the medium of suggestion and auto-suggestion, corrects our moral deformities, just as physical culture corrects our bodily defects. We cannot all become champions, but we can all develop our personality in the spiritual or moral domain as we can all increase our muscular force by appropriate exercises.

Auto-suggestion to be used to combat criminal tendencies. Auto-suggestion, then, I am persuaded, is destined to be applied more and more generally in the world's efforts to stamp out crime. I have had occasion to try

my method at Nancy upon a few boys of bad character whose precocious criminal instincts had led them to the reformatory. I believe good results were attained, but unfortunately I was unable to pursue the experiments over a long period, as the poor youths, sent in batches, remained only a few weeks before being transferred to the central establishment in another town. However, the French authorities are quite in favour of a prolonged trial of my method being made and I hope to devote myself to this task in the near future. I may say, too, that I found great interest manifested in America in this question of auto-suggestion as a remedy against the growth of crime.

**Power of suggestion in crime.** It is a well-known fact that crime is contagious. From time to time every country has crime waves or epidemics—simply because the mind is influenced by suggestions from no matter what source, more or less according to the degree of sensitiveness or strength of character of the individual. In France some time ago



the papers were full of details of a daring train robbery. Immediately afterward there was a repetition of the crime perpetrated in exactly the same manner, and within a fortnight five or six similar train assaults took place, the details of execution being identical in all cases. The epidemic was the result of suggestion.

Only recently Paris had a strange and striking illustration of the power of suggestion and auto-suggestion, the one provoking the other and translating them into acts. A maniac pricked a woman shopping in a dry-goods store with a needle or a syringe, injecting some liquid which caused a swelling of the part affected. The papers published a few lines about it, and the next day two or three other similar cases were recorded. The number continued to grow till the victims were counted in scores, and not the least strange feature was that, while suggestion created the "prickers," auto-suggestion created the victims, numbers of women being led by sheer imagination to believe themselves "pricked" and to feel the pain of a sudden jab. Curiously enough there

was a similar epidemic in the time of Louis XV!

Another example of crime contagion is to be found in the "scalping" series in the seventeenth century, when for a certain period not a day passed without one or more women being shorn of their hair by mad-brained ruffians. Twenty years ago there was a similar epidemic.

The cinema—the movies—again must be regarded in some respects as a school of crime by reason of the terrible effects of suggestion on ill-balanced or unformed minds. And the craze of the Nick Carter style of story has been responsible for the wrecking of many young lives in my country.

**Suggestion in reformatories.** The rôle of suggestion in provoking crime being thus demonstrated, it is logical to assume that suggestion is equally effective as an arm against crime. The idea is everything, since it carries the germ of action. There is vast scope for suggestion in reformatories. It could be practised collectively. With the seed of suggestion sown indiscriminately at first, the good

ground would soon be discovered by its fruit. Then the good should be separated from the bad, for, by virtue of the eternal law of the contagion of ideas, the subjects influenced by the suggestions would strengthen each other, while the neighbourhood of the refractory ones would tend to add to their resistance to good suggestions.

Vice can be conquered. To people who ask if vice really can be conquered I answer emphatically yes. By suggestion, long and oft repeated, the character can be modified. A proof that education (or suggestion) does modify character is that the instinct of self-preservation—the strongest of all—can be overcome; as witness the many acts of sublime and total self-sacrifice in favour of others recorded by every epoch.

Suggestion acts as a break to bad instincts; that is its negative rôle. It has a positive part to play in acting as a propelling force for good impulses. Applied systematically, scientifically, there is no doubt that a large portion of the classes branded as “criminal” could

be reclaimed, and thousands of outcasts transformed into clean-thinking, clean-living, and useful citizens.

This is naturally especially true in regard to the young, with their keen, vigorous imaginations open to every impression. Surely it is the duty of those in authority to see that their imagination be fed with something better than the germs of crime. The susceptibility of youth is such that it is easy (save in the fortunately rare cases of wholly bad characters) to create vivid images or ideas of good actions in their minds. Once anchored in the subconscious those ideas must inevitably develop and eventually exteriorize themselves in acts.

AUTO-SUGGESTION IN THE EDUCA-  
TION OF CHILDREN



## CHAPTER VI

### AUTO-SUGGESTION IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

**P**ARADOXICAL as it may appear to those who have not fully understood the principles and working of auto-suggestion, the education of a child begins even before it is born! Without going back to explanations which I have given in previous chapters, I need only say that the imagination plays the supreme rôle in every function of life, and that by disciplining it, or, in other words, by exercising auto-suggestion, a prospective mother can not only determine the sex of her child (that has been demonstrated by certain medical authorities) but also, to a large degree, its physical and moral characteristics. She has only to let her imagination deposit in her subconscious mind the image of the son or daughter she desires and the qualities she

wishes the still unborn infant to possess. The result is assured.

Even more important, perhaps, is the fact that such a child will yield more readily than most to suggestion. Which does not mean that its character is likely to be weak. On the contrary, the probabilities are that it will, as it grows up, exchange suggestion for auto-suggestion, and achieve perfect self-mastery. Only it must be remembered that our acts and deeds are, for the most part, the result of past outside suggestions or example. The importance of beginning a child's education early and of controlling the suggestions destined to influence and mould the young mind must therefore be obvious to all. Parents and educators must be careful to implant in it only good suggestions and protect it at all costs from bad ones.

How is that to be done? I shall try to give a few indications—or suggestions. They must be taken as general ones, of course; they may be modified or adapted to individual subjects and circumstances.



How to treat children. Be of an equable temper with them, speaking in tones gentle but firm, persuading them to obey without giving them the temptation to resist your influence. Never be rough with a child, for to do so is to risk provoking a sentiment of fear accompanied by sullenness or even hate.

Avoid talking ill of people in the presence of children; they will inevitably follow your example later on. And backbiting often leads to disaster.

Seek to awaken in their minds the desire to understand Nature. Keep them interested. Answer their questions clearly, with good-humour. Do not put them off, as so many of us are tempted to do, with such replies as, "Oh, you bother me," or "You'll know about that later."

Above all, never on any account tell a child that he or she is a "story-teller," or lazy, or a dunce, or worse. Remember that such suggestions have a very strong tendency to become realities, just as the better kind of suggestions have.

Encouragement particularly necessary to children. Rather say to a child inclined to be lazy or negligent, "Well, you have done much better than usual to-day; I am very pleased with your work; you are improving." It may not be true. No matter. The idea of improvement, of excellence, of endeavour, will sink into the child's mind, and gradually, with judicious encouragement, will be transformed unconsciously into fact.

Avoid discussing diseases before children; auto-suggestion is quick to carry the idea to the physical plane and develop the very illness you wish to avert. Teach them, on the contrary, that good health is normal; sickness an anomaly, a humiliation which is only a consequence of the non-observance of Nature's laws.

Never frighten children. Do not let a child fear the elements; man is made to stand cold, heat, rain, wind, etc., without ill effects; it is merely an idea that creates weakness. It is a cruel thing to frighten children by talking of "bogies" and goblins and the like; fear

thus instilled may persist in after life and ruin a child's later life and destiny.

**Make work attractive.** It is easy to make a child like work and study by making the lessons attractive by means of anecdotes appropriate to the subject, and by explaining the difficult points with a smile and conveying the impression that it is all quite simple. The educator's ideal should be to make his pupils look forward to the next lesson

Naturally, one must instil the love of labour, with the idea that labour is natural and indispensable; that idleness is abnormal, unhealthy, and conducive to every kind of physical and moral evil. A child's pliable mind easily assimilates such suggestions, which become permanent and will mould and build his character.

**Set only good examples.** It is unnecessary, and not in the scope of this chapter, to enumerate all the qualities which a child should possess. What I wish to explain is the employment of suggestion and auto-suggestion in his education and training. We all know

that "example is better than precept," but we realize the truth of it with greater force after studying the power of auto-suggestion. And children are particularly sensitive to suggestion; they are always ready to copy what they see, good or bad. So the first duty of parents and educators is to set only good examples.

**Suggestion to children while falling asleep.** Suggestion may be practised with wonderful effect to correct any defect in a child's character, and to develop missing qualities. Every night, just as the child is about to fall off to sleep, or when it is already asleep, stand about a yard away from the bed, and murmur in a low undertone what you wish to obtain, repeating fifteen to twenty times the qualities it is desired to provoke and the defects to be corrected. Do not be afraid to repeat the same phrases monotonously; that is the most powerful means of reaching the subconscious. The latter needs no eloquence to be impressed. A plain statement of the idea is sufficient. More than that defeats the ends to be attained.

**Suggestion in schools.** In schools remarkable results should be obtained by teachers practising suggestion on their classes every day before beginning lessons. The pupils should be told to shut their eyes and then they might be addressed something after the following fashion: "Children, I am sure you are all going to be good, polite, and amiable to every one, and obedient to your parents and teachers. You will always take note of their observations, because you know that it is for your own good. You are intelligent, so you love your work, even the subjects which you used to dislike. In class your attention will be always alert and attentive to what your teacher says. You will only be sorry for other children who may be foolishly wasting time and playing during the lesson. So, as you are very intelligent, you will have no difficulty in understanding the lesson, no matter on what subject, and you will remember everything you are told. It will all be stored away in your mind ready for use directly your knowledge is called upon."

Character formed by imagination. Of course the above is merely a sample of what might be said in the way of suggestion. It can be modified and certainly improved by teachers to suit their particular needs. The important point is to practise suggestion in this form. It does not matter if the children laugh a little at first, or if their attention wanders, or if, when the morning suggestion (it is not desirable, naturally, that they should know the purpose of it) has become a regular thing, they listen automatically to the words without hearing them. The words reach the subconscious mind all the same, and the ideas conveyed do their work just as efficiently.

In a word, it is essential that a child should be impregnated with the right kind of suggestions. Everything depends upon it. Play upon the imagination. Character is formed by imagination. More often than not that which is attributed to heredity, in the moral domain as well as in the physical, is the consequence of ideas germinated by example. It is impossible to believe a child is

born a criminal. He becomes one by auto-suggestion, just as he may become a valued member of the community as the result of auto-suggestion guided in the right direction.





MASTERS OF OUR DESTINIES



## CHAPTER VII

### MASTERS OF OUR DESTINIES

**M**ONSIEUR JOURDAIN, the “Bourgeois Gentilhomme,” “spoke prose without knowing it.” In the same way we all practise auto-suggestion, but often without being conscious of it. To a certain extent auto-suggestion may be automatic, in the sense that it may not be inspired or guided by deliberate reflection. But how much more potent a factor it must be in our lives when we have learned its mechanism and discovered how to make use of it for our own ends! The act of breathing is automatic; yet we can modify at will our manner of breathing; we can improve our health by learning to breathe in a certain way, and by doing regular breathing exercises. So it is with auto-suggestion. Once we realize its force and learn to control it we are the masters of our destinies.

Babies automatically practise auto-suggestion. Let me give you an illustration of the automatic practice of auto-suggestion. A new-born baby, in its cradle, begins to cry. Immediately its mother takes it in her arms; the infant stops crying, and is replaced in the cradle. Whereupon the crying begins over again, only to stop once more if the baby be lifted from its cradle. The operation may be repeated an almost unlimited number of times, always with the same result. The child—lacking conscious thought—is automatically practising auto-suggestion. It obtains the gratification of its unconscious desire to be taken into its mother's arms by crying. If resisted, on the other hand, if left to cry alone in its cradle, its subconscious mind will register the fact, and the baby will not take the trouble to cry, because it knows it will have no effect.

Self-mastery means health. And it is like that with every one, from birth to death. We live by auto-suggestion; we are governed by our subconscious mind. Happily, we are able to guide it by our reason. Like everything

else, however, the science of auto-suggestion has to be learned. It is a matter of educating oneself up to the point where complete control of the subconscious mind is attained. That means self-mastery and health.

Prevention is better than cure. The idea of good health begets good health, and if by accident we are attacked by disease, we are certain to have an infinitely greater chance of resisting and of rapidly throwing off the malady by practising auto-suggestion than if we know nothing of its principles. Have you not noticed this during epidemics? It is a well-known fact that persons who, in such times, go serenely about their business, not worrying for themselves, and not giving thought to the epidemic except to tell themselves that they are sure not to catch the sickness, are almost always immune and escape contagion. On the other hand, nervous people, frightened by the cases around them, and allowing their thoughts to run constantly on the prevailing malady, are certain to fall ill, despite all their precautions. Amazing

instances of the power of suggestion are recorded in the annals of the Faculty of Paris. Professor Bouchet relates the following among many others. An old lady, after undergoing a desperate surgical operation, was dying. Her son was due to arrive from India two days later. Humanly speaking, it was impossible for her to live so long. The method of suggestion was resorted to. She was told that she was better and that she would see her son on the morrow. The result was a complete success. A fortnight later the old lady was still alive. And, from a medical point of view, that was a miracle.

Equally miraculous, to all appearance, was the case of a man occupying an important position at Nancy a few years ago. He came to me suffering from sinusitis. He had undergone eleven operations, but the terrible disease continued its ravages. He was in a horrible condition, physically and morally. Day and night, without intermission, the unfortunate man was tortured by excruciating pains in the head which prevented him from

sleeping. His weakness was extreme, and his appetite non-existent. Most of the time he remained helpless on a sofa. I confess that I had little hope of being able to do anything for him. However, I took pains to convince him of the efficacy of suggestion, and though there seemed to be no amelioration during five or six sittings, I could see that the man, sick as he was, had gained absolute faith in the soundness of the theories I had expounded to him. He told me he was daily directing his subconscious mind to the idea of healing his sickness. Then, one day he said he believed that he felt a slight improvement, but was not quite sure. It was the truth, however, and the improvement continued. A complete cure followed rapidly. To-day that man is perfectly healthy, able to work without fatigue. The discharges from the nose which occurred daily have ceased.

I remember another remarkable case of collective auto-suggestion—more or less “automatic” this time. It happened in the hospital services of Doctor Renaud, in Paris. A new

serum, an alleged cure for tuberculosis, had just been discovered. It was tested on the patients. Apparently as a result of the injections all showed an immediate improvement. The coughing diminished, and other symptoms disappeared, and the general condition of all began to be very satisfactory. Alas! Shortly afterward it became known that the famous serum from which the patients unconsciously hoped for so much was nothing but an ordinary drug which had been previously tested with negative results. At once, with the fading away of their illusions, the sick men and women lost all the improvement gained, and their old symptoms reappeared.

**Modern miracles.** Miracles happen in our time as they have done in the past. I mean the things that are *called* miracles. For, of course, there is no such thing as a miracle. The modern miracle is worked by auto-suggestion, the wonderful force entrusted to us by Nature, and which, if we will only probe its mysteries, shall make us all-powerful within the limits of human possibilities. Fatality,



fatalism shall lose their meaning; nay, they cannot exist, save in our erring imagination. For it is we ourselves who alone shall shape our destinies, rising always above the external circumstances and conditions which from time to time may be thrown across our paths.



THE FUTURE OF AUTO-  
SUGGESTION



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FUTURE OF AUTO-SUGGESTION

**I**T MAY be interesting at this point to move forward a little and take a glance at the future of auto-suggestion. I have no doubt in my mind that the principles of auto-suggestion are now firmly established, and that a sound basis for their practical application has been prepared. That application is bound to become more and more general as the principles become more widely known, especially among medical practitioners. I cannot too strongly insist that auto-suggestion, so far from being in conflict with medical science, is perfectly in harmony with it, and is destined to develop into one of the most powerful curative elements at the disposal of physicians.

There was a period of considerable activity in psychological research at the end of the last century, when Charcot and the famous Salpe-

triare Schools took the lead in proclaiming the curative possibilities of Idea or Suggestion. Liebault and Bernheim at Nancy were also in the vanguard of the same movement.

Psychological research halted by materialism and fatalism. Then followed a spell of skepticism and materialism. Thought was declared to be nothing but a secretion of the brain, and conscience a mere mass of sensations condemned to be the plaything of circumstances. Our ills were irreparable, because inherited, and it was of no avail to fight against the legacy of the past. This conception coloured the philosophy of the day, transformed poets into pessimists, and made doctors fatalists. Psychology seemed to be severed completely from philosophy. Ideas were considered to be effects, and incapable of ever being causes.

Doubt and pessimism gained the minds of the intellectual classes, and percolated through to the masses.

Abstract philosophical ideas practically applied for therapeutic purposes. But the reac-

tion was at hand. Soon a new and brighter and saner philosophy emerged, with Bergson and others, to reveal the amazing natural forces at our own command, which had been so long ignored or neglected. If I mention myself here it is simply to say that I have done nothing more than to demonstrate the possibility for every one of utilizing for his own physical and moral well-being the force of the subconscious revealed by the diffused, abstract notions of the new School of Philosophy. Others will carry on the work, but I think I may say that the basis of a new practical philosophy with definite therapeutic application has now been laid. It is admitted that the human mind is a much greater force than was believed formerly. Facts—cures obtained by suggestion and auto-suggestion in cases even of organic diseases—have come to prove the importance of the Idea in the treatment of bodily ills.

Institutes for practice of auto-suggestion being built up in London, Paris, and New York. From the purely experimental stage,

the doctrine of auto-suggestion is ripe enough to enter the domain of universal application. Already, in Paris, it is being carried forward on the crest of a big scientific movement which bids fair to grow rapidly under the leadership of a group of enthusiastic members of the medical faculty, philosophers, and savants. An institute for the teaching and practice of auto-suggestion has been founded, and I hope to see others created in other cities in all parts of the world. One will soon be in existence in New York. At the Paris Institute a corps of trained men and women, some belonging to the medical profession, like my disciple, Dr. Pierre Vachet, professor at the *École de Psychologie*, and Doctor Veriot constitute a permanent teaching staff whose mission is to spread, by explanation and experiments, the knowledge of the so-called mysterious forces which we all possess, and to show patients how to use them to the advantage of their own health.

Auto-suggestion, then, is becoming more and more an experimental science and an ele-



ment of the first order in the domain of therapeutics as well as in those of sociology and education. The creation of institutes such as that of Paris will, I am convinced, be a powerful stimulant to the study of the wonderful resources of our subconscious self.

Development of applied psychology just beginning. Applied psychology, the vast developments of which are only just beginning, will teach us to know ourselves better, to possess ourselves more completely, to control the supreme powers with which Nature has endowed us and to use them for the development of our character and of our physical, intellectual, and moral well-being.

The subject far outstrips the individual; society as a whole will benefit by man's self-mastery. The doctor has been called "the last of the magicians." But we can all be much greater than the magician by merely utilizing the stupendous moral power and cerebral energy latent within us. Revivify intelligence paralyzed by doubt or ignorance, regenerate the physical organism, strengthen

the moral fibre—such are the aims to be attained, presaging an ennobling of human nature the consequences of which cannot easily be calculated. By means within reach of all we shall secure an advancement of humanity, and it will be possible for every one to feel within himself or herself the growth of that sublime force which elevates one both morally and physically.

Perhaps one day the dreams of Utopists may be realized and humanity will shake off the chains of materialism which still separate us from what we think to be supernatural knowledge, but which, in reality, is already in us, only waiting to be discerned. Who knows? Perhaps prisons may become unnecessary when we shall have learned how even evil and evil-doing can be overcome by suggestion. Backward children will be made normal, and the wayward ones taught through their subconscious to become good and useful citizens.

People are still ignorant of the immense benefits to the individual and to society to be

obtained by auto-suggestion employed for curative and educational purposes. But the light is spreading. And it will not be long before the new science has its place definitely among psychological, sociological, and medical studies.

Auto-suggestion may develop more rapidly in America than in Europe. Perhaps the study and practice of auto-suggestion is destined to make swifter strides on the American side of the Atlantic than in Europe. I do not know. I do know, however, that hundreds of American men and women have not hesitated to cross the ocean in order to probe my system at Nancy. In America I found myself among a host of friends and followers, all keen to help the propagation of the idea of auto-suggestion. Converts of such energy must necessarily be a tremendous power, so that I am quite prepared to see the science pushed forward and developed more extensively in the dynamic atmosphere of the New World than in my own country.



I AM NOT A HEALER



## CHAPTER IX

### I AM NOT A HEALER

WHEN, under the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, I found myself bombarded with questions by a score of newspaper representatives who had come aboard the *Majestic* specially to meet my humble person, I began to have a faint idea of the interest awakened in America by the announcement of my lecture tour. When I found myself escorted soon afterward by stalwart American policemen from the ship to the automobile waiting to convey me to my temporary home with friends, and when I caught sight of the crowds gathered to welcome me, I was inexpressibly surprised and touched that I should be considered worthy of such a reception. Shall I be accused of lack of modesty if I say that I am proud and gratified to have been greeted thus? I think not; because I know that all this sym-

pathy and interest must be attributed to the characteristic keenness of Americans to learn and probe to a deeper degree the methods of auto-suggestion associated with my name.

Since my arrival in New York, the memory of which will never be effaced, I have not ceased to marvel at all I saw and heard and read. Of my general impressions I shall have a lot to say later on. I am still somewhat dominated by that feeling of surprise which seized me at my first contact with the American people. In fact, my wonderment has grown every day with the realization of ideas which many people seem to have formed of me and my powers. I do not want people to have a sort of fanatical belief in me. It is true, of course, that blind faith is always an asset in favour of a sick person's chances of getting well. People who come to me with the belief already established in their minds that they are going to be cured are more than half-way on the road to recovery before they see me. But the number of persons who can come into direct contact with me must of



necessity be relatively small, and even if I possessed any extraordinary magnetic power to heal—which I emphatically declare I do not—the results of such power would be limited, for obvious reasons; whereas, there are no limitations to the potentialities of the system I teach. I mean that *I* cannot reach every one, but every one can practise auto-suggestion. My aim, therefore, is solely to show you how to cure yourselves. Rid yourselves of the utterly wrong idea that I can cure. I AM NOT A HEALER.

Not a healer. I had a first inkling of the mistake America was making when newspaper reporters on the *Majestic* addressed me as “Doctor” and “Professor,” and I was obliged to correct them with reminders that “I am not a doctor; I am not a professor.” The papers continue to talk of the cures *I* have effected in my “clinics”—a bad word, by the way, for the little gatherings at which I meet a selected number of patients in order to endeavour to convince them that by following my methods of auto-suggestion they can cure

themselves, or at least gain appreciable improvement. Yes, it has been my joy to see many of these poor sufferers benefit from my teaching; but my joy will be still greater if I succeed in spreading faith in those methods to hundreds of thousands of others and instil in them the knowledge that they can cure themselves without seeing me at all. And it will be impossible to attain that goal if the impression be allowed to persist that it is necessary to come into personal contact with me in order to obtain results.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to convince some people that I do not exercise a certain influence over them. When I tell them that they must count upon themselves, not upon me, they often reply: "I don't care what you say, you do wield power, and when I am with you I get better results than when I am alone." Well, that may be true in many cases. But the reason is, as I have already indicated, that a person who has faith enough to come to me is already half cured by that very faith.

There is another aspect of the question. **If**

I possessed any real power, surely it should have the same effect upon all. Yet that is not the case. Upon some my influence is absolutely nil. Upon others it may be immense. Which proves that it is not and cannot be an essential factor in the efficacy of my system. It exists merely in the imagination of certain persons, and as I have explained—I hope convincingly—in previous chapters, the imagination is all-powerful, so in such instances it really does aid recovery of health. But it would be a sorry action to allow it to be thought that personal contact with me is necessary. I want American citizens all over the continent to understand that all they need is a proper comprehension of the principles of auto-suggestion—that is simplicity itself—together with a belief in its effectiveness.

Merely applying truths known for thousands of years. I do not claim to have invented anything. I have merely reduced to a simple formula for every-day use and practice theories which were known to be truths thousands of years ago. Still less have I invented a new

faith, as some would appear to infer. One day a gentleman, interviewed by one of the newspapers, described my method of auto-suggestion as a "direct challenge to the Church." I confess I fail to see any relation between religion and auto-suggestion. Is medicine a challenge to the Church? Auto-suggestion is only the use of natural forces and functions of our being, and can be practised by Catholics and Protestants, Islamists or Buddhists, without violating any of the precepts or doctrinal principles of those churches or religions. Did not Saint Paul write of the "Faith that moveth mountains"? Surely it cannot be wrong to make use of the faculties which the Creator Himself has given us!

No connection with religion. Other religious leaders look askance at auto-suggestion because it has come to be associated with alleged "miracles" which I am supposed to have worked. Now, miracles do not exist. I have never accomplished any, and never shall. As a matter of fact, the so-called "miraculous" cures are the simplest and the most easily ex-

plained of all. They prove that, actually, the sufferers only *thought* they were sick. Thought produced (or prolonged) the symptoms; and in that respect they were really sick. But directly they were made to realize that their ills could be overcome by imagination they were cured.

It may seem rather unnecessary for me to answer the few criticisms of which I have been the object in the atmosphere of exceptionally sympathetic interest in which I found myself in America. But I am anxious to clear away all misunderstandings. I wish to be taken seriously by serious-minded people. I want every one to be convinced that the theories I advance, reduced as they are to their simplest expression, are nevertheless built upon a groundwork of scientific fact.



PART II  
AMERICAN IMPRESSIONS

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THE SCOPE OF AMERICAN ACTIVITY





## CHAPTER X

### THE SCOPE OF AMERICAN ACTIVITY

I AM trying to collect my thoughts and canalize a host of impressions that are tumbling over one another in hopeless disorder; and I am thinking how much easier it would be to write of my American trip when it is long past, and when my undisciplined and, perhaps, contradictory ideas have had time to settle down and classify themselves in that automatic way which Nature, or our subconscious mind, follows to perfection.

The accumulated suggestions of New York. After all, it is not so hard for one accustomed to feel and to obey the influence of suggestion whenever the latter does not clash with his conscious convictions. And what a stupendous force is that collective or accumulated mass of suggestion which one feels vibrating in that high-strung City of New York! After being

there but a few days, I had already seen and marvelled at that caldron of energy and labour and seething activities. Time and space scarcely seem to limit them. Following naturally my own particular trend of thought, I would trace it all to the effect of ever-growing masses of suggestion emanating from successive generations of vigorous-minded ancestors who helped to build the mighty American nation. One of the features that struck me was the universality of the scope of American activity. Restlessly, insatiably it explores every sphere: mechanical, scientific, artistic, intellectual. I picked up the newspapers, and I found pages of advertisements announcing lectures on every conceivable subject. Obviously they draw large audiences, or they would not be so numerous. There is nothing like it in my country, or, indeed, in any other European country. Even the churches advertise sermons or lectures by leaders of religious thought on subjects which a stranger would deem outside the sphere of any church. For instance, I saw that there

was to be a pulpit address about myself and auto-suggestion on a certain Sunday. All this denotes an eagerness to attain unscaled heights of culture and knowledge which is somewhat disconcerting when compared with the undeniable evidences of rank materialism visible all around us.

New York's skyscrapers symbolic. Reflecting on this contradiction, it seems to me that New York's gigantic skyscrapers, with their feet deep dug in the earth and their heads in the heavens, are a vivid symbol of the spirit of America.

There is beauty, and even spirituality, to be found by the thinking man in many of these monster edifices, although the severity and ugliness of other façades shock the eye of the European visitor. But I cannot help thinking of the princes of intellect and vitality who direct the huge organizations of industry whose tentacles stretch to every corner of the globe. They and their forbears have written the history of America. As an apostle of suggestion and auto-suggestion I realize the im-

mense influence they have had and will continue to have in shaping the destinies of their contemporaries. Unconsciously, perhaps, the latter, in incalculable numbers, respond to their suggestion, and imitate them with varying degrees of success.

Every American ought to "arrive." Indeed I consider that present-day America is an amazing living example of the force of suggestion. Every American is stimulated by the irresistible current of energy generated by the Nation's master-minds. And no one can fix the limits to which their creative force will carry them. We French have an expression "to arrive," meaning to reach success. I think no American ought to fail to "arrive," for not only does he inherit ideas of energy and labour which people his subconscious mind, but he is also subjected to a formidable bombardment of good suggestions from his very infancy. He *knows* he is going to succeed, and will let no obstacle check his march forward.

Americans have long used auto-suggestion without realizing it. Altogether, what I saw

of America convinced me that Americans have practised auto-suggestion to a certain extent for a long time past. Borne on that national current of energy of which I have spoken, each individual automatically seeks to wrest the maximum of what life has to offer. Doubt of his own powers is unknown to him (of course, I am speaking of the average man; there must naturally be a number of weaklings in every nation). He shares and at the same time feeds the dynamic force and radio-activity which drives the whole nation in the pursuit of progress.

One day I called on a friend who was staying in one of the biggest hotels in New York, nay, in the world. While waiting in the lobby I made a most interesting discovery. I saw a man put his hand into an aperture in the wall beside one of the comfortable arm-chairs, turn a sort of pipe, and take from it a little white goblet which he filled at the drinking-water fountain adjoining. After he had drunk, to my astonishment, he casually threw the goblet into another hole in the wall.

Then I inquired, and was told that it was a cardboard goblet, and that this automatic system is quite common. Well, I have never seen anything of the like, and I think it a very wonderful illustration of American progress and love of thoroughness in everything. Above all, I admired the lesson in hygiene. Splendid as such a system appears as a convenience to visitors in the hotel, how much more valuable is the influence it must carry, by suggestion, to the minds of all who use it. The notions of hygiene are thus necessarily spread with a thousand times more effect than by means of the most eloquently expressed pamphlets or even lectures.

While of course I found things to criticize, nevertheless, during my stay in America, I confess that I saw little which I could not admire. I was particularly impressed with the American "movies." But I want to say right now that in the cinema a new art has been born in America; Paris and London are left far behind by the masters of the *mise-en-scène* here.

There was one thing, however, that caused me regret. It was to see in the streets so many people—men, women, and children—wearing glasses. Maybe it is due to a proper care for sight. But until I am given a better explanation, I am inclined to attribute it to the strain of reading the newspapers. It seems to me, indeed, that the terribly small print in the papers, so unnecessary, one would think, in such leviathan productions, must use up the best and most perfect eyesight with deplorable rapidity. Curiously enough, I was seldom if ever asked to aid any one with faulty sight. Reason makes me believe that one day a strong newspaper editor or owner will work a revolution and make American newspapers readable—in a sense other than the one which at present they attribute to the word.





ALL IS SUGGESTION



## CHAPTER XI

### ALL IS SUGGESTION

**S**UGGESTION of Suggestions; all is Suggestion!" I was tempted to exclaim, as I let myself be whirled through the seething current of American life. The preacher was a pessimist, but if he lived now in America he might change his mind, and hesitate to condemn everything as Vanity. Reality, on the contrary, appears to me to be the dominant factor in American life; reality, built up, moreover, by accumulated suggestion.

Americans more susceptible to suggestion than French or English. Strange to say, I have never had occasion in Europe to observe the enormous effect of suggestion on the national life of a country. Here in America it has struck me most forcibly: are Americans exceptionally susceptible? Are their subconscious minds particularly sensitive? It is

quite possible. I am bound to state, in any case, that I have rarely met with such constant success in teaching patients how to get rid of their ailments as I did at my American conferences. Naturally, one of the principal reasons of this success was the wide publicity given to my methods beforehand; people read of them long before coming to me, and their minds were already fertilized by the thought of a cure; the thought grows into a belief, and by the time the patient reaches me the idea has been transformed through imagination into a reality. The mechanism is no more complicated than that! In Europe, no such faith-inspiring publicity existed, except, perhaps, quite recently—and then only in a very small way. Nevertheless, I do think Americans in general are more responsive to suggestion than French people or English. I see that in the solution of their national problems.

**Auto-suggestion and Prohibition.** For instance, I do not believe that any amount of suggestion would ever persuade my countrymen to become “dry”! Yet I was told that

Prohibition was imposed upon a majority by a strong-minded minority, and that, in reality, almost every one longs to slake his thirst again in something stronger, honester than the "Scotch Brew" which caught my eye on the restaurant cards of suggested beverages. See the force of suggestion, however—jugs of iced water have taken the place of the once-indispensable bottle of iced champagne on the tables at the most-famed haunts of luxury. And what is even more astonishing is that the effect seems to be almost the same. Diners sip their crystal glasses of water with evident pleasure, and their merriment and vivacity of conversation as the dinner goes on could hardly be greater were their glasses filled with the sparkling wine of Rheims or Épernay.

Now, that requires an explanation, for there's some little difference between water and champagne! Well, I will submit that it is due largely to suggestion and auto-suggestion. Firstly, people are accustomed to become merry and talkative over their glasses, and the subconscious mind doesn't

really care what they contain. Secondly, leading spirits (needing no artificial ones to stimulate them) having set the example of contentedness and readiness to enjoy themselves even without the aid of liquor, others respond to the influence of suggestion, and imagine they are having the deuce of a time on a jug of "New York Nature, 1923." My theory is strengthened by the popularity of the dancing places. They were all (at least those at which I was able to take a glance in my inquisitive peregrinations) crowded and animated and full of laughter and merry talk, and the only difference between them and similar establishments at Montmartre is that the music and buzz of gaiety are not punctuated by the popping of corks; and glasses of water and ginger ale replace the familiar bottles of champagne emerging from their glittering nests of ice.

Glass of iced water as a symbol. Quite seriously I am inclined to see in the American glass of iced water the symbol of a new era. It has the rhythm of a sacred rite—with a real charm thrown in. No matter where

one goes, to the chic restaurant or smartest tea-room or to the humblest eating-house, a glass of water is immediately placed before one. To my mind, the repetition of this gesture has developed a sort of hypnotism, and the constant appearance of the inevitable tumbler of glistening limpidity has frozen in many people's minds all idea of any other drink. As time goes on this force of public conviction must increase, and, unless a change of State policy intervenes, the protesting clamours of anti-prohibitionists will end by being literally drowned in the ubiquitous glass of iced water. Maybe, within a generation or two, an American will no more dream of placing in front of a guest a bottle of old wine (preciously preserved, perchance, by his parents) than a European would to-day think of treating a friend to a glass of water. Is there not an impressing demonstration of the force of suggestion in all this?

The fruits of suggestion are visible, again, in other departments of social and public life on the American side of the Atlantic, so differ-

ent from that of Europe. Certain obstinate notions as to the indispensability of servants, for instance, would appear to have been eliminated in America. It is perhaps rather presumptuous for me to discuss this subject, in view of the shortness of my sojourn in America. But, after all, these are only impressions based on what I have seen or not seen. Now, I have seen very few servants; yet everything is done in homes and hotels with an efficiency that is amazing to European visitors accustomed to a ceaseless and hopeless wrestle with the servant problem.

Whereas in Europe we are obsessed by the idea of getting things done for us, Americans have replaced it by that of "self-service," and everything is organized accordingly. One goes into a busy subway station, and the only employee visible is a man who sits in a box-like office and changes money for passengers. A nickel dropped in the slot lets you through the turnstile; there is no ticket to buy. The time saved is enormous. The work not done by the passenger himself is reduced to an



incredible minimum. Almost everything is accomplished automatically.

“Self-service” and suggestion. “Self-service,” I noticed, is a feature of many popular restaurants, the brightness, cleanliness, and attractiveness of which have won my admiration. I should like to see them imitated in my own country. And, while I am on the subject of restaurants, I must confess to chuckling a little on discovering that even the *maître d’hôtel* or head-waiter has been abolished. His work, too, is now done automatically, judging by the number of restaurant windows which display in big letters “suggestions for lunch” or “suggestions for dinner” followed by a list of dishes specially recommended to patrons. And I am told that in other establishments the huge menu card saves customers the trouble of making a choice from a hundred different dishes by carrying a little oasis of “suggestions” for the day’s meals. What would the pompous old European *maîtres d’hôtels* say? But who shall say that America does not understand the value of suggestion?



MY AMERICAN AUDIENCES



## CHAPTER XII

### MY AMERICAN AUDIENCES

WHAT do you think of American women?" was a question frequently put to me among a host of others by my American friends whose interest in me and my work switched with often startling celerity to my opinions on seemingly irrelevant subjects. Now, I am not going to answer that question. The unchallenged queen of every realm of American activity demands longer study than I was able to give her. I merely pause here to do her homage, reminded as I was of her omnipresence by the predominance of the feminine element at most of my lectures. This preponderance was especially noticeable at Washington, and I wonder why it should be so. It is true that two out of every three of my lectures were given in the afternoon, at hours when most men are at work, but I observed

the same disproportion at evening sittings. I think the reason may well be that women are more studious than men in America, more active intellectually, without taking into account their greater inquisitiveness, which is a natural attribute of Eve the world over!

**Attentiveness of American audiences.** However, in one respect at least, American men and women are alike: that is in their invariable attentiveness. American audiences are ideal from this point of view. Not once did I have the slightest difficulty in capturing the attention of every one at the beginning of a lecture, or in holding it right to the end. I hope I am intelligent enough to know that this is not because of any superior qualities of my own. On the contrary, it is an undoubted fact that my hesitating English, pronounced with a foreign accent, although it may be understood quite sufficiently, ought to have a soporific effect on an audience, and put an abnormal strain on its powers of concentration. I understand now why so many European lecturers prefer to address the American public. They are

sure of getting an attentive, comprehending, and appreciative audience. And none but public speakers can really understand the thrill of pleasure experienced when one feels the fluid of every soul in the hall vibrating in unison with one's own thought; or realize the torture of knowing that there's something "out of tune" and that the audience's attention is wandering. Personally, I shall never forget the delight of watching my American listeners' eyes riveted on me in a manifest desire to lose nothing of my lecture.

**American audiences smile while listening.** American audiences have two other characteristics which I have rarely encountered in Europe: they smile while they listen to you, and at the end of the lecture they are fresher than at the beginning. The first one, I will confess, almost dismayed me at the start of my opening lecture. When people began to wear a pleasant, smiling expression, I was afraid that I or my ideas were the object of their amusement, or that, for some reason, they were unable to follow me. I now think with

a little confusion how surprised they must have been at my too-frequent, uneasy queries, "Do you understand?" No, that is the American way. They sit through even a lengthy, possibly rather dry, conference with ease as well as understanding; in Europe, people are apt to have a tense expression on their faces if they are following a speaker on any serious subject; or else they look just a little bored, despite a polite effort to simulate attention.

American audiences ask questions. The second characteristic is shown by the vigorous volleys of questions which were fired at me directly I finished my lecture. That is somewhat rare in France. And the questions put were almost always intelligent, and proved that, not only did the questioners fully grasp what I said, but were eager for me to develop certain aspects of the subject or to explore side issues, the possibilities and importance of which they were quick to seize upon. In this respect—and this is, perhaps, a third characteristic—Americans do not seem



to suffer from that kind of nervousness which is better described as self-consciousness or bashfulness; I encountered only one bashful person at my lectures in America—and he was a mere man! As a rule, I found Americans put their questions with directness and precision, in a voice audible all over the hall, with no discernible trace of timidity. I was struck also with the order and discipline they so readily show. Whenever a number of questions happen to be put simultaneously, jumble and confusion are avoided by a quasi-automatic perception of the most interesting one, and to the author of it the floor is immediately yielded by the tacit consent of the others. Little details, perhaps, but they denote character.

In general, I found that I was not mistaken in believing, even before I sailed from France, that the American temperament is peculiarly responsive to the creed of auto-suggestion. Take my hand-clasping test, for instance. Simple as it appears—and really is—quite a number of people in France and England fail

to grasp the elementary principle underlying it, and the conflict in their own minds mars the success of the demonstration. In America, however, I had comparatively few failures, because the American mind is sensitive to ideas of psychological analysis.

Serenity of American audiences. Perhaps this same sensitiveness is responsible for the *serenity* of American audiences. I can think of no better word to convey my meaning. It was not merely idle tranquillity. There was a sort of self-watchfulness, self-control, and conscious consideration for others which surprised me and compelled my admiration at each of my lectures. There was an amazing absence of that buzz of conversation, of laughter, or (worse) giggling, of rattling of chairs, which are the annoying features of most public meetings in Europe. Above all, there was none, or very little, of the exasperating chorus of coughing which hitherto I believed to be an inevitable accompaniment to all lectures, concerts, or plays. Only once in America did I notice the plague, and then it

was in a very mild form. I conclude that, not only do Americans possess an innate respect for the rights of others to hear and enjoy, and of the lecturer or concert-giver or artist to do his part without annoyance, but that they have also come to penetrate the principles of auto-suggestion, and to know that when a person coughs in a public hall, it is not because he or she needs to cough, but simply because someone else has conveyed the suggestion by coughing, awaking an unconscious response in others. Contagion, it is usually called. It is really a wonderful confirmation of the theory of auto-suggestion.



CITIES I HAVE NEVER SEEN



## CHAPTER XIII

### CITIES I HAVE NEVER SEEN

WHO was that clever cartoonist who, years ago, did a most entertaining series of caricatures entitled, "People I Have Never Met"? I am reminded of him as I start to jot down a few impressions of American cities—cities I have never seen. Of course it is not strictly accurate to say that I have never seen them—no more, perhaps, than the cartoonist's caption was. But it is true in this sense, that it is impossible really to "see" cities in the course of a short sojourn crowded with engagements.

If I were to confess my uppermost impression I would say that I feel as if I had been taken off the ship at New York and dumped into a lecture hall and kept there! All else—hotels, streets, people, motor drives, Pullman nights—are a blur, like a film too rapidly

turned. Yet there are highlights and outlines that stand out with comparative distinctness. And it is not I who should forget that deep in the subconscious mind is a complete record of everything that the eye has seen and that the ear has heard, forming an inexhaustible mine of thought and impressions ready to feed the trained conscious mind.

An American woman asked me one day: "What do you think of our cities?"—and it seemed to me that she was not surprised and only a little pained when I answered with more truth than tact: "I don't think I have ever seen uglier streets than in New York!—Or more magnificent!" I hastened to add, with equal truthfulness. I was thinking of Fifth Avenue, into which, I imagine, twenty streets like the Paris Rue de la Paix could be slipped quite comfortably. Not that I am unduly impressed by its grandeur expressed in mere dimensions. One gets used to big things over there, and they are not necessarily worthy of admiration. But in the wealth and artistic array of its wares, in the sheer gor-



geousness of its colour and the sparkle of its stately shops, Fifth Avenue out-glitters even the glittering Rue de la Paix.

I have seen other fine streets in the residential quarters of New York and other cities. Riverside Drive is as handsome, in its way, as Park Lane. But they do not dispel the more insistent visions of a drab desert of ugliness with a few oases of real architectural beauty to remind one that the Spirit of Art is watching the growth of the city.

**Boldness of American architects.** Indeed, if my opinion on the subject be worth anything, I would say that, judging from a number of examples I have seen in New York and other cities, American architects are the greatest, as well as the boldest, in the world. Whenever they have really made an effort to break away from the ordinary and to produce something artistic they have succeeded and achieved a masterpiece, worthy of comparison with the monuments of antiquity. The new railroad terminals—the Pennsylvania and the Grand Central, and the station at Washington—

are illustrations of this. To me they are marvellous. The ancient Greeks or the Romans would not have disowned them for beauty of line and harmony of proportions. And withal, the architects have contrived to ally with pure art all that modern mechanical ingenuity has invented in connection with transportation facilities, so that these buildings also represent the last word in utility and in convenience for travellers and the handling of big railroad traffic.

**Promiscuous American building.** It ought not to be, but it is disconcerting to turn from such manifestations of American artistic genius to the unsightly streets near by, in the building of which all considerations apart from the strictly utilitarian would seem to have been banished. How odd that there should be such symmetry in American town-planning, and such complete absence of it in the actual building. Houses big and small, handsome and hideous, pretentious and insignificant, ornamental and sordid, huddle side by side in jarring promiscuity, in mute testimony to the

stern material necessities and preoccupations of the past. One is tempted to liken New York, architecturally, to a garden overgrown with gigantic weeds, cleared in parts to make room for fair, well-trimmed avenues.

**The development of an American artistic temperament.** Such a superficial impression, however, cannot blind one to the rugged beauty of it all. What we see to-day in American cities is a picture of the wonderful vitality and energy of the men who made a country. And what a country! A picture that has grown with each generation since the early settlers, portraying faithfully their efforts as they blazed the path of progress. A care for beauty in matter could not be expected to penetrate their ideals, concerned as they were in building the framework of a nation of whose mighty destinies they must have had an intuition, to account for their amazingly swift accomplishments. Can any one see a city like Cleveland, little more than a hundred years old, and not be moved to wonder? A city already enriched by industry, a city with a mil-

lion inhabitants, and a Museum of Art, and a theatre that might rouse the envy of a dozen famed European cities. A city with shops which would not be out of place in Regent Street or the Avenue de l'Opera. There is the characteristic belt of ugliness around it, of course, denoting haste and the neglect of all but the material necessities of the moment. Yet on all sides I see such strong evidence of a swiftly developing national artistic temperament that I am convinced the present blemishes of Cleveland as of other towns in America will in due course be swept away.

One element of American city life has particularly interested me—the activity of advertising clubs, commercial societies and associations whose chief aim is to hasten the improvement of their cities and attract men of talent, energy, and industry to aid in the march of progress. Members of such a club I met at Cleveland, and I can well believe that, under their impulsion, the city is bound to go ahead rapidly.

Some suggestions for commercial organiza-

tions. It may be expected that bodies of this kind will take in hand the beautifying of their towns, and exercise a control over the plans of new buildings. They will, perhaps, change the present Noah's Ark type of street car for one equally useful but less unsightly. They may get rid of the noise of the streets, which I should imagine makes it hard for a good many people to sleep in New York and elsewhere.

Philadelphia reminded me of certain parts of the city of London, even to the narrowness of its streets. Odd, it seems to me, that town planners in a new country, where they had plenty of space to work in, should have built such cramped streets. I suppose it is another illustration of the force of suggestion. The European model was implanted in their minds, and they could not get away from it immediately. I liked the Philadelphia Law Courts, a building with style, but why did the architect make all four façades identical?

Washington is beautiful, and despite an impression of artificiality is distinctly pleasing.

Its architecture may not be copied by other cities, but it will probably serve as inspiration. The lighting of the Capitol is peculiarly effective. I have come to the conclusion that Americans are the first colour and light artists in the world. They stand almost alone in the art. In the combination of the electric signs, which are a feature of American cities, they are past masters. I can conceive of nothing more beautiful than Broadway theatreland at night with its dazzling, scintillating symphonies of light, and its orgy of colour shaded and harmonized with infinite skill and delicacy.

QUESTIONS I AM ASKED





## CHAPTER XIV

### QUESTIONS I AM ASKED

**F**EW things struck me more forcibly in my contact with Americans than the ceaseless activity of their minds. Less precise, less unerringly logical, perhaps, in its working than the French or Latin mind in general, the American mind impressed me as more open in character, more pliable, and more imaginative than the European. In many respects it is curiously Celtic in its manifestations. The Celts have always possessed strong imagination; their history and literature have been stamped by it. Maybe my own Celtic origin is responsible in a measure for my faith in the principles of auto-suggestion. The Celtic weakness, however, is a tendency often to sacrifice reason to imagination, instead of disciplining it as one should do, in order to attain real self-mastery.

The revelation of the American mind came to me through the questions put to me at my lectures and in private conversations. In France, few questions are put to me in public, and those which I am called upon to answer usually have a bearing on the actual why and wherefore of my theories. The French mind prefers first to discuss and argue on the fundamentals of a principle before inquiring into its practical adaptability to every-day life. The American mind, on the contrary, immediately sees the possibilities of it, and seeks, without more delay, to carry the idea further even than the author of it may have conceived. If the idea seems reasonable the American is ready to take for granted, temporarily at least, that its exponent is right; but his own swift-working brain and fertile imagination lead him to perceive a vista of developments along lines still untraced.

**Auto-suggestion in business.** To give an example. At one of my lectures I was asked: "Can auto-suggestion be adapted to business?" And in Cleveland perhaps one of my most apprecia-

tive and attentive audiences was one composed exclusively of business men who, fearing they might not all succeed in getting admission to the ordinary public ones, had organized a surprise séance at which they could have me all to themselves. I told them what I had said in answer to the question quoted above: of course auto-suggestion can be adapted to business. And I have reason to believe that they were convinced. As a matter of fact, in business, as in everything else, we employ it constantly, though often unconsciously. The man of business, or the industrialist, or the salesman who has in his mind that he is going to succeed, that he is going to “put through” his deal, will certainly do so—if it be materially possible, of course, because there must necessarily be circumstances sometimes quite outside the control of one individual. But, apart from exceptional and unknown factors, nothing can prevent the realization of the projects of a man or woman imbued with the principles of auto-suggestion. Such a person has confidence in himself. His mind dwells on the elements of

success. His imagination is trained in the same direction. And the idea becomes, quite logically, a reality. I might speak of another aspect of the question, and show that a man who knows the power of suggestion would know how to use it to influence others; but that would carry me too far. The possibilities of it, however, are obvious, although it should be clearly understood that I am not alluding to anything even remotely connected with hypnotism.

Advertising, which is only a manner of employing the force of auto-suggestion, is always more effective when it is done with a proper knowledge of that force. Americans, by the way, must be gifted with it unconsciously, judging by the clever, scientific wielding of it manifested on all sides in their advertising methods.

Auto-suggestion for the executive. The handling of big staffs is also made easier by auto-suggestion. The man who knows how to put himself in the right frame of mind to accomplish the task he has set himself will know

equally well how to stir and keep the enthusiasm of others working for him. Indeed, even without any conscious effort on his part, the personality of such a man inevitably tunes the minds of his collaborators to the same chord of achievement.

An unusual query, but typical of the American habit of seeing things from every angle, was flung to me one day: "Would auto-suggestion be of any use to the uncivilized tribes of Africa and Asia? And could they understand?" Now, that question seems at first sight to be almost on a par with the inquiry whether auto-suggestion would benefit the insane, although a very little reflection suffices to reveal the difference.

Whereas the mind of the insane is obviously impervious to a mere idea, which therefore cannot reach his subconscious mind, the mind of a healthy African, incapable as it may be of analyzing an abstract theory, yet is quite able to understand a simple suggestion, either of a moral or a physical character. So I replied that, in my opinion, there is no reason why

auto-suggestion should be less efficacious with the African tribesman than with the citizen of New York. The missionary who persuaded the cannibal that if he persisted in his scheme of making a meal of him the result would be violent indigestion is a famous illustration of this.

**Danger to be avoided.** Then I am frequently asked if the practice of auto-suggestion can be dangerous. Most certainly it can. That is why we need to learn all about it. There are bad suggestions as well as good, and the subconscious mind registers them all. The main idea of my principles of auto-suggestion is to teach control of the subconscious mind or imagination, so as to exclude everything that is not good and useful. In other words, one must not be the slave, but the master of one's subconscious mind.

**I do not use hypnotism.** I am told that a number of people try to explain the success of auto-suggestion and the cures effected by it by declaring that I employ a kind of hypnotism. Nothing is more untrue, or more ab-

surd, to anybody who has the smallest acquaintance with the principles of hypnotism, and I would not mention it here but for the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of people liable to be influenced by such allegations lightly thrown in the air. I did study hypnotism once, many years ago, but abandoned it completely. Those who witness the experiments I make in public know that I avoid looking the subjects in the eyes, or doing anything that might cause my own personality to exercise undue or abnormal influence on them. That alone dissipates all possibility of hypnotic effects. Others attribute to the natural force of my personality any success achieved by my teaching. I say emphatically that my personality is of no account in the matter, save in the sense that I may happen to have powers of persuasion that call forth faith; and it is faith that heals. That is all.

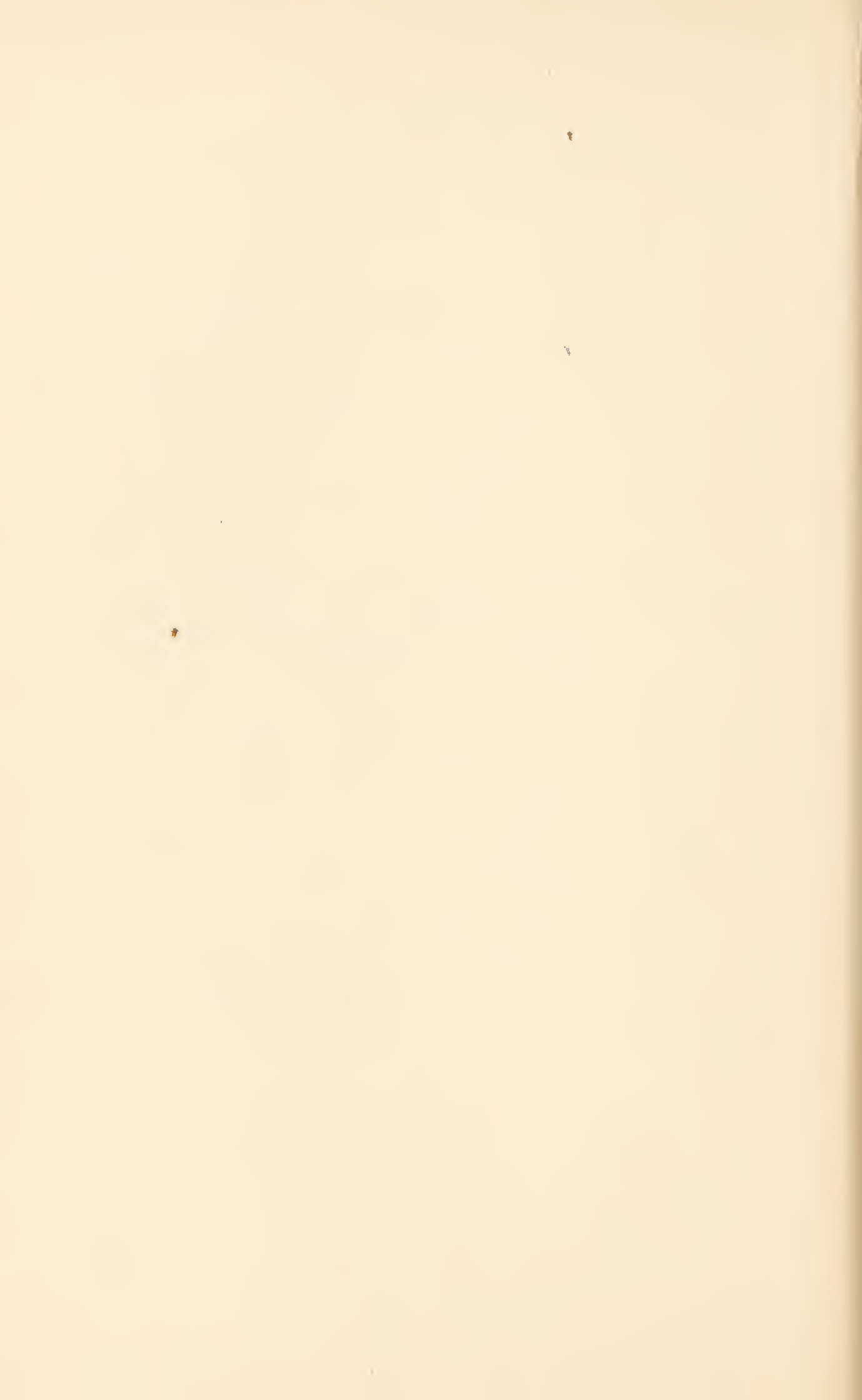
Don't let auto-suggestion become an obsession. Another question which amuses me rather, and which is put to me everywhere, is: "If I don't get any relief by reciting the 'day

by day' formula twenty times, should I recite it thirty, forty, or fifty times?" I generally answer: "Say it as many times as you like; only don't let it become an obsession."

In a public statement to the press I dealt with the question of the alleged antagonism of auto-suggestion to religion. I need only repeat that it is in no way antagonistic to any religion. It can be practised with or without religion. But I might add that auto-suggestion is not a philosophy—at least, not in the sense usually given to the term. Auto-suggestion is simply the act of making use of the forces with which Nature has endowed us for the benefit of our own moral, mental, and physical well-being. It does no more prevent any one from holding the philosophy of life corresponding to his or her temperament or mind than it precludes a belief in particular religious principles. It is only an instrument.



AMERICA—FOUNDER OF A  
NEW CIVILIZATION



## CHAPTER XV

### AMERICA—FOUNDER OF A NEW CIVILIZATION

**A**MERICA, the saviour of civilization—or the founder of a new one—may one day be the new and greater symbol of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour.

There are political students and thinkers who see in the present chaos of Europe convincing evidence of the decline of what we call modern civilization. They believe that the war has hastened the passing of an era, and that the final collapse is at hand; that the thousand-year-old edifice of Western culture is crumbling to dust as in past epochs the proud pillars of Rome, Greece, and Egypt tottered and fell when their destiny was accomplished.

I am not a pessimist, and I refuse to believe that our civilization is indeed foundering already. And did I believe it I would discour-

age such sombre predictions, for the law of suggestion is immutable, and to disseminate them is to facilitate and hasten their realization. As I have explained and, I hope, demonstrated, every idea tends to become a reality. As the sick man aggravates his sickness by dwelling upon it, and the aged shortens his days by thinking they are numbered, so nations and races hurry their own downfall by allowing the suggestion of it to sink into their souls.

America untrammelled by "traditions." Yet were the light of European culture to be extinguished, the torch of civilization would still be kept burning by America. Who can visit this country without being persuaded of its fitness for such a glorious destiny? There was much to impress and astound me in America, but one of the vividest impressions I took away with me was the feeling of having been among a new people, a new people who have begun to climb where others had stopped, and whose best attainments have far outstripped the best of other nations. Why is

this? It must be because America started untrammelled by the load of "traditions" borne by the peoples of the Old World, and her spirit or genius was free to develop on new and independent lines. "Traditions" in this sense are nothing but "suggestions" operating ceaselessly, automatically, with ever-accumulating force, upon the whole population through succeeding generations. Of course, the earlier generations of Americans were still under the influence of their legacy of traditions. But the chain was broken. The virgin forests were a fit cradle for the birth of a new nation and a new mind. Auto-suggestion would continue to mould them and their destinies, but it would flow from a fresh, unsullied source emanating from the unfathomable mystery of life to supply humanity with the elements of progress.

That America has built a new foundation for her spiritual home, nay, for a new civilization, is proved by her political and social institutions and by her whole trend of national thought to-day, although this is not the place

for a proper analysis of them. Reminiscent as they obviously must be of older ones, they nevertheless differentiate widely from them in most essentials. There are certain superficial resemblances, but nothing like the fundamental sameness of principles which strikes one in all European countries.

**Social conditions in America.** Compare the social conditions existing in America with those pertaining to other countries. They bristle with differences. My beloved country led the world with its Revolution and its declaration of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," and for a time they became absolute realities—as absolute as conditions then prevailing could make them. And France still is a good land to live in, for the principles she fought for are still a living force. But America has carried those principles further, has given them a new meaning and breathed into them a vitality that renders them proof against all passing shocks. In Europe they are subject to eclipse, because in the subconscious mind of the people centuries of suggestions have not

yet been obliterated. Europe has, indeed, solved many social problems but has not had time to forget the difficulties, the obsession of which disturbs them still from time to time. For instance, the struggle between democracy and autocracy. America, on the contrary, has been freed of all such hampering auto-suggestion, and has therefore been enabled to move forward with swifter strides.

I might also point to the position of religious thought as an illustration of my argument. A fresh breeze of freedom of discussion blows through every avenue of thought, preventing stagnation and dogmatic decay. Nowhere in the world, to my knowledge, is there such a lively interest manifested in church matters as in America; and nowhere is there such tolerant liberality. Here, the church, or religion, or religious thought—call it what you will—is an active element in the life of the people. Consequently, it lives and develops. Without going into the controversy raised by Dr. Percy Stickney Grant's challenge of the Divinity of Christ, I may mention it as an ad-

mirable example of a vigorous national spirit, eager to push away every obstacle to the march of intellect.

American ideals are new ideals. The ideals of America are new. The idea of the League of Nations could only have germinated and developed in the minds of a people who themselves constitute a family of States. Europeans welcomed it but, tainted by traditions, their conception clashed with the fresher one of the United States; so the latter withdrew, thus obeying—unconsciously—the imperious call of the spirit of a new civilization, scorning to build upon an old foundation.

There is more evidence of this new spirit in the harmony in which offshoots of a score or more of different races live together on this side of the Atlantic. They are being welded together in the making of a nation—a God-like achievement. Contrast this with the pitiful strife and futile jealousy that tears Europe, simply because its inhabitants do not happen all to be of what is called in our still puerile language the same “nationality” or creed!



We see the same differences in everything, even in the little details of every-day life, even in America's worst manifestations of materialism. There is always something to show that she had a new starting point. Her skyscrapers could not have originated in the mind of a European architect.

**America the guardian of civilization.** America is young, but from a necessarily cursory survey I gathered an impression (I wonder if it will be confirmed by more qualified observers?) that in most manifestations of intellect, in art, in science, in industry, in social progress, the foremost Americans have reached a further point than the foremost of other continents. What matter, then, if the general level in America be still on a lower plane? Surely her destiny is to be the guardian of civilization.



AMERICAN EFFICIENCY



## CHAPTER XVI

### AMERICAN EFFICIENCY

**F**ROM the moment he lands in America a European feels the impression grow upon him that he is a part of a machine; he feels compelled to fit himself into its complicated works and become one of its little wheels—or resist the movement and be shot off into sterile isolation. Efficiency, system, standardization—these are, perhaps, the main reasons for such an impression. There seems to be no room for anything or anybody inefficient. They would throw the machine out of gear.

Efficiency begins directly you step off the gangway from the ship. System directs you to the exact spot where your baggage will be found and guides you to the customs officer who is to examine it. The porter who handles your belongings handles both them and yourself like a machine, and before you realize

what is happening you find yourself in a taxicab which has drawn up to the curb at the precise moment of your own arrival. As for the baggage, it has slid down a chute into the arms of a squad of stalwart men who have only just time to rescue it from an avalanche of other people's trunks and bags trying to overtake it. If you were not there at the right second to claim your property, I suppose it would be hopelessly lost, for there can be no time to put all aside and sort it out afterward. That is the danger of extreme, machine-like systematization. If a hitch occurs, everything goes wrong.

**Efficiency in American hotels.** The core of America is efficiency. It goes right through everything. You encounter it at every turn. In my hotel room I took up the telephone receiver, and almost before I put it to my ear the operator's voice was asking what number I required. That is unheard of in France or England. It is the little things that strike a stranger—little things that are unnoticed by the native inhabitants. And those appar-

ently insignificant details that spell efficiency are innumerable in every city of America that I visited.

In the hotels and restaurants there is promptness of service, an absence of blunders or misunderstandings, smooth-running organization which is very impressive. The theatres, the moving-picture shows, the subway, the surface cars, the taxicabs are a few among a host of examples of the efficiency and system found in every phase of human activity. There is a general desire to please which is most soothing amid the hustle and turmoil of American life. "Smile," commands a big cardboard notice inside the doorway of the café and other public rooms of the hotel which I know best in New York. And the suggestion has its effect. On the menu cards at the same hotel, as well as on other leaflets issued by the establishment, is notice to the effect that the management welcomes any report from visitors of special attention or service rendered by any member of its staff, because it wishes to recognize efficiency. Now

that is a new conception. It is good psychology. It also denotes a comprehension of the principles of auto-suggestion. Hitherto, it has been the custom to invite clients, or visitors, or customers to report inattention or negligence with a view to the punishment or reprimanding of the offender. Mark how much more effective the new way must be. First, on the employee, who is encouraged by positive suggestions of good service and its reward; secondly, on the client, into whose mind is thrown the suggestion of contentment and the desire to look for efficiency, instead of a negative suggestion of fault-finding. In every way the idea is sound and the use of it clever.

Foreigners become Americans quickly. A particularly interesting feature of the all-pervading efficiency here is the part played in it by the foreign element. It is a well-known fact that the United States absorbs and assimilates foreigners more thoroughly and more quickly than any other country. But I confess that I was amazed to find how completely Italians, French, and people of other



nationalities who have made their homes here have absorbed the peculiarly American temperament, copied American methods, and adopted American ideals. In the matter of efficiency, for instance, the foreign employee in New York is as keen and convinced as the true-born American. Efficiency seems to be as natural to him as to the latter.

Danger of too much "efficiency." This is all very admirable. But I am wondering if there is not a tendency to overdo things. System, standardization, and clock-work efficiency are certainly desirable, and they do much to make life run smoothly. Yet, intuitively perhaps, I seem to discern danger in overstraining to reduce abstract qualities to mathematically perfect equations in actual practice. It may become an obsession, like any other notion, however good in itself. I often have to remind patients of this when I see them making auto-suggestion into a sort of monomania. Extremes meet, and it is quite possible for a system, if pushed to excess in complicated elaborateness, to break down completely, simply

because it seeks to provide for every contingency except human intervention. No room is left for play in the joints. The other day I heard of a man who was lost to all his friends for a whole day in a large New York hotel famous for its terrible efficiency. What was the reason? Merely that, as a result of personal influence on the part of a member of the staff, he had been allotted a room without going through the regular machinery of the establishment.

I believe this danger of subjecting everything and every one to machine-like rule is real in America. But I also believe that Americans are far too idealistic at heart not to curb the tendency in time. Efficiency will stay, but not the excesses of a materialism and a rigid "mechanicalism" due to the exuberant vigour of a young, pushful, and perfection-loving people.

ACCUMULATED HASTE IN  
WESTERN CITIES



## CHAPTER XVII

### ACCUMULATED HASTE IN WESTERN CITIES

**I**F ANY one had asked me before I left New York on my tour of the cities of the Middle West what I thought of the pace or the rhythm of American life, I would probably have replied, "It is normal or thereabouts." For despite all that I had heard of the hustle and frantic race of Americans in their pursuit of business or pleasure, I confess that I have seen little evidence of any dangerous tendency in cities of the East like New York or Philadelphia to overstrain human resistance. I saw admirable results of their strength—tenacious efforts but few signs of feverishness.

I met men who thought lightly of working ten to twelve hours a day with perhaps fifteen minutes for their mid-day meal, which is bad. I met both men and women whose lined, tired faces and tense expressions told tales of a mad,

ceaseless pleasure hunt and nights spent in haunts of joy real and sham and in dens of different kinds of so-called amusement.

New York the leisurely! But in general, the pulse of America, as I felt it in New York, seemed to me to beat with the strong regularity of a young people just a trifle boisterous. I was told indeed of flourishing "Three Hours For Lunch" Clubs, which have never yet been thought of even in slow old France. Of course, all this is merely an impression, and it is quite true that there is a hectic current in New York life which does make itself felt. Still a shade of satiety appears to have come over the city and moderated its once frenzied orgy of motion and turned its energy into a channel of reflectiveness. A European influence seems to be discernible, strange as it may sound to all who know how rapidly the foreign immigrant is passed through the American moulding machine to emerge a standardized model of an American—superficially, at least—and often sincerely imbued with the great American ideals. Suggestion is at work

here both ways. New York may be likened in some respects to the rich self-made man who has worked hard for the best part of his life and now takes things easier while giving advice to his more exuberant offspring.

The killing pace of the Middle West. Ah! it is different in these cities of the back country: Pittsburgh, Detroit, and the others—with their flaming furnaces and throbbing foundries belching smoke that hangs a perpetual pall and blackens Nature's own thick mantle of fog. Here the pulse of the people beats quicker, unsteadier, impatient to outstride time itself. It is reflected in their drawn faces, rugged mouths, and restless eyes. Strong of character? Yes. Relentless of purpose, too, and eager to meet and overthrow the obstacle. But the pace is killing. I was struck by the nervous character of some of the audiences in the part of the country of which I am speaking. Among the sick persons who crowded around me for aid and advice which, alas, I was unable to give to all, nine tenths could trace their troubles to a nervous

affliction. Even a cursory survey was sufficient to tell me that these people live too fast. They live most of the time probably in their automobiles and their offices; eat wrongly, too quickly, and maybe too much; and disdain to pause to breathe in their race to their goal of achievement. Now nerves cannot be kept taut for long without something giving away. So sick men and women are made. I have been asked if auto-suggestion will cure them. It is impossible to say with certainty but improvement is bound to result. I told them so, but better still the practice of auto-suggestion will prevent all such evils. It cannot be too strongly recommended to business men and workers of all kinds who are inclined to waste vital nervous energy in abnormal brain activity. It will act as a brake. It will quiet quivering nerves, and transform an unbridled torrent of thought into an even-flowing, calm stream that furnishes infinitely more real energy in the long run.

**Auto-suggestion and the strenuous life.** I was once asked if I condemned the strenuous



way of living and I answered, "Certainly not." Work as much as you like, although it is wise not to exaggerate. But work does not hurt you if you control it and do not let it control you. Therein lies the danger. If you understand auto-suggestion thoroughly, if you practise it in the spirit as well as in the letter in your business as in your social life, you will be able to obtain that essential control of your nervous force which will enable you to be as strenuous as you like and work as much as you like, within the limits of human endurance, of course. As I am compelled to repeat every day, auto-suggestion is nothing more than the art of availing ourselves of the natural powers within us all, and it should be obvious that none of us can go beyond them. Auto-suggestion teaches how to make hard tasks easy; how to analyze thought; how to accomplish things with a minimum of effort and nerve expenditure. There is no trick in it. It is simply self-mastery. Musing on the character of the people in these industrial cities, my train of thought was interrupted by a man

staying in the same hotel who, in the course of a short conversation, gave me what I believe to be the key to it. His grandfather was one of those who in 1830 tracked westward and founded the city of Chicago. Where that immense city now stands, a hundred years ago there were then three or four log huts. That is what I have been trying to visualize—this amazing growth of a nation. The men of that generation were giants in achievement, reckless and extravagant in their outpouring of energy because of their haste to turn primitive settlements into organized states and transform industrious communities into cities of industry and thriving trade. The force of suggestion emanated from them and still works. The present generation is still under its influence, multiplied a hundred thousand-fold by the accumulation of the idea of haste in the transmission of the suggestion from individual to individual. The suggestive force of this kind moved from East to West. That seems to explain adequately the still red-hot, fast-throbbing energy of the westerly cities.

FEMININE INFLUENCE IN AMERICA



## CHAPTER XVIII

### FEMININE INFLUENCE IN AMERICA

ONE of the apparent if not real paradoxes of America is the preëminence of feminine influence in a country which seems so essentially man-made. There is undoubtedly an explanation of this, but I could not pretend to fathom it in the space of a few short weeks. That woman is supreme here, however, is impressed upon all, I suppose, who come to the United States from abroad.

I do not mean to say that American women take a more active part in business or industry than their sisters in France or England; women have invaded all domains in France formerly held to be the closed preserves of man. Moreover, no Frenchman will deny that the feminine element wields power that is seldom challenged in his country.

But it is less perceptible than in America.

One feels that women rule over here. Not politically—at least not directly—and even in the sphere of trade and industry I think the French woman plays a more important part than the American woman.

Where the American woman rules. But in everything else woman appears to lay down the law in America; and the husband—"lord and master" only in his office and club—brother, and often the father, too, are content to obey and accept her sway. An American said to me the other day: "Women run our homes and many things besides. In the house she is 'boss.' For instance, I would never think of taking a friend home to lunch or dinner without getting my wife's approval first." He added that he was quite happy and that everything worked smoothly. I do not doubt it.

Of course, I am not citing this as an example of abnormal wifely authority. It is merely one among hundreds of remarks I have heard men make in regard to other spheres where women reign supreme. American women are, I firmly believe, worthy of the power they

hold; and in general they appear to exercise it with advantage to all concerned. I often wonder if I met the typical American women.

American women are charming. I shall certainly carry with me vivid impressions of creatures of rare charm and wisdom. Physically, the American woman is one of the handsomest and perhaps one of the most fascinating types I have ever studied. She is visibly healthy and has mental and moral poise. Probably one meets a greater proportion of pretty faces and figures in the streets of New York and other cities of America than in any other country, although I think that perfect beauty may be commoner in London and Paris.

Good conversationalists. Intellectually, the average American woman seems to me to be of a superior order. She is a good conversationalist, with a sparkle peculiar to herself. Often she rises to real brilliancy, despite a tendency to use slang at inappropriate moments.

I think I have mentioned in a previous chapter that I consider Americans to be the

best talkers in the world. American women show remarkable versatility, and they are never dull. Morally, they are resourceful, self-reliant, and independent—qualities which should make them ideal companions and “pals” for their husbands and brothers and children.

I say “should” because I am not sure that they are always such companions. I am not sure that there is not a little selfishness and temperamental coldness in the American woman which makes her prone to lose too early after marriage much of the interest in her husband and his pursuits which are essential to the harmony of wedded life. And that may be one of the reasons for the growing number of divorces.

On the other hand, as I have been privileged to observe in many homes, American women are devoted to their children and will make any sacrifice for their general welfare and education. Yet, they do not allow their home life to absorb all their time and attention, as too many French women are apt to do. They are eager to keep abreast of developments in



art, letters, and science, although, strangely enough, I have not noticed much feminine interest in politics, notwithstanding that American women occupy government administrative posts which are still closed to women in France.

American women are well read—and extravagant. They are usually exceedingly well read, and it is always a real pleasure to talk with them. But are they not inclined to be tyrannical and extravagant? I suppose there is nothing really astonishing in the careless spendthrift ways of the modern American girl, in a country where every one makes and spends money quickly, yet they did surprise me at first.

I met so many girls and young married women who owned and drove automobiles that I asked one of them how they were able to afford it.

“Oh,” she replied, “we business and professional girls all buy cars; we spend all the money we earn.”

Westward one meets a slightly different

kind of woman—sterner, harder, less supple of mind, and with a narrower outlook on the world. She is the type of those left when the tide of settlers flowed still farther West. Prosperity has come with the growth of industry, but has not had time to efface the rude qualities bequeathed to them by earlier generations, so one encounters women sometimes who lack the gentleness and polish to which one is accustomed in the East.

Of the giddy social butterfly, flitting ceaselessly in search of amusements to fill the emptiness of an aimless existence, I need not speak. She is not peculiar to America. The real American woman is the generous, warm-hearted, enthusiastic woman, full of energy and devotion and resource, whom we saw at work all along the battleline in France during the war.

AMERICAN MEN—THE HARDEST  
WORKERS IN THE WORLD



## CHAPTER XIX

### AMERICAN MEN—THE HARDEST WORKERS IN THE WORLD

EVERY American man shows in his actions that he believes himself to be a wheel in the complicated great machinery that is at work manufacturing a nation. That, at least, is the impression they give me.

Their belief in their individual importance may be, and often is, unconscious, but it is always perceptible to the stranger. It is revealed in their thoroughness, in the feverish haste with which they conduct their business as though working to a hard schedule in order to achieve perfection or success in a given time and keep abreast of the swift national movement.

Americans are hard workers—as a result of suggestion. Without a doubt this is the result of suggestion driven into the mind from

childhood up. School books teach it and it becomes auto-suggestion. The subconscious mind of the American man tells him imperiously that he must not tarry. He has no time for leisure, the nation must be built, and if his own little wheel stops it may check the advance of the whole machine. And so the American man is the hardest worker in the world. A pioneer and a slave to a civilization in the making, he condemns himself to a premature old age. Although I have seen a few American business men who look young at 65 or 70 they are exceptions. The average man there is old at fifty—because he is always at work even when he is at play. He carries his business with him to the golf links and is thinking out problems, meeting worries over his hurried lunch. And too often he takes them to bed with him. His family life is sacrificed despite his naturally affectionate disposition. Generally a devoted husband and father, the American is only too willing to leave the evening of his home and children to his wife. He will send his whole family away for a holiday or a

change regardless of the expense, for money means little to him. He knows subconsciously that he will earn as much as is necessary.

The auto-suggestion of success. That is one of the secrets of his success in business—the auto-suggestion of success. The idea of success is in the blood of the nation, for the nation itself is a success—the most gigantic success history has ever recorded. And always the American business man seems to have the notion firmly ingrained in his mind that he is working not only for himself but also for the nation, for his state and for his city. I have never seen such “boosting,” as you call it, of cities and states as among Americans. The result is obvious in the rapid growth of such cities and states and of the nation. Look at the men who own or control some of the biggest businesses or industries in America. They deny themselves all leisure, they work fourteen hours a day or more. I know many such. Certainly they exaggerate, just as some of those “boosters” of whom I have spoken. But that very “boosting” spurs

men on unconsciously to greater effort to accomplish things and make their own words true.

American men not self-conscious. I am quite convinced that the more or less vague consciousness that they are indispensable units in the great nation-building plant explains the element of idealism that colours the methods of so many Americans in the conduct of their business despite a more prominent appearance of self-interest. It may be, too, that these broader motives animating them explain partially at least the striking lack of self-consciousness in American men which enables them to concentrate their thought and energies more than Europeans. Sometimes, by the way, that lack of self-consciousness manifests itself in less pleasing manners to European eyes. In my hurried trip through America I was compelled to sleep often in Pullman cars, and I was not a little surprised when I saw for the first time men emerging from their beds and passing through the car with only their nether garments and a thin



undervest to conceal their lusty, unwashed frame from the eyes of other occupants, including women. On one occasion it was full noon when a man left his couch in such scanty attire and passed unconcerned down the entire length of the car which was full of women. That, of course, strikes the visitor from Europe, where such incidents are impossible. Yet America has a reputation for prudishness.

The American is self-confident. A fine confidence in himself necessarily goes with the American's lack of self-consciousness. He knows by the best kind of auto-suggestion conceivable that he can do anything and everything and he does it. I have been told that thinkers and philosophers are fretting over the dread consequences to be expected from a new tendency which they profess to perceive—a tendency to laziness and professional idleness in a certain class of young Americans. I am told that the sons of millionaires do not work. Maybe it is so. I have seen no signs of it, and in any case I doubt if

the tendency be strong enough to constitute a real danger. A few days ago I met the owner of a business whose annual turnover amounts to the best part of a billion dollars. He has six sons; all six work every day in their respective departments and all six know the business from A to Z. Only one has even been to college. Another multi-millionaire whom I know personally and who owns the largest business of its kind in the world is able to leave it in the hands of his son with complete confidence whenever he desires to take a rest.

I know from personal observation that these cases are not exceptional. America has, however, reached a stage in her development when a certain amount of idleness cannot do much harm, especially if, as appears to be the case, the idlers are fostering the growing interest in art and the refinements of civilization. American men might do well to relax a little. It would, I think, be good for the country. There is very little danger of their going to extremes in that sense. The men of America

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are physically and morally among the finest types I have ever met. It would be a racial disaster to allow the reservoir of nervous energy to be exhausted before the nation's destinies are accomplished.



INFLUENCE OF THE NEWSPAPERS



## CHAPTER XX

### INFLUENCE OF THE NEWSPAPERS

**A**MERICA is a nation of newspaper readers. Nowhere else in the world do people display such an insatiable hunger for news or other matter to be found in the daily journal. I am almost tempted to say that newspapers constitute the principal feature of American streets, so much are they in evidence. At every corner one sees a little stall, with stacks of them piled high in front of the vendor. The sidewalks and roads are littered with cast-away sheets. The building-sites, of which there seems to be one to every three blocks in New York, are convenient dumping-grounds for papers thrown away by passers-by. Fresh editions are put on the streets all day long, and are devoured instantaneously by the still news-hungry public. Three persons out of four in the subway trains

have their noses buried in their papers to and from their place of business. And it is the same in every city. One wonders if the general American public finds time to read anything else, or if its chief literary food is not furnished by the papers.

**The influence of the Press.** It is easy to see what a tremendous influence the daily papers must have upon the American people. Fortunately, their influence, on the whole, appears to be good, morally and intellectually. With the exception of what you call a "yellow" tendency, in a certain but small section of the Press, American journals, besides being the most enterprising in the world, endeavour to live up to ideals of a surprisingly high order. By their conception of the rôle assigned to them as educators and enlighteners of the people they have accepted a big and important share of that task of nation-building to which I have referred in previous chapters.

In my hurried tour of American cities I was often surprised to see in local papers articles and signatures which I had already seen in



New York. Generally, such articles treated of matters connected with literature, art, the theatre, music, and science. Inquisitive, I asked why and wherefore; and thus I learned all about the system of newspaper syndicating which apparently is practised nowhere outside America—at least to the same degree. What a gigantic machine for the dissemination of ideas! Superficially, the system may seem to be just another example of American enterprise. It is. But to me it has an infinitely deeper significance. Geographical, economic, and political conditions have created the need for it. America is such a huge country, and the nation is still not fully developed. A continuous liaison was indispensable between the political and intellectual centres in order to meet the risk of the different States, many of them remote from the capital (how many Europeans realize that an express train takes five days to cross the continent from ocean to ocean?), manifesting differing tendencies and developing along separate lines. So to my mind the peculiar business policy of American

journalism is the result of natural law. American newspapers are the vehicles of thought, or arteries, or nerves which establish a constant circulation of intellectual energy between the brain centres and the most distant parts of the country; for a growing nation like America, with its mass of imperfectly digested foreign elements, they probably constitute the most potent, if not the only means of welding this heterogeneous people into a thoroughly homogeneous nation, politically and intellectually. It is impossible to over-estimate their power in this respect. Their force of suggestion in the matter of moulding public opinion and guiding national development must be colossal. And, as I have said, I believe the newspapers do their work well and conscientiously.

Just as one illustration among thousands of others I should like to mention a result obtained by the hammering of an idea by the newspapers. In almost every paper I picked up in the different cities I found an article urging people to build, and giving the reasons

why. I have just seen figures showing that building throughout the country has increased by more than 30 per cent. within a year.

Americans are accustomed to their papers, but the foreigner cannot but be impressed and amazed at the size of them and the quality and diversity of their contents, especially of the Sunday editions. Often running to a hundred pages, they are veritable encyclopædias and constitute a faithful mirror of the world's thought and activity in every branch of intellectual, artistic, scientific, political, and economic life. There is food for thought in them for all. The literary supplement, for instance, embraces the world's productions, and each article is written in such a way that when one has read it one feels as if one had read the book it reviews instead of the usual tiresome platitudes poured out in Europe in the guise of "criticism." There is a short, brightly written lesson in American history for the children, a story by a leading American author, and articles on every topical phase of home or foreign movement,

social, political, or intellectual. Nothing is omitted. Enterprise is naturally one of the first characteristics of the American editor.

**Dominant part played by American editors.** His finger is ever on the pulse of the world and on that of his own people. His brain registers the faintest movement and change in international affairs. He will get the news for his paper at all costs and will pay extravagant sums to harness to its columns the minds of the leading men and women on the world-stage. He is a dynamic force in the national machinery. Shaping national policy, swaying public opinion, a maker of the people's chiefs, he conscientiously plays his rôle as a guardian of the nation's ideals.

The terrible importance of the above strikes one forcibly when it is realized that an article on a political or social subject may be printed in seventy different provincial newspapers, some of them with huge circulations. I read in a paper published in one of the biggest cities of the States that the circulation of its Sunday edition reached somewhere near a

million, and it gave graphic aids to realization of what those figures meant. I learned that the paper used for that edition, if placed along a straight line, would reach a distance of over fifteen hundred miles.

The course of history can be changed by the forces commanded by American newspapers.

THE END

















