

The Power to Heal



First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV, No. 7, April 1883, pp. 158-60.
Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE POWER TO HEAL) IV pp. 380-86.
Frontispiece: Concert (c. 1485-95) Lorenzo Costa, National Gallery, London

IT IS A STRIKING COMMENTARY upon the imperfection of our modern system of medicine that an almost unanimous scepticism prevails among physicians as to the power of healing the sick by mesmeric methods. By most the thing is declared impossible, and those who maintain its reality are set down as little better than charlatans. The majority are not satisfied with this exhibition of petty spite: they do their best to intimidate and ostracise the more candid minority. And they find more than willing allies in the theologians who stand for their especial prerogatives, and, while claiming to heal by divine commission, denounce all lay mesmeric healers as either humbugs or sorcerers. It is saddening to read in the literature of mesmerism so many plaintive protests against the prejudiced injustice of the medical profession towards such able scientists as Gregory, Ash-burner, Elliotson, and von Reichenbach. One cannot restrain one's indignation to see how an instinct of narrow selfishness carries professional men beyond all bounds and warps the moral sense. The case of Newton, the American healer, whose mesmeric cures are recorded by thousands and embrace examples of the most desperate ailments instantaneously relieved, is striking. This man has healed in public halls in many American cities as well as in London, not scores, but hundreds of sick people by the simple laying on of hands. His power was so great that he could by a word and a gesture dispel the pains of everybody in the audience who stood up when he called upon those who were suffering from any pain to do so. Seventeen years ago he publicly stated that he had up to that time cured one hundred and fifty thousand sick persons; what his present total is — for he is still curing — we cannot say, but it must be larger than the aggregate of all the instantaneous cures effected by all the “holy wells” and shrines and professed healers within our historical period. A book¹ by Mr. A.E. Newton, a respectable gentleman of Massachusetts, which appeared in the year 1879, contains the record of some thousands of cases which yielded to Dr Newton's tremendous psychopathic power. From a public address of the latter² we learn that “In healing there must be faith *on one side or the other*. A healer should be a person of great faith, great energy; sympathetic and kind; a man who is true to himself; a muscular man, with a fixed, positive and determined will. One possessing a good share of these qualities will be successful.” The discourse finished, he gave a practical illustration of his healing power. Said he: “Now I ask any in the room that are in pain to

¹ *The Modern Bethesda, or The Gift of Healing Restored*. Edited by A.E. Newton, New York: Newton Pub. Co., 1879

² See pp. 113-14

rise — only those who are in acute pain.” About twenty rose, and the Doctor threw his arms forcibly forward and said: “Now your pain is gone.” He then “requested those whose pains were cured to sit down, and they all sat down.” His power has been sometimes so superabundant that he had only to touch a paralytic, a clubfoot patient, a deaf or blind person, to cure them on the spot, and there he has touched and healed 2,000 in one day. The Curé d’Ars, a good French priest, who died in 1859, healed like Newton for thirty years; during which period he had been visited by 20,000 patients of all ranks and from every country in Europe.¹ Dr. Ennemoser, in his interesting *History of Magic*, tells about Gassner, a Romish priest of the latter half of the eighteenth century, who cured his thousands by the following artifices:

He wore a scarlet cloak, and on his neck a silver chain. He usually had in his room a window on his left hand, and a crucifix on his right. With his face towards the patient, he touched the ailing part, . . . calling on the name of Jesus . . . every one that desired to be healed *must believe* . . . covered the affected part with his hand, and rubbed therewith vigorously both head and neck.²

In our days the Roman Catholics have revived the business of miraculous cures on a grand scale: at Lourdes, France, is their holy well where hundreds of cripples have deposited their sticks and crutches as tokens of their cures; the same thing is going on at the parish church at Knock, Ireland, and last year there were symptoms that the same trump card was to be played by the fish-collecting priests of Colombo, Ceylon. In fact the Church of Rome has always claimed a monopoly and made the simple psychopathic law play into their hands as testimony in support of their theocratic infallibility. That useful compiler of valuable psychic facts, the Chevalier G. des Mousseaux, scrapes on this papal violoncello with great zeal. With him all mesmeric healings are effected by the devil.

When the magnetic agent operates upon the evils of the body, experience proves as an infallible truth, that it does not heal them without causing acute pains, or without risk to life, which it often destroys! Its cures are exasperatingly long; perfect ones are the exception; the evil that it expels from one organ is often replaced in another organ by an evil still more desperate, and the sicknesses it dissipates are liable to cruel relapses.³

His several volumes contain hundreds of reports of cases in which the devil has shown his Satanic power by healing the sick and doing all sorts of wonders. And that we may have the most unanswerable proof that the mesmeric fluid has manifested itself similarly in all ages, he collects from the writings of the ancients the testimonies which they have left on record. Nothing could be more sarcastic than his arraignment of the Academies of Science and the medical profession for their stupid incredulity as to the occurrence of these marvels. Verily this is an author to be studied by the intelligent psychologist however much he may be disposed to laugh at his Catholic bias and his blind resort to the theory of a non-existent devil to explain away the beneficent power to heal disease which so many philanthropic men in all

¹ [See J.B. Vianney in the General Bibliography Index, pp. 669-70.]

² [Pt. II, p. 274]

³ Henri Plon, *La Magie au XIX^{me} Siècle*, Paris 1864, p. 327

epochs have exercised. It is not in the least true either that mesmeric cures are impermanent or that one disease disappears only to be replaced by a worse one. If the operator be healthy and virtuous and knows his science well, his patient will be effectually restored to health in every instance where his or her own constitution is favourably disposed to receive the mesmeric aura. And this leads us to remark that Dr. Newton has not sufficiently explained the curative action of faith nor its relation to the mesmerizer's healing power. The familiar analogy of the law of electric and magnetic conduction makes all plain. If a metallic body charged with + electricity be brought into contact with a body negatively electrified, the + fluid is discharged from the first into the second body. The phenomenon of thunder and lightning is an example in point. When two bodies similarly electrified meet they mutually repel each other. Apply this to the human system. A person in health is charged with positive vitality — *prāna*, od, aura, electro-magnetism, or whatever else you prefer to call it:¹ one in ill-health is negatively charged: the positive vitality, or health element, may be discharged by an effort of the healer's will into the receptive nervous system of the patient: they touch each other, the fluid passes, equilibrium is restored in the sick man's system, the *miracle* of healing is wrought, and the lame walk, the blind see, deaf hear, dumb speak, and humours of long standing vanish in a moment! Now, if besides health, power of will, knowledge of science, and benevolent compassion on the healer's part, there be also faith, passivity, *and the requisite attractive polarity*, on that of the patient, the effect is the more rapid and amazing. Or, if faith be lacking and still there be the necessary polaric receptivity, the cure is still possible. And again, if there be in the patient alone a faith supreme and unshakable in the power of a healer, of a holy relic, of the touch of a shrine, of the waters of a well, of a pilgrimage to a certain place and a bath in some sacred river, of any given ceremonies, or repetition of charms or an amulet worn about the neck — in either of these or many more agencies that might be named, then the patient will cure himself by the sole power of his predisposed faith.² And this rallying power of Nature's forces goes

¹ [See "Magnetism, Mesmerism, Hypnotism" in our Confusing Words Series. — ED. PHIL.]

² That excellent journal, *The Times of Ceylon*, in its number for February 7th, prints the following facts which illustrate the recuperative power of the imagination:

I have recently read an account of what is termed a 'faith-cure' which took place with the famous Sir Humphry Davy when quite a young man. Davy was about to operate on a paralytic patient with oxygen gas,

" . . . but before beginning the inhalation, Davy placed a thermometer under the patient's tongue to record his temperature. The man was much impressed with this and declared with much enthusiasm that he was already much relieved. Seeing the extraordinary influence of the man's imagination, Davy did nothing more than gravely place the thermometer under his tongue from day to day, and in a short time he reported him cured."

I can relate a perfect faith-cure of a desperate case of dysentery in one of our planting districts, by a medical practitioner well known at the time, Dr. Baylis, who practiced on his own account in the Kallibokke valley and Knuckles district. He had just returned from a visit to India, having left his assistant in charge, and on his return was much distressed to learn that a favourite patient of his, the wife of an estate manager, was desperately ill with dysentery and not expected to live more than a day or two, being almost *in extremis*. She had been gradually sinking under the debilitating effects of the terrible disease, and there was nothing more to be done as the doctor found the treatment to have been all that he could have adopted. Wishing to see the patient before her death, he at once went to the estate, and on seeing him she expressed great pleasure, saying in faint tones she knew she should recover now that he had come to attend her, as she had such complete confidence in him. At her request he remained in the house, but no change in her medicine was made. Strange to say she at once began to recover, and at the end of a week was able to walk with him in the garden.

Such was the result with the patient. On the mind of the doctor the cure had the effect of causing him to lose all confidence in the efficacy of medicine; he abandoned allopathy as a delusion, took to homeopathy as the only true practice, and necessarily lost many of his patients; and eventually left the country

in the medical books under the name of *Vis Medicatrix Naturae* — the Healing Power of Nature. It is of supreme importance that the one who attempts to heal disease should have an absolute and implicit faith

- In his science;
- In in himself.

To project from himself the healing aura he must concentrate all his thought for the moment upon his patient, and WILL with iron determination that the disease shall depart and a healthy nervous circulation be re-established in the sufferer's system. It matters nothing what may be his religious belief, nor whether he invoke the name of Jesus, Rama, Mohammed, or Buddha; he *must believe in his own power and science*, and the invocation of the name of the founder of his particular sect only helps to give him the confidence requisite to ensure success. Last year in Ceylon, Colonel Olcott healed more than fifty paralytics, in each case using the name of Lord Buddha. But if he had not had the knowledge he has of mesmeric science, and full confidence in his psychic power and the revered Guru whose pupil he is, he might have vainly spoken his simple religious formula to his patients. He was treating Buddhists, and therefore the invocation of Śākya Muni's name was in their cases as necessary as was the use of the name of Jesus to Père Gassner and the other many healers of the Romish Church who have cured the sick from time to time. And a further reason for his using it was that the cunning Jesuits of Colombo were preparing to convince the simpleminded Singhalese that their new spring near Kelanie had been endowed with exceptionally miraculous healing powers by the Virgin Mary.

Those who may, after reading our remarks, feel a call to heal the sick, should bear in mind the fact that all the curative magnetism that is forced by their will into the bodies of their patients, *comes out of their own systems*. What they have, they can give; no more. And as the maintenance of one's own health is a prime duty, they should never attempt healing unless they have a surplus of vitality to spare, over and above what may be needed to carry themselves through their round of duties and keep their systems well up to tone. Otherwise they would soon break down and become themselves invalids. Only the other day a benevolent healer of London died from his imprudent waste of his vital forces. For the same reason, healing should not be attempted to any extent after one has passed middle life: the constitution has not then the same recuperative capacity as in youth. As the old man cannot compete with the fresh youth in athletic contests, so he can no more hope to rival him in healing the sick; to attempt it is sheer folly; to ask it of him simple ignorance and selfishness. We make these reflections because requests have been made from many quarters that Colonel Olcott would visit them and publicly heal the sick as he did in Ceylon. To say nothing of the fact that he is now a man of past fifty years of age; and burdened with a weight of official duty that would break down any person, not sustained like him by exceptional influences, we need only reflect that the suffering sick throughout India are numbered by the tens of thousands, and that for him to be himself known as healer would be to insure his being mobbed and almost torn to pieces in every city. If

and settled in California as a farmer, where he was drowned a few years ago. The late Dr. Baylis was a marvellously gifted man in many respects, but, like many other clever men, very impulsive. He was inclined to be a believer in Buddhism and actually named one of his children Buddha.

in a small place like Galle, our Headquarters building was thronged by two and three hundred patients a day, the road was crowded with carts, litters and hobbling cripples, and the President was often unable to find time to get even a cup of tea before 5 p.m., what would it be in our Indian cities, those hives of population where every street would pour out its quota of invalids? If, like Newton, he had practised healing all his life, and he could cure by a touch, the case would be different. As it is, all he can do is that which he has been doing, viz., to teach eligible members of the Theosophical Society the secrets of mesmeric psychopathy, on the simple condition that it shall never be used as a means of pecuniary gain or to gratify any sinister motive.

