

LONDON LETTER.

THE case of M. Chauffat, a native of Haute Savoie, who has been overtaken by a trance in a French hotel in London, has been exciting very great interest among the section of medical men devoted to psychological studies. To-day is the seventeenth day of his cataleptic condition, from which he shows no sign of awakening, and the administration of food is not a little difficult. Chauffat has been a patient of the famous Dr. Charcot, in the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris, where a large number of experiments are now being conducted upon hypnotizing. Dr. Charcot, however, particularly wishes it to be understood that Chauffat is not a hypnotized subject. The general state of his body is good, the temperature and pulse being normal, though the respiration is subject to great variation, changing from 15 to 28 in the course of a few hours. The only way in which he can be aroused sufficiently for the administration of food is by directing a strong ray of light on to his eyes. An examination of them by the eminent oculist, Mr. Brudenell Carter, showed that all the vessels, both veins and arteries, were much contracted and very small. Both sides of the body are alike in their condition, though the cataleptic condition is stronger in the limbs than in the trunk. The most extraordinary feature of the case is the remarkable results obtained by gently stroking Chauffat's arm. The limb, if raised upright, remains in that position indefinitely; and, when certain nerves are stroked, the fingers clinch tightly, the blood is forced from the extremity, the hand and fore-arm turn slowly round to the right till the strain is so great that the muscles stand out rigidly, the limb being perfectly rigid. On the other hand, the most gentle touch or stroking of the flexor of the fore-arm is sufficient to relax the whole. Without doubt, Chauffat's case is one of the most remarkable of the kind that has occurred in England, although they are more frequently to be met with in France. The following extract from the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh for Feb. 19, 1816, has recently been published, and has an interesting bearing on the case.

"Dr. Brewster communicated an account of the sleeping woman of Dunninald, near Montrose, drawn up by the Rev. James Brewster, minister of Craig. Margaret Lyall, aged 21, daughter of John Lyall, laborer, of Dunninald, was first seized with a sleeping fit on the 27th of June, 1815, which continued to the 30th of June; next morning she was again found in a deep sleep—in this state she remained for seven days, without motion, food, etc.; but at the end of this time, by the moving of her left hand and by plucking at

the coverlet of the bed and pointing to her mouth, a wish for food being understood, it was given her. This she took, but still remained in her lethargic state till Tuesday, the 8th of August, being six weeks from the time she was seized with the lethargy, without appearing to be awake, except on the afternoon of Friday, the 30th of June. For the first two weeks her pulse was generally about 60, and previous to her recovery at 70 to 72. Though extremely feeble for some days after her recovery, she gained strength so rapidly that before the end of August she began to work at the harvest on the lands of Mr. Arkley, and continued without inconvenience to perform her labour.

"The account is drawn up by the clergyman of the parish, and is accompanied with the medical report of the surgeons who attended; to whose attestations are added those of Mr. Arkley, the proprietor of Dunninald, and Lyall, the father, and is in every respect entitled to the fullest credit."

The term 'hypnotism' was first introduced many years ago, by Mr. Braid, a surgeon of Manchester, to whom the demonstration of the condition was first due. An account of his work is given in Dr. W. B. Carpenter's 'Mental physiology,' pp. 601–610. The subject has very recently been revived, and has formed the subject of several curious experiments in the Salpêtrière hospital and elsewhere. According to the *Zeitschrift für Elektrotechnik*, experiments have shown that there was no difficulty in producing all the ordinary hypnotic effects upon a distant subject by means of a telephone. The present writer, however, has not been able to verify the statement.

Rumors of important telegraphic and telephonic discoveries come to us from Belgium, as having been made by von Rysselberghe, but details are at present wanting. It is certain, however, that arrangements are in progress for the establishment of a telephone-line between Paris and London.

At the Colonial conference now assembled in London, some striking facts were put forward by Mr. Pender, chairman of the 'Eastern telegraph company,' as to the debt which commerce owes to science. Twenty years ago there were scarcely 2,000 miles of submarine cables: now there are 107,000 miles, of which all but 7,000 are under British control (the total cost being \$185,000,000); and "cables can at the present time be laid with comparatively little risk of breakage, and with an almost certainty of efficient repair." The total land-lines are estimated at 1,750,000 miles, costing \$260,000,000.

W.

London, April 9.