

I am a scientist and I am a hypnotist. I am interested in hypnotism. Hypnotism helps sick people as they sleep. That is what I believe. Some patients have an illness in their bodies. Some patients are sick in their minds. When a patient is hypnotized they can help themselves.

As the patient sleeps, he or she listens to the words of the hypnotist. The patients' own thoughts can help their minds and bodies to get well.

This is the way that I make my patients sleep. First, I move my hands in front of the patient's face. Then I speak slowly and clearly. My voice is deep and soft.

"Your eyes are heavy," I say. "You will sleep."

A few seconds later, the person is sleeping, but the person is also awake! The person can hear everything that I say. I give orders. The person follows my orders. Some people are easier to hypnotize than others. But I cannot hypnotize a person who does not want to be hypnotized.

A few years ago, I had an interesting idea. No one had been hypnotized just as they died. What happened to the mind and body of a person as they died? Was it possible to stop death? Soon I was able to study this idea. I had a very interesting case. Here are the facts about a special patient.

Mr Ernest Valdemar was a scientist, like myself. I knew him well and he liked me. Mr Valdemar was also interested in hypnotism. We talked about my idea. We talked about death and hypnotism.

Mr Valdemar was very ill. He had a disease in his lungs.

In a few months, he was going to die. He was frightened of death. His illness gave him a lot of pain. And he did not want to have a painful death. He wanted to sleep because of the pain. He wanted to be hypnotized.

"I will hypnotize you just before you die," I said.

Mr Valdemar was pleased. Then one Saturday night, he sent me a note.

*Please come to my room immediately. My death is close. I cannot live another day.*

I went to Mr Valdemar's room. His doctor was with him. The doctor could do nothing more for Mr Valdemar. He said goodbye to his patient and left his room. A nurse was looking after Mr Valdemar in his last hours of life.

Mr Valdemar was sitting in his bed. He was holding a pen in his hand. He was writing in a small book. His face was very pale and very, very thin. I could see the bones of his skull under his skin. And Mr Valdemar's skin was not white - it was gray.

"Hypnotize me," said the sick man. His voice was weak. "I will die before midnight. Hypnotize me now."

I moved my hands in front of Mr Valdemar's face. I had done this many times before. I did not speak. I hypnotized Mr Valdemar easily. His eyes closed immediately. Soon he was asleep.

The nurse and I laid the patient flat on the bed. Was he alive or dead? He was breathing very slowly. I held a mirror up to his lips. I saw his breath on the mirror. He was alive, but he was very weak.

"Mr Valdemar, are you asleep?" I asked. "Yes," said the sick man. "Don't wake me. I'm dying."

After a few minutes, I asked the question again.

"Mr Valdemar, are you asleep?"

Mr Valdemar gave the same answer. "Yes," he replied. "Don't wake me. I'm dying."

Then his eyes opened a little. I saw only the white part of his eyes. His lips moved and I saw his teeth. Then his mouth opened and I saw his tongue. It was black. Suddenly all the breath came out of Mr Valdemar's body and he was quiet.

Mr Valdemar was dead. I was sure of this. His arms and legs were cold. He was not breathing and his heart was not beating. So I was very surprised when he spoke to me. But his voice did not come from his mouth. It came from somewhere deep in his body.

"I've been sleeping, but now I'm dead," said Mr Valdemar.

After this, Mr Valdemar did not change. He was dead, but he was not dead. The nurse closed Mr Valdemar's mouth.

Maybe he was not dead! I spoke to him again. Maybe he tried to reply, but he could not.

The next morning Mr Valdemar's doctor returned. The doctor looked at Mr Valdemar but he did not sign a death certificate.

"I can't sign the official document," he said. "I don't think that the patient is dead. You mustn't put him in a coffin. You mustn't bury him in a tomb. Wait another day."

The doctor came back the next day, and the day after that. Mr Valdemar lay on the bed. His body did not move. He did not breathe. He did not speak. He lay like a dead man. It was the sleep of death. But his body did not change. Mr Valdemar was not dead.

"Tell me when his body changes," said the doctor. "Soon his skin and flesh will become black and bad. Then you'll know that Mr Valdemar is dead. I will sign a death certificate when you tell me this."

How long did we wait by Mr Valdemar's body? You will not believe me! Mr Valdemar lay on the bed for seven months! His body never became black and bad. It never changed.

At the end of seven months, I made a decision. I was going to end the hypnotism. I was going to wake Mr Valdemar. This sleep of death was wrong.

I moved my hands in front of Mr Valdemar's face. I spoke in a loud and clear voice.

"You will wake up," I said.

Did Mr Valdemar's eyes move? Was he trying to open his eyes? A yellow liquid came out of his ears.

"Mr Valdemar," I said. "How do you feel? Can you speak?"

Did the patient move? Did he move his hands? I was not sure. But I was sure about his voice. I heard a voice that came from deep inside his body.

"Quickly! Make me sleep, or wake me up! Quickly! I tell you that I am dead."

More yellow liquid came from Mr Valdemar's body. Then there was a terrible smell. I stepped back from the bed. Then Mr Valdemar's body started to disappear. It was like black ice in hot sunlight. His body became liquid - yellow liquid that smelt terrible. Soon there was nothing left of Mr Valdemar's skin or body. There was only a pool of yellow liquid and some bones.