

A full discovery of the strange practices of Dr. Elliotson on the bodies of his female patients! : At his house ... with all the secret experiments he makes upon them ... The whole as seen by an eye-witness, and now fully divulged!.

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A FULL DISCOVERY

OF THE

STRANGE PRACTICES

OF

Dr. ELLIOTSON

On the bodies of his

FEMALE PATIENTS!

AT HIS HOUSE, IN CONDUIT STREET, HANOVER SQ.

WITH ALL THE SECRET

EXPERIMENTS HE MAKES UPON THEM,

AND THE

Curious Postures they are put into while sitting or standing, when awake or asleep!



A female Patient being blindfolded, to undergo an operation.

THE WHOLE AS SEEN
BY AN EYE-WITNESS,
AND NOW FULLY DIVULGED!

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A FULL DISCOVERY
OF
THE STRANGE PRACTICES
OF THE CELEBRATED
DR. ELLIOTSON,

On the Bodies of his Female Patients! at his House in Conduit Street, Hanover Square, with all the Secret Experiments he makes upon them, and the Curious Postures they are put into, while sitting or standing, when awake or asleep! the whole as seen by an Eye-witness, and now fully divulged Showing the wonders of "Animal Magnetism," and the influence of the "Mesmeric Science."

That which was call'd witchcraft, and the blackest of crimes,
Is admir'd, and sought after, in these latter times,
Ah "Mesmer!" once defam'd—could thou again but rise
Whole multitudes would pay thee, each their sacrifice!

One day lately, while residing a short time in London, I dined at the house of a gentleman in the neighbourhood of Portman Square, where I happened to meet and form the acquaintance of the celebrated Dr. Elliotson. I had heard of this gentleman only by vague report, and knew little further regarding him than that he had been zealous in the pursuit and practice of animal magnetism, for which he had incurred not a little obliquy and professional animosity. Much as this subject has recently been discussed, I had never paid any attention to it, and probably never should but for the accident of meeting this eminent magnetist, and being gradually drawn into conversation with him. The good humour

of the professor, the vivacity of his manner, and the truthful force of his observations when they bore upon philosophical subjects, gave me reason to imagine that deceit formed no part of his character; but at the same time I put myself on my guard, and was resolved to be carried away by "no sort of nonsense." On my bringing the conversation round to the subject with which his name was so intimately connected, I found that he had formed no distinct code of laws or precise theory regarding mesmerism as he called it. He said that the experiments he had been able to make, were in his opinion, highly interesting, as developing physical and mental phenomena of no ordinary kind: that he felt assured there existed in nature an unseen agent or agency, an influence, or whatever it might be called, which flowed from one living animal to another like a stream of electricity, although at the time the animals were not in contact with each other; and that in highly irritable conditions of the bodily frame, that agency produced certain phenomena of a most remarkable kind; that he did not pretend to account for, or to understand the nature of the agency; all he insisted upon was, that such an agency existed, that it could be excited into activity, and was therefore as a truth in nature, worthy of being examined, and to have its phenomena duly recorded. "I do not wish to lead you one way or another," he continued; "but if you feel any inclination to pursue the inquiry, call at my house, and I will perform some experiments in your presence on two patients, and you can think for yourself." Now for

The Doctor's strange Practises on the bodies of his Female Patients.

These explanations were so candid and fair, that I at once agreed to go and see the experiments. Tuesday next at four o'clock was appointed for my visit, and at that time I proceeded to the doctor's house, an elegant mansion in Conduit Street, taking with me two gentlemen of my acquaintance, one of them a medical man, who had never seen any experiments in mesmerism, and who I hoped would have all his eyes about him, to make sure there was no trickery or collusion.

We were shown into a splendid suit of rooms, and the doctor, his assistant, and his two patients, immediately made their appearance. The two patients, as he mentioned to

me, were sisters, Elizabeth and Jane Okey, the former eighteen, and the latter sixteen years of age. In appearance, however, they were much younger, being small in figure; and I soon perceived that their behaviour, was marked by an extreme silliness or infantile imbecility. They laughed, giggled, spoke broken nonsensical language, and ran about the room like two children at play. They could, however, understand what was said to them, and do as they were bidden, their imbecility not being that of absolute idiots. The doctor explained to us that they had at one time been afflicted with epileptic fits, for which they had been placed under medical treatment in one of the London hospitals; that he had cured them of that malady by mesmerism, but that they were left in the infantile condition in which we now saw them; that this condition was a mode of existence quite peculiar; they had no recollection of anything, not even of who they were; and they had every thing to learn afresh. He also mentioned that their susceptibility of mesmeric treatment was now excessive; that a single wave of the hand could stupify them, or send them to sleep; and that they were further susceptible of being thrown into a state of *perfect somnambulism*, or *walking sleep*, in which they were in a condition of existence different from the preceding. If I understood him rightly, they are susceptible of three conditions: first, the condition of silliness in which I saw them; second, the condition of somnambulism; and, third, that of rationality, in which all their old recollections revive, and they remember nothing of what has passed while in their other conditions. To these susceptibilities, however, there are occasional and very remarkable exceptions, and at all times their respective states of excitability are different. Both are sometimes so slightly irritable—or the force of the agency is so ineffective—that they cannot be operated upon in the usual manner; but a mode has been discovered of rendering them excitable. This is done by the touch of gold or silver, the contact being made on the palm of the hand.

The secret Experiments he makes upon them, divulged.

The first experiment performed was something really startling. I had asked for a glass of water, which the doctor ordered Jane to bring into the room. She had just set down

the water bottle and glass on a side table, when Dr. Elliotson at the distance of about twenty feet, and unseen by her, by a wave of his open hand transfixed her in the attitude in which she happened to be at the moment. She seemed frozen to the spot, and thus stood for a minute or two, with the rigidity of a statue. In half a minute she recovered with a sort of shudder, and came running back, whining as if affronted, and sat down on a chair. The series of experiments performed on her while she was looking at us, was equally striking, though some of them might certainly have been the result of previous rehearsal. A wave of a single finger, of two fingers, and of the whole hand, had each a peculiar effect in setting her asleep. The whole hand being passed through the air in front of her, made her, as I have said, stiff and motionless; her hands were clenched so firmly, that I could not with all my strength open them. From this rigid state, and with her eyes shut, she was recovered by the doctor holding the point of his hands (the two palms pressed together) directed to her hand, a process which seemed to relax the muscles, as if something had passed out of his into her hands, though at the distance of one or two inches. A little breath blown by the mouth also appeared to transfix her, and the same thing seemingly recovered her, tho' breath simply causing an alteration of condition in either way.

The touch of gold, silver, or nickel, or friction with any object, produces a similar effect in setting her asleep. Gold, if held previously in the hand of the operator, has a particularly powerful effect; and a streak of water with a small brush, if the water has been previously blown upon, and had the fingers of a person in it, has the most powerful effect of all; so much so as to be in some measure dangerous to the patient. The touch of, or friction with, iron, always loosens the rigidity, and awakens the patient.

One experiment appears to me worthy of particular description. The assistant procured a thick paste board, which he held to the neck, and round the face of the girl, so that she could not see any thing before her. We sat down in front of her. The doctor rubbed the palm of one of her hands with a piece of lead the size of a pencil. He repeated the experiment several times, but no effect was visible. At length he rubbed the lead on a sovereign which he held in his hand, and then applied the lead to the girl's palm; instantly the hand was clenched into rigidity. The doctor now took me to the door, and said, "Tell me how many times I shall repeat

the rubbing with the lead alone, and at what time I shall touch the gold." I answered, "Touch the gold in your hand at the fifth time." We returned to our seats, and the experiment being repeated, he rubbed four times without effect; when, at the fifth time, having, as I perceived, touched the lead with the gold, her hand became clenched like a vice. While these experiments were performing, her face was so enveloped with the pasteboard, that she saw nothing of the operations; neither, I feel assured, could she hear any sound from the rubbing of the lead on the gold; if the operator or his assistant made any secret signal to cause her to clench her hand, nothing of the kind was apparent.

The curious Postures they are put into, while sitting or standing, when awake or asleep!

These and most of the other experiments, were performed on Jane, the younger sister. Elizabeth, the elder of the two, a beautiful girl of a dark complexion, with a finely moulded features, and who had been amusing herself meanwhile in running over the keys of a piano, was now experimented upon. She possesses a degree of mesmeric susceptibility which permits the performance of an experiment very elegant in its nature. By certain passes of the hands, and other means, she was thrown by Dr. Elliotson into the somnambulic condition. In this she stood fixed in the most graceful attitude for several minutes, her eyes open, but looking vaguely forward, while an innocent smile played upon her countenance. The doctor spoke softly to her as she thus gazed in a statue-like attitude (harsh speaking being, as he said, hurtful and displeasing to her while in the somnambulic state); he asked how long she would remain in the way she was, and she replied "ten minutes." At about the eleventh minute as I reckoned by my watch she passed out of the somnambulic condition by falling back in a kind of swoon or sleep, and was immediately recovered by being blown upon by the breath: she awoke to her condition of infantile playfulness. While this experiment was performed on Elizabeth, my companions were chatting with Jane, and, as I afterwards learned, experimenting upon her. My medical friend, by a pass of his hand when her back was turned towards him, threw her at once into a sleep, and she would have dropped but for the timely support which was given. This extraordinary suscep-

tibility, and to all appearance the entire absence of deception, astonished my friends not a little.

The experiments were altogether so curious, and so unexplainable by any known laws, that I felt my mind bewildered. I told Dr. Elliotson that I had now seen what seemed very extraordinary, and almost magical; still that I was not convinced, and should like to see something more; however, that could scarcely be, as I intended to leave London next day. Dr. Elliotson now mentioned that he was to have a public exhibition at three o'clock, and that he should be glad if I would remain in town one day longer, and make one of the company. I agreed to this polite proposal, and returned next day accordingly.

I found on this occasion from thirty to forty ladies and gentlemen in the room, along with Dr. Elliotson, his assistant, and the two patients, as before. The company being all met, a series of experiments commenced, similar to those which I had already witnessed, with a few others that I had not seen. Not to be tiresome, I shall briefly describe those that were new to me. Jane was placed in a chair, beside which stood on the ground three iron weights tied together; making eighty-six pounds, which she was told to lift by the ring of the principal weight. At first she could not perform this feat; but, her hand being placed on the ring, Dr. Elliotson drew his hand upwards several times, as if drawing something out of her hand, and, after a certain number of these upward passes, her hand actually lifted the eighty-six pounds off the floor, and swung the weights round. Being relieved, she rose up, and I among others advanced to try our powers at lifting; but not one of those who attempted it could raise the weights in the sitting position. Several gentlemen lifted them standing. The circumstance of a feeble girl of sixteen years of age, with one hand, lifting or swaying off the ground a weight of eighty-six pounds, and at the time sitting in the worst possible attitude for performing such a feat, is of itself a most extraordinary fact, and the cause of it altogether baffles my comprehension.

The next thing done was the recovering of the said girl Jane, from her condition of imbecility to that of sound reason. This was a disagreeable experiment. The doctor closely pressed her face with his hands, while his assistant similarly pressed the back of her head. The mode of applying the hands was peculiar. They were placed *across* the face and across the back of head. We were told that if they were

placed up and down the face and head, the desired effect could not be produced. The point of the patient's nose was only visible, and left at liberty for breathing. A wave of the hand downwards first sent her to sleep, and the process of pressure, as I have described it, proceeded. Once or twice she seemed to be recovering, but by an instantaneous application of the hand longitudinally, the sleep was continued, it being important that she should not recover too soon, for then her irrational condition would not be dissipated. After some minutes were spent in this manner, the doctor said he believed she would now certainly recover to consciousness. She heaved sundry deep sighs, the operators took off their hands, and she awoke to all appearance a new creature. She seemed astonished to see such a crowd of persons, stood up and curtsied to the ladies, and spoke with modest diffidence on being addressed. She had no remembrance of any thing that had taken place while in her former condition; she did not know who I was, although she had known and named me previously, from having seen me the day before; she knew her sister, however, from early recollections in her rational condition, but her sister did not know her. After a little time, she was allowed to go out of the apartment. At a subsequent part of the proceedings, she was recalled, and, by a pressure of the doctor's thumbs on her palms, sent back into her infantile condition, when she immediately began to speak and act nonsense.

CONCLUSION OF THE DOCTOR'S EXPERIMENTS,

Showing the Wonders of "Animal Magnetism," and the Influence of the "Mesmeric Science," clearly proved by the Author.

The reader will here naturally ask a question which occurred to my own mind, and which I put to Dr. Elliotson—if the patient can thus be restored to reason at the will of the operator, why not allow her to remain in that condition, and so restore her to society? The doctor, in answer, explained, that the infantile condition would seem to be a state of mind most suitable for the progressive strengthening of the physical frame, and so permitting a cure of that nervous irritability which in the first instance produced epileptic fits—that while in the infantile condition she was gaining health and strength

—that, in point of fact, both girls had greatly improved in intelligence since they came into his charge—and that ultimately the nervous irritability would possibly be so much allayed, that a final and complete restoration to reason might be ventured on with safety. This, as far as I can recollect, was the subject of Dr Elliotson's explanations, and I gathered his meaning so far as to comprehend that it was in reality an act of humanity to allow the two girls to remain in the mean time in the half-idiot condition in which I saw them. I further learned that the doctor had cured other patients of epilepsy by mesmeric treatment, and that all persons were less or more liable to be acted upon, though in many cases a month's treatment (that is, waving the hand towards them for a few minutes once a-day for a month) would be required before they could be rendered so susceptible as to be thrown into the magnetic sleep.

Dr. Elliotson now proceeded to show another experiment, that of drawing the girl, Elizabeth, after him, by the action of his hands, although at a considerable distance from her. Having placed her in an easy-chair, and set her to sleep, he retreated slowly from her backwards, his eyes looking steadily at her, and his hands held together and pointed towards her. As he retreated, he repeatedly drew in his hands towards him, as if drawing something in the air along with him. He thus retreated the breadth of the room and across a lobby into another apartment, a distance of perhaps fifty or sixty feet. As he retreated, the girl at intervals appeared convulsed, and endeavoured to raise herself, or to bend forward as if desirous of following the operator, but always fell back into her position of repose. The experiment being performed, the girl was recovered.

This experiment did not make a deep impression on the company, for the phenomena it exhibited could be too easily accounted for by supposing that the girl simulated. The next, which was the touching the palms of Elizabeth with unaurified and afterwards aurified lead, was more striking and unaccountable. Determined to prevent collusion betwixt the operator and patient, if such existed, I solicited the office of performer, and the doctor being quite willing, I forthwith began. All was expectation. Fancy the girl reclining in an easy chair, with a thick pasteboard held sloping upwards close round her neck, so that she could see nothing but the roof; I sitting in a chair in front of her; the crowd of spectators behind me on seats; and the doctor, by my request, placed out of sight near

the door. In the right hand I held the stalk of lead, in the other a sovereign. I told the girl to open her hand, and I then rubbed it with the lead—perhaps twenty or thirty rubbings on the palm. I told her to close her hand; she did so. I thus rubbed her palm *thrice*, and at each time caused her to close and then open her hand. It was evident to all that the lead had no effect. I now rubbed the lead on the sovereign, and rubbed her palm as before. I then asked her to shut her hand, and she did so. Now came the trying moment. I asked her to open hand, but she could not; it was stiff and clenched. A murmur of surprise burst from all around. It happened as if the contact of the gold with the lead had caused this remarkable phenomenon; and it was equally apparent that there was no collusion. I feel satisfied that the girl did not see what I was doing. How the aurified lead should have had the effect it appeared to have (granting there was no deception in the case), is beyond my power to explain.

I next proceeded to perform the experiment of streaking the fingers of the patient with water. Two wine-glasses were half filled with common water from a jug, and into each was put a camel-hair pencil, into the water in one glass the doctor's assistant put two of his fingers, and also breathed several times, as if to affect it with some kind of influence. To the water in the other glass nothing was done. The girl sat on the chair in a deep magnetic sleep, with her face shielded by the pasteboard. Using the common water, I now streaked the back of the first and third finger of her left hand, which was lying conveniently on her knee, and then streaked the second and the fourth with the mesmerised water. I repeated the streakings three or four times. After an interval of a minute, and while all anxiously looked on, the fingers touched with mesmerised water moved and pointed outwards, but the other fingers continued fixed as they happened to lie. On touching both thumbs with the mesmerised water, they shortly moved in the same manner. The patient was now recovered by the usual means, though with some difficulty, as the mesmerised water has, as I said, a very powerful effect.

Both before and after this experiment, I had, unperceived by Jane, waved my hand behind her, and it uniformly and constantly fixed her into rigidity. Other gentlemen present took similar opportunities of magnetising her by a pass of the hand, and always with the same result, for the power seems to reside in any one. I need hardly say that this bye-play caused extreme astonishment to every one who saw it practised, and all

confessed that they could not previously have the smallest conception of its effects. Towards the conclusion of the proceedings, a cockatoo was brought into the room, and when the girl rubbed it with her hand, the same kind of stupor was produced in her person; the lower animals as well as mankind being agents, as I was told, of this mysterious power.

Before my departure, I took out my watch and held it towards her, as a person holds a watch before a child's face to engage its attention. I asked her to kiss the watch, and doing so she was instantly fixed in a stupor in a bending attitude; the gold, as was explained, had produced this effect. She recovered by my blowing in her face. Again she became fixed by taking hold of the chain; but on afterwards kissing the glass of the watch, she was not in any way affected. I touched the back of her neck with the gold side of the watch, and it stupified her; on touching her with the glass, no effect as before, was produced.

I now finish the account of this very strange exhibition; it will be perhaps asked by the reader, what is my opinion on the subject, but I profess my inability to give one. My feelings are those of astonishment. I cannot believe that any deception was practised, although I possess no proof that there was not. Dr. Elliotson pledged his honour that there was no collusion; and as he is a man of education and fortune above being acted upon by sordid or mean motives, I cannot imagine that the phenomena which I have described occurred from any trick on his part. I however, leave the reader to think for himself, and simply content myself with having given an account of certainly one of the most curious "sights" of London.

Thus, Nature and Science, reveals their magic arts,
 While amaz'd we stand, they play their various parts;
 And to search out, their mighty mysteries who can?
 Why, God's immortal Reason, found in mortal Man!

AN EYE-WITNESS.

FINIS.

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