

Mesmerism.

Publication/Creation

[London] : [publisher not identified], [1840]

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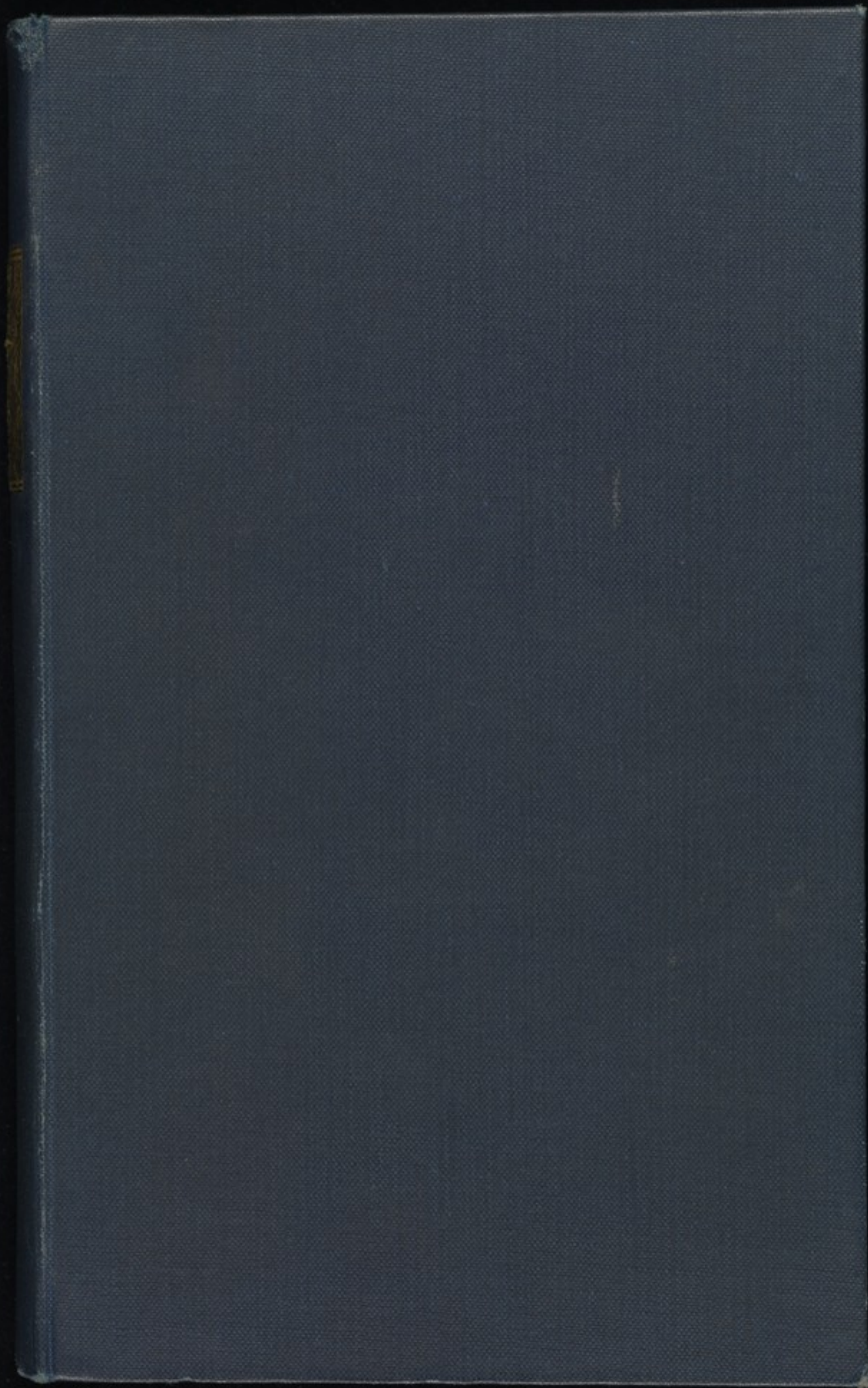
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MESMERISM.

“All sound and true philosophy is founded on the appearances of things, which, if they draw us ever so much against our wills to such principles as most clearly manifest to us the most excellent counsel and supreme dominion of the All-wise and Almighty Being, those principles are not therefore to be laid aside, because some men may perhaps dislike them.” — *Cotes's Preface to Sir Isaac Newton's Principia.*

MESMERISM, or ANIMAL MAGNETISM, is a subject upon which there still exists, in the public mind as well as amongst the faculty, opinions so widely different, that we should almost be tempted to doubt the fact of all men possessing similar organs of sense wherewith to become acquainted with the phenomena of the external world, did we not remember that at all times and periods a similar reception has almost invariably awaited every discovery, whether important merely to the lovers of science as a matter of truth, or to the world at large as a means of advancing civilization, and of alleviating the ills to which mankind are liable. It at first appears strange, yet so it is, that whatever discovery has been made, or has been asserted to have been made, whether the motion of a planet through the heavens above us, or the circulation of the blood within us, there have never been wanting multitudes to abuse and decry the luckless discoverer, although very few have taken the trouble to investigate calmly and impartially the facts upon which he founded his assertion. Such has been, and such is still the disposition of mankind. We are, it is true, in the nineteenth century, and the march of intellect has, we are told, proceeded, and is still proceeding, with rapid strides: it may be so, but the human mind is in the present day as it was of old, made up of the same faculties, stirred by the same passions and feelings: some are too obtuse to perceive a new truth; some are too jealous of the fame of contemporaries to admit anything which will add to their reputation; others are satisfied to receive by hear-say a sweeping condemnation of every innovation, however calculated to be beneficial, and to re-echo the same without troubling themselves to investigate the merits of the question, or will content themselves with the admission that it is beyond the scope of their understanding, or that it does not concern them; whilst many there are, who, not having the means of investigating for themselves, are obliged to be guided by what they hear or read; and well may they often be puzzled as to what they shall believe or disbelieve amongst the various conflicting opinions. It is to individuals of this latter class that we would more particularly address our observations on the present subject, which certainly yields in interest to no discovery as a matter of truth, and promises, when more fully investigated, the most happy results to a large portion of our afflicted fellow-creatures. They will hear of Animal Magnetism proceeding from and affecting animal bodies; then they will be told perhaps that it is all ‘humbug,’ that no such thing exists, except in the imagination of some credulous enthusiasts — that those who profess to believe in it are impostors, or deceived by cunning hypocrites and clever actors; others will tell them that such a power does exist, but that its nature is such that the worst consequences must inevitably ensue from its application, and that the devil himself is its originator; whilst another party will endeavour to set the whole question quietly at rest by assuring them that the idea of such a thing is entirely opposed to all the well-known laws of physiology, and, moreover, that it is impossible such a power could exist

in nature, as by its means one individual might obtain such immense and improper influence over his fellow-creatures.

It will be our endeavour to treat of this subject in such a manner as to show that its professors cannot possibly have been deceived; that a great power certainly does exist of which, until lately, little has been generally known; that it has been applied to good and beneficial purposes, and that it is calculated to produce effects for the promotion of which it is not likely that a devil, or any other spirit of evil, would lend his accommodating aid, nor indeed were we ever credibly informed that that mysterious individual is in the habit of working good that evil may come.

In speaking of this power we shall use the term Mesmerism in preference to Animal Magnetism, because it has not been proved to have any connexion with Animal Magnetism, as was supposed by Mesmer, and therefore that name might lead people astray; indeed it is better to distinguish any discovery rather by the name of the discoverer, or some noted teacher, than by a name derived from any supposed properties of the thing discovered; for these properties may in progress of time be found not to belong to it, and in the meanwhile a name has been acquired conveying a certain meaning, and it is difficult to divest the mind of the error. Oxygen, formerly called dephlogisticated air, is a case in point. Now Mesmerism merely reminds us of Mesmer, one of the earliest promulgators and first teachers of the science, as Galvanism brings the distinguished Galvani to our recollection, or the Voltaic Pile its inventor Volta.

What then constitutes Mesmerism, or what is this power with which those who believe in Mesmerism profess to be acquainted? We are told that in human beings there exists a power, which, under certain circumstances, evidently affects the nervous system, not only of other human beings, but also of animals; that all are more or less susceptible of the effects produced by its agency, and that we all possess it to a greater or a less extent, though the stronger the individual is in health of body and energy of mind the greater will be his Mesmeric power; that those who are afflicted with any of that numerous class of diseases denominated nervous are more easily brought under its influence than healthy and robust persons; and that women are, *cæteris paribus*, more easily affected by it than men. We are further told that the effects are not always at first produced, nor does it therefore follow that the operator is not possessed of the power, or that the patient is not susceptible of its influence, for in many cases it has been necessary to operate several times with the greatest patience and perseverance before any symptom could be produced, when, afterwards, every succeeding application has brought out more and more, the evidences of its action on the system of the patient. Nor is this a case by any means unfrequently met with in the practice of medicine; how often does the physician find himself compelled to repeat dose after dose of mercury before he can obtain the desired effect, and yet, after a time, how small an addition will cause even alarming symptoms, whilst in other patients the smallest dose will produce all those distressing symptoms at the very first.

In making use of Mesmerism, the modes of operating are various; thus, in some instances, it is sufficient merely to point with the fingers at the patient at a little distance from him; in others it may be required to draw the hand, with the fingers extended, down from the brow of the patient over the face and stomach, without touching him, however; whilst again, in some cases where the individual is not very susceptible, the operator should place one hand upon the patient's head, and the other on his stomach, then concentrating his whole attention and energies upon the

object in view, let him place his hands upon the patient's shoulders, and draw them down his arms and forearms to the palms of his hands, and from the head down either side of the face and body, and let him continue these movements for some time, either in contact with the patient or not, until the effect be produced. Such are the most ordinary modes of operating, but it would be impossible here to notice every variety of method which is employed.

Now as to the effects produced, the first symptoms are often peculiar sensations on the surface of the body, as warmth, pricking, twitchings, and spasms; the pulse and respiration become affected; after a time, the sight generally becomes less clear, the nervous sensations are increased, and gradually the patient is oppressed with a deep sleep, the limbs refuse to sustain the body, the head is inclined forward or to one side if not supported, and the body, if in the sitting position, will fall if not prevented; the limbs, head, or body of the patient may, at the same time, be most forcibly attracted in any direction by the mere movement of the hand of the operator. This sleep is often so profound, and in it the various senses are so blunted, that no noise or pain disturbs it; this is called coma or Mesmeric sleep, and after the operation has been repeated several times, or when the patient is very susceptible, this state of sleep is succeeded by one of somnambulism closely resembling what is commonly observed in ordinary sleep-walkers.

All the advantages which the professors of Mesmerism expect to derive from its application cannot yet be known; indeed the subject may still be considered in its infancy, although it has been much more investigated on the continent than in this country; still, however, it is asserted that many nervous affections, including epileptic and other fits, some kinds of paralysis and mania, have been cured by it; and that patients may, whilst under the influence of the mesmeric sleep, undergo severe and excruciating operations without being sensible of pain.

There are, then, if these assertions be true, ample grounds to authorize the fullest investigation, and strong reasons for viewing the conduct of those who, from sinister or selfish motives, would prejudice the public mind against it, as evincing anything but a fervent desire to benefit their fellow-creatures, and as justly reprehensible by every friend to humanity; whilst those who, from love of fun, endeavour to turn it into ridicule, would do well to satisfy themselves most perfectly that there is no truth in the conclusions at which clever scientific men have arrived concerning it, before they lend their aid, feeble though it may be, for the purpose of retarding knowledge on a subject which promises to confer as much benefit on many as it seems to bestow amusement upon them.

It is idle, at the present day, to call Mesmerism a new or fanciful theory, for it is already more than half a century since Mesmer began publicly to assert his possession of this power; and although he was the first who assigned to it a specific name—animal magnetism, as he considered it in some way allied to mineral magnetism—there were many others who, before him, employed it for the benefit of their fellow-creatures, and the testimony of the learned and acute is not wanting to confirm accounts relating the success of their endeavours.

How far the ancients were acquainted with the existence of this natural power we shall, probably, never know; still it is far from improbable, indeed many deem it almost proved, that the priests, not only Greek and Roman, but also those of the Chinese, Persians, Egyptians, and Chaldees, were in the constant habit of employing it for the purpose of curing diseases. Those who are curious on this subject would be much gratified

by perusing the works of Kircher, Athanasius, and other travellers and Jesuit missionaries, who, without having been prejudiced in favour of Mesmerism, relate facts bearing so strong a resemblance to those of more modern date, that the idea of their dependence on a similar power might be very reasonably entertained.

That all ancient priests were impostors or fanatics is what, in the present enlightened age, we have all been taught most religiously to believe; but although, from the barbarous times in which they lived, it might have been considered expedient to envelope all their proceedings in a certain air of mystery (which fancy we cannot say has entirely deserted us in the present day), still, had not a considerable portion of truth been mingled with their mysticism, and had they not possessed a knowledge of the secrets of nature far superior to that of their ignorant countrymen, they could not, so long and successfully, have practised their profession, as the advantages expected from them would not have been obtained; and, amongst these advantages, the recovery from disease was one of the most prominent, and this was brought about, in many instances, by deep sleep much resembling the modern Mesmeric coma.

Passages are frequently met with, amongst Greek and Latin authors, containing clear allusions to sanative processes closely resembling the operations of Mesmer; but, as the knowledge possessed by the ancients on this subject is viewed by us more as a matter of curious interest than as necessary to support the more modern theories of Mesmer, we shall merely call the attention of our readers to a passage referred by Stobæus to Solon, the celebrated lawgiver of Athens, who, be it remembered, travelled much in Egypt and Lydia, and must have had, we should suppose, some claim to the possession of what is called common sense as well as genius, inasmuch as he was considered one of the wise men of Greece, and the Athenians continued to be governed by his salutary practical laws for full four hundred years. This passage is quoted by Mr Colquhoun in his 'Isis Revelata;' it runs thus:—

“Τὸν δὲ κακαῖς νόσοισι κυκώμενον ἀργαλείαις τε
Ἀψαμένος χειροῖν αἴψα τίθησ' ἰγυῖν.”

and may be literally translated, “and having touched, with his hands, him a mass of bad and painful diseases, he quickly restores him to health.”

From the time of Solon, however, we must pass over in silence many centuries; not however because in the records, such as we have of the intervening ages, we should find no mention made of persons possessing the power of healing diseases by manipulation, but, as we have before stated, because these facts can be brought forward less as matter of proof than of interest to the curious; and we will now investigate the subject as it has appeared in more modern times.

Petrus Pomponatius, born in 1462, and who became, though in what year we do not find, professor of philosophy at Padua, asserted that the imagination or will of one individual could exercise a decided influence on the system of others, and the conditions of the exercise of this power were given by him in a manner showing that his views strongly resembled those entertained by many modern magnetisers.

After Pomponatius we find Van Helmont, born at Brussels in 1577, who appears to have been sufficiently well versed in this science to employ it for remedial purposes, and with such a degree of success that his cures were ascribed to the assistance of the devil; a strong test at all events, we think, of the efficacy of his treatment, for we may observe that the aid of

the devil is seldom called in, except by the most uneducated, unless to account for some phenomena possessing more than an usual degree of interest.

About half a century after Van Helmont, there was born, in the county of Waterford, Ireland, Valentine Greatrakes, who, after having completed his education in this country, whither he had fled on account of the Irish rebellion, returned to Ireland and served as lieutenant in the Earl of Orrery's cavalry regiment, and, a few years subsequently, was made a justice of the peace and clerk of the peace for the county of Cork. This Mr Greatrakes seems to have possessed great Mesmeric power, but in giving an account of the cures effected by him he attributes all the praise to God, not to the devil.

He mentions, in a letter to the Hon. Robert Boyle, many cases which were cured by him in the presence of the Mayor of Worcester, Colonel Birch, Major Wilde, Sir John Hinton, Colonel Talbot, and many others; some of his poor patients he considers to have been possessed by devils. All who applied to him, however, he does not profess to have relieved, and amongst the number of those who placed themselves under his care without obtaining the desired benefit, was Flamsted, the celebrated mathematician, who nevertheless gives his testimony to other cures wrought by him.

The Lord Bishop of Derry, in letters addressed to Joseph Glanville, a writer of that period, bears strong testimony not only to the surprising cures effected by Greatrakes, but also to the simplicity and worth of his character; indeed there is no lack of evidence as to his pretensions having been borne out by facts; and there have been quoted by other writers on this subject many names of respectable and intelligent persons who witnessed and attested those facts. Moreover, a pamphlet was published by Dr Henry Stubbe, of Stratford-upon-Avon, upon the subject, and in this, after speaking of his observations upon the cases, he gives his conviction, that "there was no manner of fraud in the performances."

Many years after the time of Greatrakes, there appeared in Germany an individual who caused, by his wonderful performances, far more excitement on the continent than the former had in Ireland. This was a Catholic priest, by name John Joseph Gassner, who had been induced to turn his attention to the subject from having been himself cured of a serious illness by what was then termed exorcism. After having performed a great number of interesting cures amongst his own parishioners, he was invited to visit the Archbishop of Ratisbon at Elwangen in Wirtemberg; and here the immense numbers which he cured, and the astonishing effects produced by him on the systems of the sufferers, did not fail to attract general attention. All this, as a matter of course, gave rise to controversy, and this rather of a theological than philosophical nature, his opponents ascribing to the interference of the devil the cures wrought by him on persons whom he considered to be possessed by devils: even the very eminent physician De Haen used this argument against him, and we are only surprised that we find no mention made of Gassner's having quoted Holy Writ to prove the fallacy of their reasonings. In the German archives of Animal Magnetism, vol. viii, will be found a full and interesting account of Gassner's proceedings, written by Professor Eschenmayer.

We now come to the time of Mesmer himself. This celebrated man was born at Weil upon the Rhine, A.D. 1734. After having studied under Van Swieten and De Haen, he settled in practice at Vienna, and, from circumstances which he observed whilst prosecuting inquiries into the power of the mineral magnet, he was led to try the effect of the human

hand in removing diseases. The great success of his experiments, combined (we fear there can be little doubt) with his hasty character and vivid enthusiasm, soon set him at complete variance with all his professional brethren. Some time having been spent by him in this unenviable position, he repaired to Paris, where, in 1778, he made known his ideas to the learned of that metropolis. The time had not yet arrived, however, for any doctrine so entirely independent of that which was taught by the faculty and philosophers of that period to be quietly received or calmly discussed; not but that we admit it appears to us probable that Mesmer, in his anxiety to account for the phenomena which he had observed, allowed himself to be carried far away by his imagination and sanguine temperament. He published a short treatise, in which he gave a condensed view of his system; in this he assumes the existence of a subtle matter pervading all bodies, and operating at a distance without any intervening substances; to this matter he referred the relative actions maintained between the heavens and the earth, and their constituent parts. He also considered that the properties of all organic and inorganic matter depended upon this principle; and many other theories were brought forward by him, for none of which he could show the shadow of a proof. All this, however, only shows how careful we ought to be in assigning causes to any phenomena of nature; it is one thing to observe a fact, and another to know the cause of that fact; and had Mesmer confined himself to the simple task of showing to others the phenomena he had observed, and of carefully prosecuting his experiments, he would, probably, have met with much better success. As it was, however, enough was shown by him to convince many intelligent individuals, amongst whom we find the names of De Lafayette, and Count Segur the elder who was at one time ambassador at the court of St Petersburg from France.

Finding his communications with the French government of no avail, Mesmer at length determined to establish a private society for the purpose of making others acquainted with his doctrines; this society he called L'Harmonie; the members paid him for his instructions, and were bound to secrecy. The pupils of this school formed similar societies in various parts of France, mesmerising gratuitously the poor who required relief, and keeping up a constant communication with Mesmer and amongst each other. Thus did the science spread very considerably in France, until, at length, the rumour of its progress, and the reports of the good and ill effects produced by it (for we by no means are disposed to assert that everybody who practised it was judicious, or influenced in doing so by proper motives), attracted the attention of the government. Accordingly, in 1784, we find that a royal mandate was issued ordering commissioners to be appointed from the Academy of Sciences, the Faculty of Medicine, and the Society of Physicians, to investigate the subject, and to report to government the result of their inquiries. It appears that Mesmer himself would not attend the meetings of this commission; the reason of this refusal does not clearly appear, but many men might well refuse to submit their discoveries to the investigation of those who had already shown themselves hostile to them, and by whose prejudiced opinions the public had already been much influenced.

One of Mesmer's first pupils, M. D'Eslon, undertook, however, to explain the principles of the science; this he did, and also undertook to prove to the commissioners that such a thing as animal magnetism existed, and that it was useful for the cure of disease.

M. D'Eslon operated in the presence of the commissioners in various ways; he pressed with his hands on the stomach and hypochondria of the

patients, and he made movements with his finger, or an iron rod held in his hand, around the head, face, or other parts of the patients which were diseased. He also exhibited a circular platform of wood, a little raised from the ground; upon this sat his patients in a circle, their bodies united by a cord, and each holding in his hand an iron rod, which iron rods passed up through holes in the platform. The object of the cord was to increase the effect by communication, and of the rods that the magnetism might be concentrated at their points. The result of these experiments upon the patients was, that many felt nothing, whilst others coughed, spat, perspired freely, and felt great heats in divers parts of the body; many of the women also, and a few of the men, had convulsions.

Now from these experiments the commissioners could make out but little; however, they did satisfy themselves, by means of a needle and electrometer, that in the platform there was neither mineral magnetism nor electricity. To make themselves more competent, however, to give a report to the government, the commissioners met at the house of Dr Benjamin Franklin, who was at their head, and tried the experiments upon themselves, upon some of D'Eslon's patients, and others; the result of these experiments did not agree with what D'Eslon had asserted, and they came to the following conclusion, little favourable to the science of Mesmerism, viz.: "That the doctrine was not entirely useless even to philosophy; as it is one fact more to be consigned to the history of the errors and illusions of the human mind, and a signal instance of the power of imagination."

But we may here make two observations on the report of these commissioners.

I. We cannot conceive how men, inexperienced in any science, should be competent, from the results of their own experiments, to decide as to the soundness of the doctrine of those who have made that science their particular study. How would Dr Franklin have expected his experiments and discoveries in natural philosophy to have been received by the world, had a committee of priests or of military men been appointed to repeat those experiments, and to report concerning them?

II. We would remind our readers, that in the multitude of councillors there is not always wisdom, and that sometimes the opinion of one man of penetration is worth more than the decree of a whole scientific body. Now it is certainly a fact worthy of remark, that M. Jussieu, one of the most learned of those commissioners, and who is celebrated for having founded an entirely new system of botany, did not agree with the rest of the commission, although requested so to do by the government; on the contrary, he published a report of his own, in which he decidedly admits that some power must have been present and have acted upon the patients, for, he says—referring to phenomena elicited by his own experiments—"These facts are neither very numerous nor very varied, because I could only adduce those which were sufficiently verified, and with respect to which I could have no doubt. They are sufficient, however, to justify us in admitting the possibility, or the actual existence of a fluid, or agent, which is transmitted from one man to another, and which sometimes exerts a sensible action on the latter."

It was expected, no doubt, by all the opponents of Mesmerism, that this decided verdict of the commissioners would have effectually silenced its supporters; their expectations, however, were disappointed; the facts had been already witnessed by too many who preferred exercising their own private judgment to being guided by a government commission, nor could their confidence in their own opinions fail to be much strengthened

by the independent report of M. Jussieu. Many paper skirmishes took place, in which, as is generally the case, both parties claimed the victory; but the subject continued to be investigated, and new facts were daily elicited, although the French Revolution for a time occasioned not only in France, but over the whole of Europe, an almost total eclipse of everything connected with natural philosophy or physiology. Still we find Deleuze, Tardy De Montravel, and Puysegur, prosecuting their experiments, and affording, by their writings, matter of great interest to those curious on the subject. Of these authors Puysegur, who had established a society at Strasburg, inculcated a mode of operation rather different to Mesmer's. He endeavoured, by more gentle manipulations, to avoid all those violent convulsions or crises which the latter generally tried to produce, and he aimed rather at procuring comfort and repose for his patients. Thus we see in Mesmerism, as in the practice of medicine, there was already springing up a difference of opinion as to the mode of treatment, which in our judgment affords a strong presumptive proof of there having been no league between the professors of the science for the purpose of imposing on the public.

The credit of having discovered the Mesmeric somnambulism is by many given to Puysegur, and certainly his more gentle mode of operating was generally preferred in France. It would appear that Mesmer, who was now aged, became weary of the disputes and ill feeling which attended the progress of his discoveries; he retired to Switzerland and there remained, without at all changing his opinions concerning this wonderful natural power, until his death, which occurred March 5th, 1815. His private character has been most freely abused by his opponents, who seem, however, to have been able to bring forward little to blacken it but their own assertions, and to have forgotten that libelling a man's character is by no means a convincing, though a very common argument, in the attacks of unsuccessful adversaries.

In Germany we find that the celebrated Lavater was the means of calling the attention of several men, most eminent for their perseverance and talents, to the investigation of Mesmerism; amongst these we may particularly mention Wienholt, who has left a very valuable work on the subject. Gmelin, Treviranus, Eschenmayer, Kieser, and many others, have all contributed to illustrate and explain the science, which continued to be studied and practised, gaining credit with the learned both in Germany and France, besides other countries of Europe, so much so that at length, about the year 1825, after some most beautiful experiments had been made in the Paris hospitals, by which many of the first physicians of that city were fully convinced, an application was made to the Academy of Medicine, promoted chiefly by MM. Dupolel and Foissac, to induce them again to investigate the matter; but it was first necessary to determine whether or not it was worthy of a second investigation, and for this end a committee was appointed, which came to the resolution of recommending the Academy to institute a full examination of all the facts and theories of Mesmerism. Their recommendation was, after much discussion, adopted, and for the purpose a second committee was chosen in December 1825: the gentlemen who composed this committee were MM. Bourdois, Double, Itard, Guenean, De Hussy, Guersent, Fouquier, Leroux, Magendie, Marc, Thillaye, and Husson. Now the feeling with which these gentlemen conducted this important investigation will be best seen by giving some extracts from the observations which prefaced their report.

“The committee proceeded to fulfil their duties with the most scrupulous exactness; and while we do justice to those who assisted us, we must

at the same time destroy even the slightest suspicion which might arise with regard to the share which others may be supposed to have had in the investigation of this question. The committee invariably suggested the methods of experimenting, traced the plan of inquiry, directed the course to be pursued, followed its progress, and described and recorded the particulars. No experiment was made without the presence of the committee, even by the members of the Academy. Whatever confidence the spirit of confraternity and mutual esteem may have inspired, we felt that in a question the solution of which is so delicate, we are to trust none but ourselves, and you can rely on our guarantee alone." * * * *

"It is with magnetism (Mesmerism) as with other operations of nature; a certain combination of conditions is necessary to the production of certain effects. Whether these conditions be external or physical, or whether they be internal or moral, it is sufficient that they exist to make it incumbent upon your committee to endeavour to unite them, and to make it their duty to submit to them. It was, however, neither our duty nor our inclination to have divested ourselves of that indefatigable curiosity which induced us to vary our experiments, and, if possible, to set at fault the practices or promises of the magnetisers. We sought only to be inquisitive, mistrustful, and exact observers."

Unless it had been previously agreed upon, amongst the gentlemen whose names we have already given, as constituting this committee, to impose upon and deceive the Academy, a supposition too absurd to be for a moment entertained, we have quoted from the preface of their report sufficient to show that, if any body of scientific men ever entered upon an inquiry requiring circumspection and attention, with feelings calculated to render them impartial judges, they certainly did. We shall omit the process of manipulation as described by them, for we have already given a brief sketch of it elsewhere, and we will direct the attention of our readers to a few of the conclusions at which the committee arrived, and some of the facts related by them, contained in their report.

"A certain number of the effects observed appeared to depend upon magnetism (Mesmerism) alone, and were never produced without its operation. These effects were very various; they agitated some, soothed others, produced a momentarily accelerated respiration and circulation, feverish symptoms, convulsive motions resembling electric shocks, numbness, heaviness, sleepiness, and in a small number of cases the state called by magnetisers somnambulism." * * * *

"We may conclude with certainty that the state of real magnetic somnambulism exists when it gives rise to the development of new faculties, which have been designated by the names of clairvoyance, intuition, and prevision; also, when it produces great changes in the physical economy, such as insensibility, sudden and considerable increase of strength; examples of all of which were witnessed by the committee.

"We hold it as demonstrated that sleep has been produced by magnetism (Mesmerism) under circumstances in which the patients could not see, and were ignorant of, the means employed to occasion it.

"When a person is once made to fall into magnetic sleep, it is not always necessary to have recourse to contact to magnetise him anew. The look of the magnetiser, his volition alone, possesses the same influence.

"The patient can not only be acted upon, but be thrown into a complete state of somnambulism, and recovered from it without his knowledge, by an operation performed out of his sight, at a certain distance, and with doors intervening.

"In general, changes, more or less remarkable, are produced on the perception and other mental faculties of those individuals who are in a state of magnetic somnambulism.

"Some, amidst the noise of a confused conversation, hear only the voice of the operator; some will answer questions addressed to them by persons placed in magnetic connexion with them; others carry on a conversation indifferently with every one around them.

"Sometimes the power of smelling appears to be annihilated. The patient will inhale muriatic acid or ammonia without inconvenience; nay, without perceiving them. The contrary, however, takes place in certain cases.

"The greater number of somnambulists we have seen were completely insensible. We might tickle their feet, their nostrils, or the angle of the eyes, with a feather; we might pinch their skin so as to leave a mark, prick them with pins underneath the nails without producing pain, and without their even perceiving it. Finally, we saw one who was insensible to the most painful operation in surgery, during which she did not manifest the slightest emotion by her countenance, pulse, or respiration.

"While in the state of somnambulism, the patients retained the faculties which they possessed when awake. The memory appeared to be more faithful and more extensive; they remembered everything that passed at the time and at every previous time in which they were placed in the state of somnambulism.

"Upon waking they seemed totally unconscious of all that took place during their somnambulism.

"We have seen two somnambulists, who, with their eyes closed, perceived the objects placed before them. They distinguished the colour and the value of cards without touching them; they read words traced with the hand, as also some lines of books opened at random. This took place when their eyelids were kept closed by the fingers of a member of the committee.

"In two somnambulists we found the faculty of foreseeing the acts of organism more or less remote; one of them predicted, several months before, the day, hour, and minute of epileptic fits; the other announced the period of his cure. Their previsions were realized with remarkable exactness.

"We found one somnambulist who declared the symptoms of the diseases of three persons placed in magnetic connexion with her.

"Considered as a cause of certain physiological phenomena, or as a therapeutic remedy, magnetism (Mesmerism) ought to be allowed a place within the circle of medical sciences; and, consequently, physicians only should practise it or superintend its use, as is the case in the northern countries."

Without entering more fully into the committee's report to the Academy, we think that sufficient has been given to show the view of the doctrine of Mesmerism which they felt themselves bound to take; and here we must beg to call the attention of our readers particularly to two or three circumstances connected with this investigation and report.

We would have them remember the date of these transactions; they occurred between the years 1825 and 1831; not centuries ago, rendering the account of them fabulous, or unworthy of confidence from their antiquity; but at a period within the memory, perhaps, of the youngest of our readers. We would also remind them that this committee was appointed to examine into a question which had already, in 1784, not only been submitted to the scrutiny of the academy, but upon which the aca-

demy had made a deliberate and decided report, and a report which was by no means calculated to prejudice the committee in favour of the Mesmerisers. It should also be borne in mind that the committee were five years engaged upon this subject, and that, excepting in one case only, the particulars of which had been admitted by the College of Surgeons, they drew their inferences merely from facts which passed under their own observation. The cases from which the committee drew up their report were numerous, and interesting in the highest degree; but we must refrain from attempting a description of them, which, from want of space, would of necessity be so much contracted. The one case, however, which had been admitted by the College of Surgeons we will briefly describe, as it affords clear proof both of the existence of the Mesmeric power, and of its practical utility.

Madame Plantin during several years had been afflicted with a cancer of the right breast; the axillary glands of that side were also enlarged. With the hope of reducing the swelling her physician, M. Chapelain, had subjected her to the action of Mesmerism, but no good effect was produced, excepting sleep so profound as to prevent her feeling pain, and the state of somnambulism already described elsewhere. The extirpation of the tumour was proposed to the poor lady, but she could not make up her mind to submit to an operation so painful. It was, therefore, arranged that the celebrated anatomist and surgeon, M. Cloquet, should perform the operation whilst Madame Plantin was under the influence of the Mesmeric somnambulism, her consent having been previously obtained whilst in that state. Accordingly, M. Chapelain produced the state of somnambulism, in that state obtained her consent to the operation, and on the day appointed, Madame Plantin being under the influence of the somnambulism, M. Cloquet performed this painful and hazardous operation in a little less than twelve minutes. During the whole of the operation, the particulars of which we need not here detail, Madame Plantin showed no symptom of pain or sensibility, but, as had been her habit when under the influence of Mesmerism, conversed calmly: no visible effect was produced on the respiration, voice, pulse, or any one limb or feature. After the operation was concluded she was allowed to remain in the same state for forty-eight hours, then after the wound had been dressed she was awakened, and she appeared to have no consciousness of what had passed during the preceding two days, but asked to see her children, when informed that the operation had been performed. The sight of her family causing a good deal of emotion, she was set to sleep by Mesmerism.

Fourteen days after the operation this poor lady died. Whether or not the treatment subsequently to the operation had been discreet, it is not our object here to discuss; we merely wished to give as brief an account as possible of the operation itself, and of the manner in which it was borne by the patient. M. Cloquet performed this operation in April, 1829; it was witnessed and attested by M. Chapelain, M. Pailloux, assistant to M. Cloquet, M. Moreau, secretary to the surgical section of the Royal Academy of Medicine, and M. Dronsart, physician.

After the expiration of five years the committee made their report to the Royal Academy of Medicine, and we cannot but feel that the reception which that report met with from the Academy clearly showed that the members of that scientific body were influenced by no prejudice in favour of Mesmerism when they appointed their committee; and therefore, also, that it is highly probable the gentlemen of that committee were, at all events, not partial judges.

We are told that the hall of the Academy was crowded; all the members, even the most aged, being present. After the meeting had been opened, M.

Husson, reporter to the committee, gravely read the report. From the commencement, various members of the Academy evinced impatience and uneasiness at the facts detailed; but when M. Husson related those connected with the somnambulism, prevision, &c., a great uproar ensued, and the gentlemen of the committee were abused as unworthy of confidence by those very same men who had chosen them and entrusted them with the investigation. The committee, however, were not without some partisans, and by them the accusations of the other party were repelled; and the Academy were in no very gentle terms reminded that, in the same place they had denied the circulation of the blood; there also that the early inoculators were denounced as impostors, and their patients as dupes and idiots; that the physicians who first prescribed tartar emetic were tried and expelled from the Academy in that very hall, although the members of that same Academy now used that very medicine in large doses, and with most beneficial results; and the same learned body had ridiculed the idea of meteoric stones, now generally admitted to exist and fall.

In fact, the whole meeting became a scene of disorder and confusion, showing that the Academy were evidently much chagrined at the report, and that its members were not sufficiently philosophical to bear a disappointment, nor sufficiently reasonable to allow their opinions to be publicly influenced by evidence of the most convincing nature; we say "publicly influenced," for when men evince so much bad temper it is a strong proof that they cannot help seeing the force of the arguments made use of by their adversaries, though they will not openly avow it.

The committee and their friends much wished to have the report printed, but this was as violently opposed by the other party, who, however, as if their passions had completely blinded their reason, allowed it to be lithographed for the private use of the members of the Academy, as if the result of the investigation would be rendered one atom less public from being lithographed instead of printed.

Our limited space will not allow us to dwell longer on the proceedings of the Parisian faculty and the Academy of Medicine, as we still have other facts, without alluding to which we should be sorry to close our subject.

In England, until quite recently, little attention seems to have been given to this very interesting discovery, and few persons of any notoriety, excepting a Miss Preston, of Bloomsbury square, who died not very many years ago, appear to have practised Mesmerism.

In 1829 the late Mr Chenevix performed many curious experiments on various patients, in the presence of different individuals, both at his own residence and also at St Thomas's Hospital; but still Mesmerism was not adopted, that we are aware of, by those to whom he exhibited it. Amongst those who witnessed his experiments was Dr Elliotson, then one of the physicians of the hospital above named; and as that gentleman has, within the last two years, in spite of all opposition, ridicule, abuse, and insult, been perseveringly employed in carefully investigating the subject and treating many patients by Mesmerism, we think that it will interest our readers to see the remarks which he himself makes relative to Mr Chenevix's experiments as witnessed by him.

"In May, 1829, I was introduced to Mr Chenevix by Dr Hodgkin, and as that gentleman had persuaded himself theoretically and practically, at Paris, of the truth of Mesmerism, I seized this opportunity of commencing an experimental examination by availing myself of his offer to mesmerise any person I might present to him. I saw him mesmerise two girls at his own lodgings in Old Burlington street, and took him several times to St Thomas's Hospital. The two girls appeared to fall asleep by the

process, but though I watched them very carefully I might be deceived; and, as they were well known to Mr Chenevix, and had been mesmerised before, I drew no inference. At St Thomas's Hospital I selected female patients at random from my list of their names, and neither had he seen them, nor they heard of him or Mesmerism. Each was manipulated alone in a private room. On manipulating a patient of a colleague, who selected her himself, she had an hysterical fit, at which I was not surprised, as hysteria was her complaint, and the least emotion at any time excited a paroxysm. He endeavoured to put an end to it in vain. On a second occasion a violent fit recurred, and his attempts to calm it were fruitless. He manipulated six other females with no effect, except that one, labouring under chorea, said her head was light and heavy alternately. An epileptic woman fell asleep apparently on the two occasions she was mesmerised, yet we found that she was not asleep the second time, and she declared that she had not been asleep the first time, though on both occasions she felt drowsy. I did not venture to conclude she was asleep, but the redness of her eyes and cheeks, the heaviness of her looks, and every circumstance, make me now believe she was asleep the first time, for I have seen many mesmerised persons fast asleep who afterwards denied it. Pain was produced in her arm, and afterwards in her head, and presently recurred by manipulating in another direction; from this I inferred nothing then, but I have since witnessed such phenomena so frequently that I do not doubt their reality, and their production by the manipulators. I remained unconvinced till another female was Mesmerised. She was an ignorant Irish girl, and unprepared to expect anything. In a minute she plaintively entreated Mr Chenevix not to proceed. The manipulations 'drew weakness into her and made her feel faint.' She next complained of pain in the abdomen; on a few transverse movements she said the pain was gone: the same thing occurred several times, and once pain was complained of in the chest, but ceased perfectly after a few transverse movements. He darted an open hand towards one of her arms, and told her to raise it; she could scarcely move it: after a few transverse movements she declared the stiffness and uneasiness were gone, and she moved it as well as the other. He produced all the same effects upon the other arm, and then upon one leg. Her eyes were closed as perfectly as could be, and a piece of paper weighing, perhaps, a grain, being placed upon one foot she instantly was unable to raise it; the paper was removed, and she raised it directly. All these things were repeated again and again, I telling Mr Chenevix, in French, which part I wished to be rendered powerless, and which to be restored, and she being prevented as much as possible from seeing, deception was impossible. Mr C. looked round at me and asked me, in French, if I was satisfied. I really felt ashamed to say no, and I could scarcely credit my senses to say yes. I remained silent. He then asked me, still in a language unintelligible to the patient, 'Shall I bring back a pain or disable a limb for you once more?' I, of course, requested that he would do so. He complied instantly, giving her a pain in the chest once, and disabling her several times from moving her limbs, and removing those effects at pleasure, according to the intentions he avowed to me; the whole taking place exactly as it had done in my former trial with this woman.

"From this time I was satisfied that such a power as Mesmerism existed, and hoped some day to inquire into it."

We have thought it right to give this long extract from Dr Elliotson's 'Physiology,' No. 2, p. 680, that our readers may see the spirit in which he entered upon the subject of Mesmerism. It has often been asserted that he is ridiculously credulous and incautious; but certainly there appear in his method of testing Mr Chenevix's pretensions no grounds for making

such an accusation. In 1837 Baron Dupotel visited the University College Hospital, of which Dr Elliotson was then Senior Physician, and by his permission tried many curious experiments upon patients of the Doctor's, amongst whom was one young man suffering from epilepsy. Sleep commonly was produced, and, in some instances, twitching also of the feet, fingers, arms, and legs. We ourselves were present at many of these operations: the Baron always spoke in French, so that the patients could not know what were his intentions. One striking circumstance is, that the young man who, upon being awoken from the Mesmeric sleep, often complained of pain or uneasiness, at length so much disliked it that he quitted the hospital. Certainly his symptoms were not feigned. In the more susceptible patients somnambulism and delirium were produced; and several gentlemen who were sufficiently curious to submit themselves to the operation, became sensible of very peculiar feelings, although only for a few minutes exposed to the influence of the Mesmeric power.

After a time Baron Dupotel ceased to attend at the hospital, but Dr Elliotson himself and a gentleman by the name of Wood, one of his clinical clerks, made many experiments on various patients, and with great success. One of the Doctor's patients, Elizabeth O'Key, who had for a twelvemonth been suffering from epileptic fits and acute head-aches, proved to be so extremely susceptible, that in the coma, or Mesmeric sleep, a seton was put into the back of her neck for the relief of the head-ache; she was not conscious of the operation, and expressed much surprise when, upon being aroused, she discovered that it had been performed. In the presence of several gentlemen, amongst whom were Mr Wheatston, Dr Lardner, Dr Roget, and others, this same girl, and also her sister Jane O'Key, whilst in the state of delirium produced by Mesmerism, received shocks (both of galvanism from a powerful battery, and of electricity from well-charged Leyden phials), so severe as to produce a smart effect on some of the gentlemen present; but they evinced no symptoms of uneasiness, although they could not afterwards disengage their hands from the wires of the galvanic apparatus: with respect to the electricity, they merely seemed entertained, and laughed at the sparks.

It has been already stated by us that one very remarkable phenomenon is the power which the operator possesses of attracting with great force the limbs of the mesmerised individual. In the case of Elizabeth O'Key this was put to the fullest test; weights to the amount of seventy pounds were attached to one of her arms; and after Mr Wood had, without contact, attracted her arm upwards by the motion of his hand, strong efforts on her part were evinced to lift the weights. At length she rose from the chair in which she had been seated, attained the erect position, and moved this immense mass of iron several inches from the ground, at the same time extending her arm towards the operator; she then lost her balance, and fell in the direction of the weights and towards Mr Wood. After the experiment, and when restored to the natural state, she was unable to raise even fifty-six pounds in the same manner; and indeed how few ordinary, or even strong young men, could raise even one inch, not to say five or six inches, from the ground, a weight of seventy pounds, as did this little pale girl of sixteen years of age! This last experiment was not performed in secret, it was witnessed by several hundreds of spectators, and was performed in the operating theatre of the University College Hospital.

We have already given some account of the proceedings of the French Academy, and of the impression made upon the minds of the commissioners, as evinced by their report. If there had been any additional circumstances required to convince men of unprejudiced mind that there is existing in nature such a power as that described under the name of

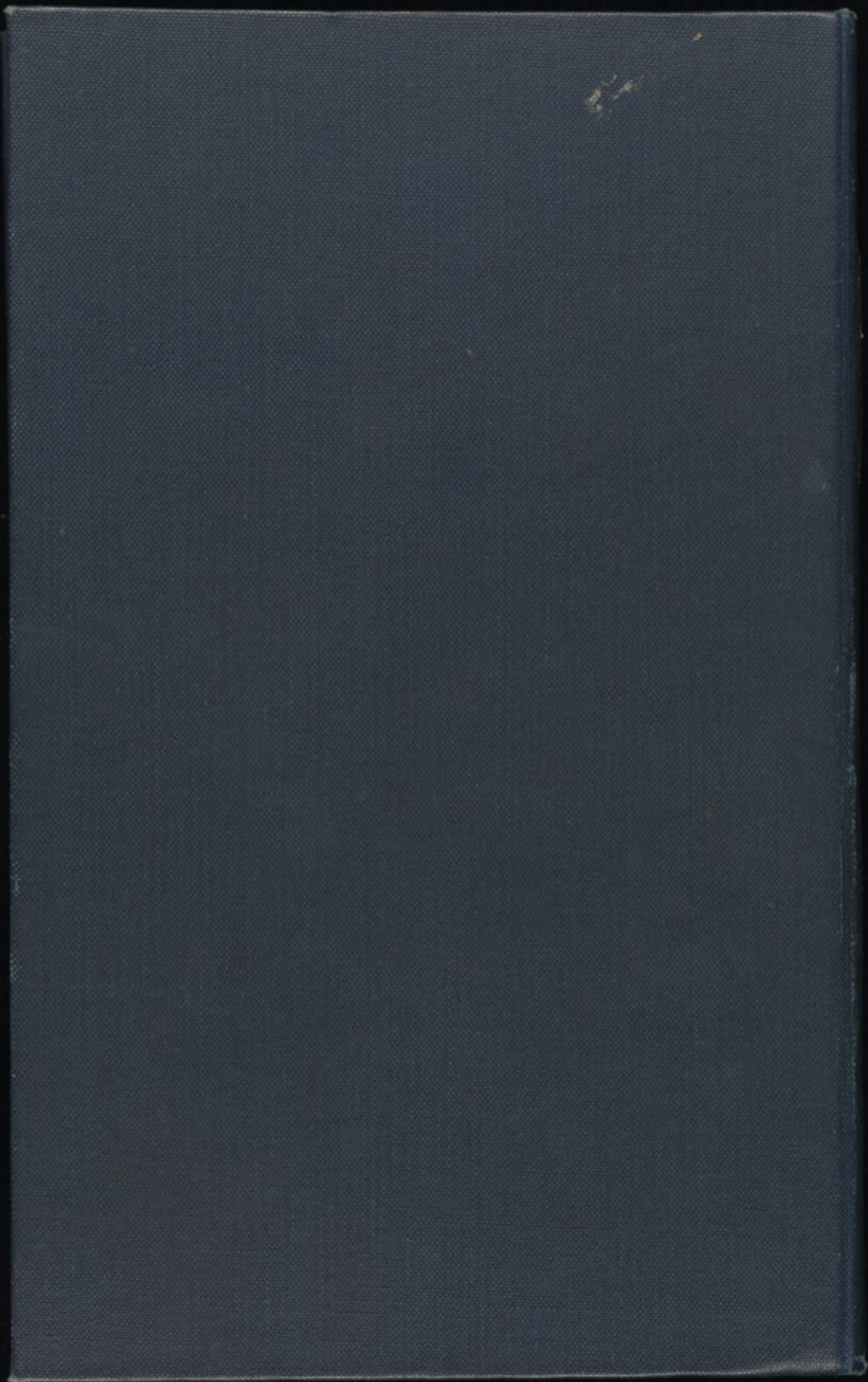
Mesmerism, we should certainly conceive that the two or three simple facts above related would prove sufficient. It is just possible that the seton might have given pain, but that O'Key, being prepared for the operation, had been able to conceal her feelings, it is barely possible, as everybody must know who has ever experienced a strong galvanic or electric shock; indeed we may say it is not possible that both the sisters should have received those shocks with such perfect indifference. The sensation produced by the action of a powerful galvanic battery when one touches simultaneously both the positive and negative wire with moistened hands, is much more easily remembered than described. It is very easy for those who will still persist in thinking that these little girls could have pretended not to feel, to make the experiment themselves, and they then would be more competent to give an opinion. We have tried the effect of a shock more than once, but we once only received a strong one, and most assuredly we shall never for any light purpose submit to another. The experiment of the weights is also within the reach of every one; we cannot but regard this quite in the light of an *experimentum crucis*; insensibility might possibly in some instances be feigned, but power cannot, when feigned, produce the effects of real strength; and let it be remembered that several who witnessed this extraordinary feat had the curiosity to examine the iron weights for themselves—let them say if they were fictitious.

Both before Dr Elliotson resigned his chair in University College, and subsequently, he has continued to perform careful experiments, in order that he might make himself fully acquainted with the laws of this highly interesting natural power. We know that he intends to publish the result of his investigations, and we therefore forbear mentioning many, both curious and wonderful phenomena which have come to our knowledge. The Doctor has, from the very commencement of his investigations, afforded to the public ample means of witnessing his modes of experiment and the results produced; but many of his most determined opponents have steadily forborne to avail themselves of any opportunity which would enable them to do more than exclaim against Mesmerism, without having been eye-witnesses of the effects produced, or to speak publicly to students of their colleague as a "tom fool," and the patients as impostors. Others seem perfectly satisfied, at having heard or having seen, on some occasions when Dr Elliotson has been performing his experiments, or when others have tried to repeat those experiments, that the expected result was not produced, to take it for granted, that he must inevitably be either a dupe or an impostor, or at all events immensely credulous. This is hardly fair; it is scarcely doing unto others as we would they should do unto us. We remember, on more occasions than one, when we were induced to hear a lecture from a learned professor of University College, by many considered a very scientific man, and who has been particularly forward in deciding against Mesmerism without other than hear-say evidence, that many experiments of that learned man failed in the class-room: for instance, we have seen him place a little bird under a glass,—tell the students that he should exhaust the air contained under that glass, and that the poor little bird would show evident symptoms of distress and uneasiness, and finally, that the little creature would die; he then has pumped away with much energy, but the poor little bird hopped about much like other little birds, and finally pecked the glass instead of dying; but the students (they were chiefly young men who had not seen much of the world, for this was one of the first classes which the regulations compelled them to attend) did not call that professor a "tom fool," nor did we infer that atmospheric air was not necessary to support animal life. Then, again, has that same intelligent professor and able experimenter placed a portion of brownish fluid, for example, in a little test glass, and after telling the ingenu-

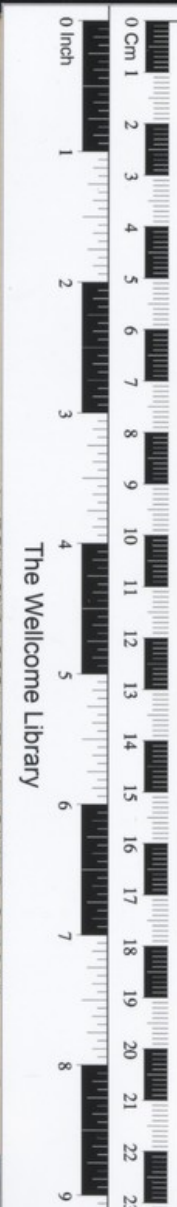
ous young men that he should add some other fluid to it which would cause the brownish colour to become yellow, lo! the brownish fluid upon the promised addition has become bright green or blue; still he was not called an impostor, nor did the students doubt the propriety of the test. Lastly, we have known this learned man bring a little dog into his theatre, and give notice to his class that he would introduce into the system of the poor little animal some strychnine by means of a wound made for the purpose; and then that, after the lapse of a few seconds, this poor little dog would fall into horrible convulsions, particularly of his hind legs, and die. We have seen an incision made, and the poor little dog has continued to run round and about the professor's private domain, behind his table, and never used his hind legs, that we could see, otherwise than in a natural way. All this did not make the pupils, however, exclaim "Oh! credulous professor!" though, perhaps, we might have observed a slight smile come over some countenances which before wore an expression of pain, from sympathy with the poor little dog's promised and expected sufferings, nor did we doubt that strychnine was a deadly poison when inserted into a wound.

To judge properly of the effects of Mesmerism people should take the trouble to see for themselves, and they should not pretend to report the experiments made by those who are conversant with the subject without first having made themselves thoroughly acquainted with the manner in which those experiments were conducted, or at all events, should they be sufficiently rash to neglect this precaution, they must consent to take upon themselves the responsibility of the failure.

It is constantly demanded "Of what use is Mesmerism, even supposing it be true?" The question has been put to ourselves over and over again; the case of Madame Plantin, and the experiment of the seton performed on Elizabeth O'Key, ought of themselves to be sufficient answer; but in addition to these examples of its utility we may state, that the fits for which the latter individual was admitted into the hospital have been perfectly cured by it; by its means Dr Elliotson cured also an epileptic boy who was a patient in the hospital, also another lad, the son of a respectable tradesman, who had for several years suffered severely from epileptic fits, and had at length lost the use of his legs; he had been under the treatment of several medical men. Another patient whom he had restored to health by it is the daughter of a tradesman; she had for many months suffered from hysterical mania, which appeared to be so confirmed that one physician had actually signed a certificate to the effect of her being insane. Surely the question of its utility is now fully answered; but had these cases not occurred, had only the existence of the power been known and proved, would it not have been a great gain? would it not have been an important addition to the facts already discovered relating to the physiology of the human frame? And truly we are not so well acquainted with all the laws of animal life as to justify us in rejecting any truth, or in refusing to inquire into any fact which may be offered us concerning it. It is clearly the duty of all those to whom, by their profession, the public safety is in so great a degree entrusted, to lose no opportunity of acquiring all knowledge which may enable them to insure that safety to the greatest possible extent; and if this be the duty of medical men, how much more so is it of those who are engaged in the instruction of the students of medicine, and yet how few have in any degree given their attention to the investigation of Mesmerism?—they have not even shown the inclination to make themselves acquainted with its nature. There have, of course, been a few exceptions, and to these few should the public indeed feel grateful; the public best know whether this be or be not their sentiment towards them.



MESMERISM



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could add some other fluid to it which would cause some yellow, lo! the brownish fluid upon the probe bright green or blue; still he was not called an ass. Doubt the propriety of the test. Lastly, we saw a man bring a little dog into his theatre, and give him a wound introduced into the system of the poor dog by means of a wound made for the purpose: in a few seconds, this poor little dog would rise, particularly of his hind legs, and die. We saw, and the poor little dog has continued to run in his private domain, behind his table, and never could see, otherwise than in a natural way. All the while, however, exclaim "Oh! credulous professors might have observed a slight smile come upon his face, which before was not there."



be facts already discovered relating to the matter? And truly we are not so well acquainted with the facts as to justify us in rejecting any truth, or any fact which may be offered us concerning it. Those to whom, by their profession, the public is entrusted, to lose no opportunity of acquiring knowledge, and to insure that safety to the greatest extent possible, it is the duty of medical men, how much more engaged in the instruction of the students of medicine, to have in any degree given their attention to the subject?—they have not even shown the inclination to be acquainted with its nature. There have, of course, and to these few should the public indeed be indebted to know whether this be or be not their senti-

To James Blundell M.D.
From John Elliotson

NUMEROUS CASES
OF
SURGICAL OPERATIONS
WITHOUT PAIN
IN
THE MESMERIC STATE;

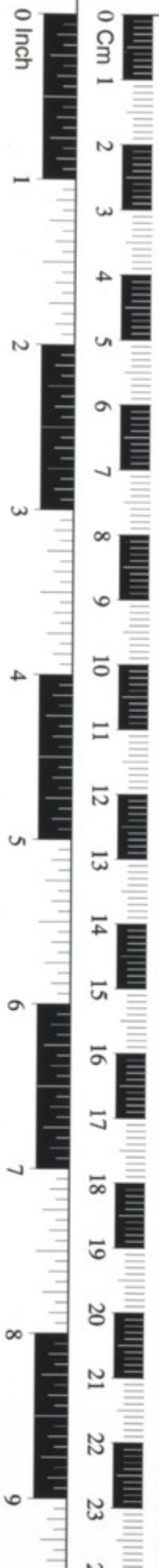
WITH
REMARKS
UPON THE OPPOSITION OF MANY MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL MEDICAL
AND CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY AND OTHERS
TO THE RECEPTION OF
THE INESTIMABLE BLESSINGS OF MESMERISM.

"In the whole domain of human arguments, no art or science rests upon experiments more numerous, more positive, or more easily ascertained."
"To me (and before many years the opinion must be universal) the most extraordinary event in the whole history of human science is, that MESMERISM ever could be doubted."
Chenevix.

BY
JOHN ELLIOTSON, M.D. CANTAB. F.R.S.

LONDON:
H. BAILLIERE, 219, REGENT STREET.

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