

**Animal magnetism : a ballad - with explanatory notes and observations containing several curious anecdotes of animal magnetisers, ancient as well as modern / by Valentine Absonus, Esq.**

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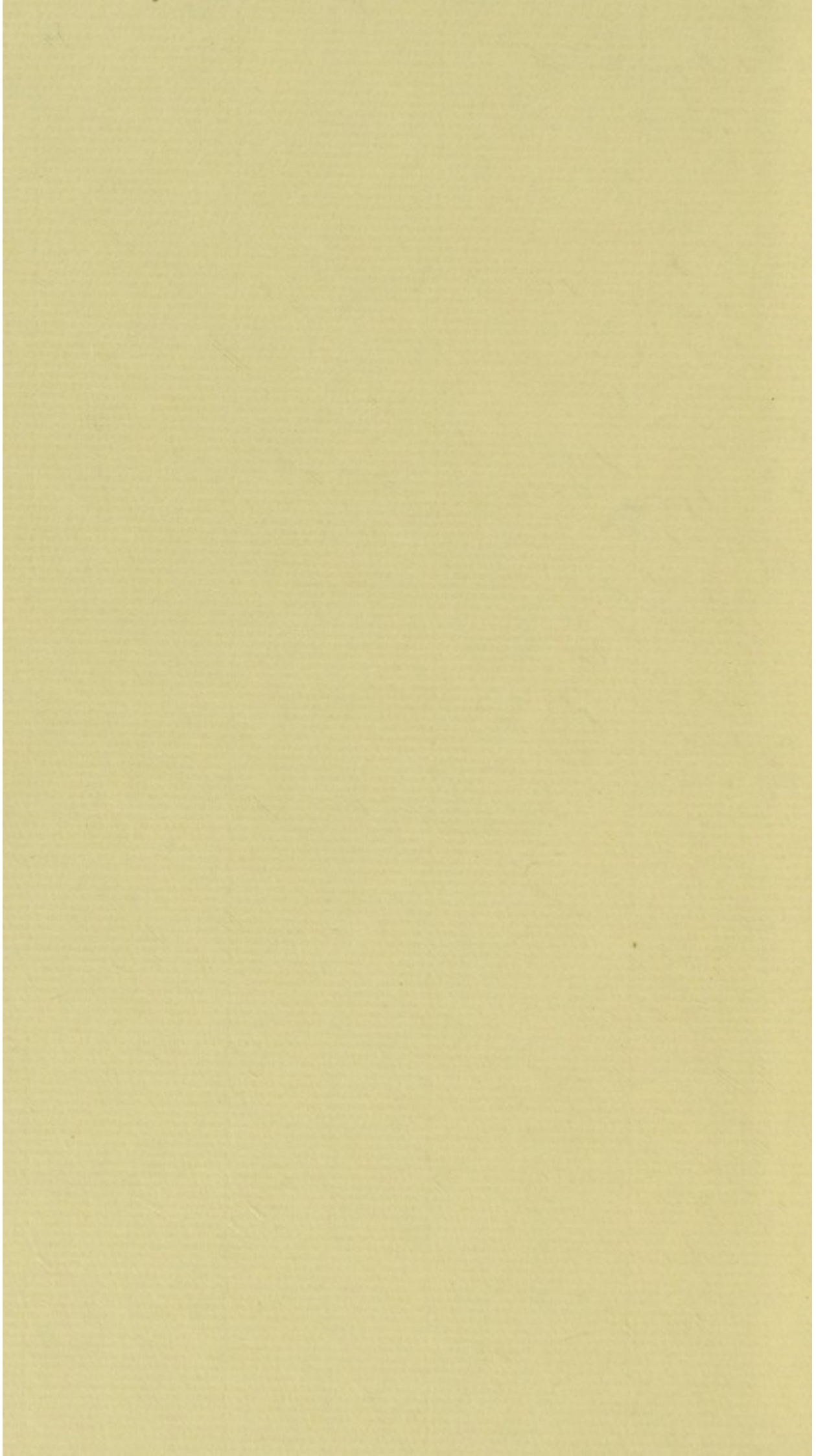
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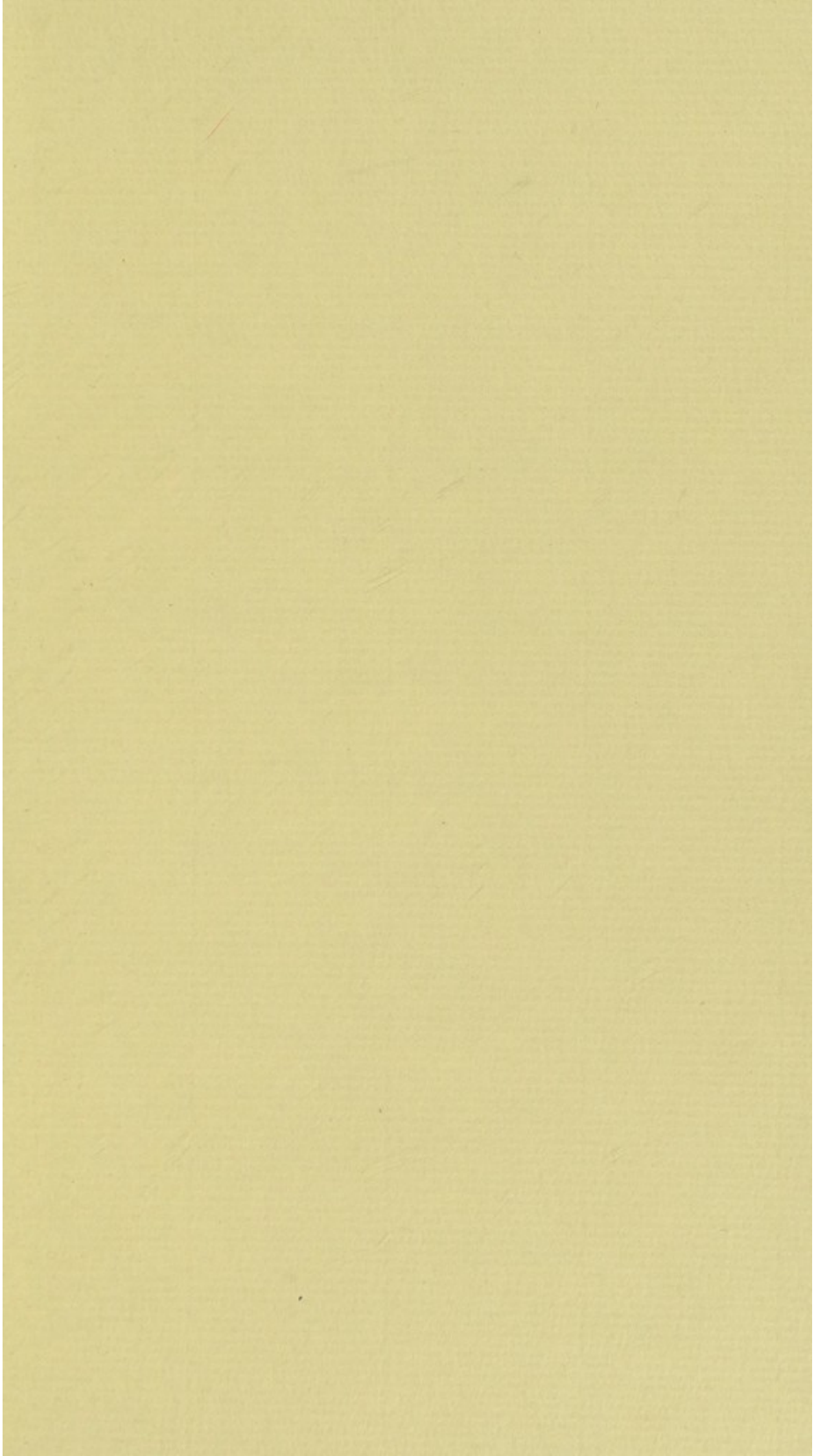


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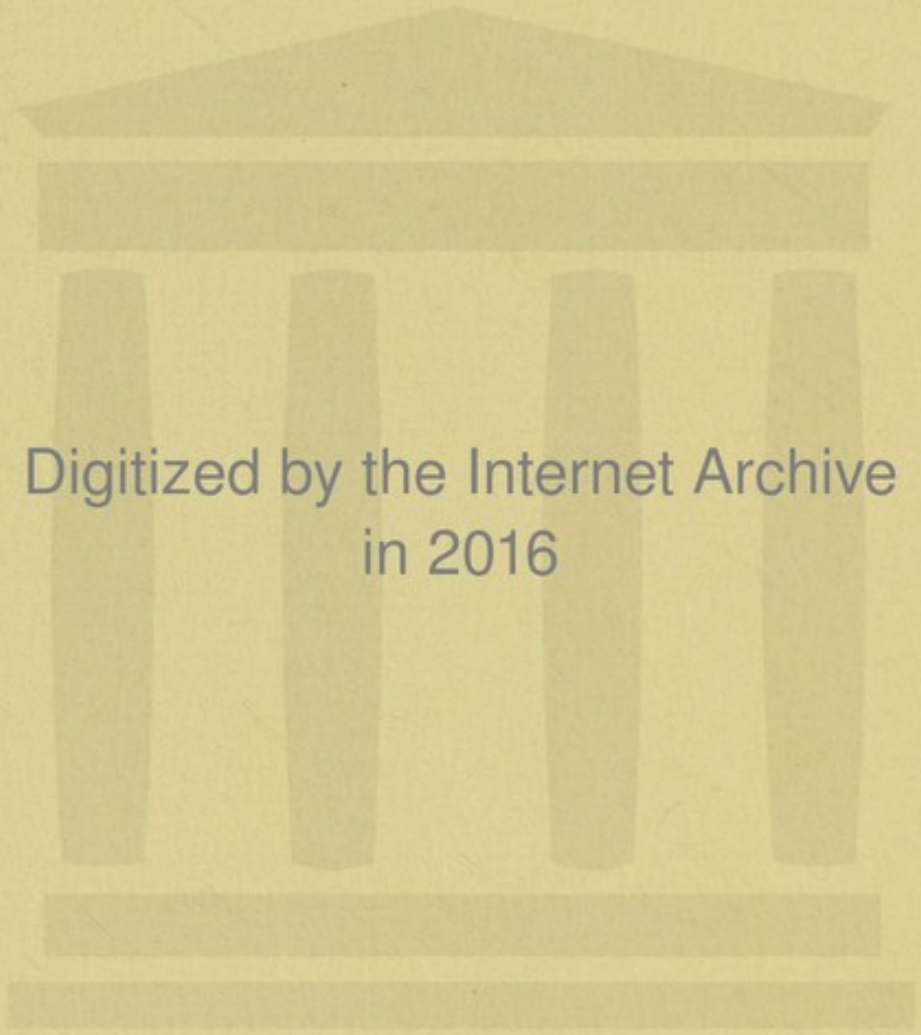












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# ANTHRAKOSIS

by J. H. HENNING

1911

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Washington, D. C.

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# ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

## A BALLAD.

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS:

Containing several curious Anecdotes of  
ANIMAL MAGNETISERS,  
ANCIENT AS WELL AS MODERN.

By VALENTINE ABSONUS, Esq.

*Author of The Commentary on the first Apbotism of Hippocrates.*

Let us all sing fancies knell,  
I'll begin it — ding dong, bell.

*Merchant of Venice.*

Fancy can save or kill; it hath closed up  
Wounds when the balsam could not, and without  
The aid of salves: to think has been a cure.

*Cartwright.*

————— he  
Forsooth, look on him as a conjurer,  
And gazing in my eyes, feeling my pulse,  
And with no face, as 'twere out facing me,  
Cries out, I was posselt.

*Comedy of Errors.*

Nay, Lady sit, if I but wave this band  
Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster;  
And you a statue, or as Daphne was  
Root bound, that fled Apollo.

*Comus.*

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Printed for J. JOHNSON, N<sup>o</sup> 72, St. Paul's Church Yard.

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BY VALENTINE ABBOT, Esq.

Author of the Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, &c.

It is all day long, I say,  
The same old story — the same old song.

There's a man, I say, who can  
Make the dead speak, and the dumb be dumb.

He can make the blind to see,  
And the deaf to hear, and the lame to leap;  
He can make the dumb to speak,  
And the deaf to hear, and the lame to leap.

He can make the blind to see,  
And the deaf to hear, and the lame to leap;  
He can make the dumb to speak,  
And the deaf to hear, and the lame to leap.

Printed by J. W. Smith, No. 1, New Street, London.

# A D D R E S S

T O T H E

R E A D E R.

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**H**A V I N G picked up the following ballad in the large room of a tavern in the city, in which, as I was informed by the waiter, a society of medical gentlemen had dined the preceding day, I concluded it had been written by one of the party; and presumed I should not offend, in thus giving it to the public. The ballad, being, in fact, but a piece of doggrell rhyme, can boast of no poetic beauties; yet it may help to laugh out of fashion those absurdities which, although too gross to have imposed upon our Gallic neighbours, have found a comfortable patronage in British credulity. If any apology be necessary for thus adopting this son of chance, and becoming the unasked editor of the work of a stranger, I can only say, that, from some opportunities, which I have met with, of observing the artful tricks, and impertinent follies of these Charlatans, I am enabled to elucidate many passages in this little ballad, which might not otherwise be generally understood. This information I shall give, in the form of explanatory notes to the poem; where I shall introduce an anecdote or two of



animal magnetisers, the truth of which I can safely pledge myself to prove. I must acknowledge, that I was for some time doubtful, whether, in the notes, with which I have endeavoured to illustrate this bagatelle, I should treat the subject with that gravity, which its patrons think is due to it ; or with that ridicule, which I am satisfied it deserves : whether I should seriously remonstrate with the public, for encouraging the most dangerous quackery, that ever magistrate permitted ; or merely, indulge a good natured laugh at their folly. But, considering the shafts of ridicule as most proper to bring down that nonsense, which, being truly incomprehensible, soars triumphantly, out of the reach of either common sense or philosophical reasoning, I have sent forth a few random arrows, with the hope of just winging the folly, as it flies. Serious argument I have not meddled with ; since to that it is impregnable, even though aided by well known and authenticated facts. Were not this the case, it could not have met with such a reception, in England, after the report made by the commissioners, appointed by the king of France, to enquire into the merits of this all-surprising art. A few of the impositions discovered by these gentlemen, I shall here take the liberty to notice ; first observing that, among those who signed these reports, was that late respectable philosopher Dr. Franklin. In consequence of their appointment, these commissioners



missioners went to the house of Mesmer, and in his public room found several patients, who were said to be then under the extraordinary influence of animal magnetism. Some of these seemed to be lulled into a deep sleep, whilst others appeared to be thrown into the most violent convulsions; the effects produced being said to be varied by the different constitutions, or maladies peculiar to each patient. After a careful and impartial examination of every circumstance, from which they could derive any information, the commissioners discovered that all these miraculous effects were brought about by the ingenious aid of accomplices, or were the consequences of the force of imagination working on weak minds. As a proof of the nullity of the pretended science, and of the impositions practised on the credulous, they relate, that a lady, whom Mesmer himself selected for the purpose, was seated in a chair, against the wainscot, and informed that he was to perform the usual operations, on the other side of the wainscot, in the adjoining room, Mesmer being kept in conversation by one of the party, another took the situation, which the lady supposed to be possessed by him; and the lady being asked, from time to time, whether she experienced any particular change, was soon brought to say, that she began to be affected, in the same manner that she always was during the operation: she at last became so much affected, as to be thrown  
into,



into, what magnetisers term, a complete crisis. As soon as the lady had recovered from this state, which she supposed to have been produced by Mesmer's operations, she was replaced in the same chair, and Mesmer, taking his post on the other side of the wainscot, was desired to exert all his efforts to repeat the crisis ; the doctor laboured for some time, but, the lady not being apprised of what was going forward, continued in a conversation, in which she was purposely engaged, without suffering the least interruption. The operations of these philosophers, are not confined to the animal system; since, should they chuse it, they can, by their almost miraculous powers, deprive a flower of its fragrance, in one instant ; and restore it in the next. Or, should they shed their baneful influence on a tree, in the shade of which some unsuspecting wight has sought a refuge, soon will the impoisoned tree expend its venom on the deluded mortal, who has foolishly been caught in the alluring snare ; soon may he expect to be bound in the leaden chains of Morpheus ; the best he can hope for, will be to become a prisoner at large to the somniferous tyrant ; to use a plainer language, he may expect to be set asleep, with his eyes wide open ; a frequent consequence of the magnetic influence. The power of thus affecting the vegetable kingdom, was boasted of by Mesmer. The commissioners, to enable themselves to judge of this pretended power, desired

Monseigneur



Monfieur Mefmer to felect a proper fubject for the experiment, and point out thofe particular trees, in his garden, which he had magnetifed, as well as thofe which he had omitted ; the patient being placed under any of the trees thus pointed out, as under magnetic influence, foon began to be extraordinarily affected ; but experienced no change, when placed under any of the others. The commissioners willing, however, to make the experiment, in the faireft manner, had the patient blindfolded, and placed under different trees ; uſing, at the ſame time, proper artifices to mislead him, in forming an opinion, whether the tree, under which he was placed, had been deſcribed as magnetifed or not. By this management, the credulous or artful patient remained unaffected, or became comatofe ; accordingly as he was made to ſuppoſe, he was under a tree that had been operated upon, or not.

I cannot conclude this addreſs, without recommending to ſuch of my readers, as may be yet uninformed of the real nature and principles of Animal Magnetifm, an attentive peruſal of the intereſting *Report of Dr. Franklin and other Commissioners charged by the King of France with the examination of Animal Magnetifm.*



## S O N G.

TUNE, *A Begging we will go,*

## I.

Ye Sons of Æsculapius who,  
Around me now assemble,  
The news I've to relate to you,  
Will make you surely tremble.

*For a begging you must go, must go,  
For a begging you must go.*

## II.

True Science now is rival'd by,  
(1) Manceuvre and grimace;  
And magnetifers strive to thrust  
Themselves into your place,

*And a begging you must go, &c.*

## III.

These (2) vile intruders have of late,  
So gain'd upon the town,  
That your gilt chariots must, I fear  
Be one and all put down.

*And a begging you must go.*



IV.

In tricks and wiles they far exceed

(3) The nimble finger'd gentry,  
Who cleanly can your pocket pick,  
Although your hand is sentry.

*And a begging you may go.*

V.

(4) They do not touch their patients, but,  
(5) They act e'en at a distance,  
Yet never fail to lighten those  
Who come for their assistance.

*Then a begging they may go.*

VI.

(6) The blind they do supply with eyes,  
The lame they make to walk,  
The deaf with ears they furnish too,  
The dumb they teach to talk.

*And a begging you must go.*

VII.

These wonder workers boldly say,  
They can when e'er they please,  
(7) From sick folks to themselves transfer  
Each obstinate disease.

*So a begging you must go, &c.*



## VIII.

(8) Though many scruple not to say  
 They're such deceitful elves  
 Their patients purse alone 'tis they  
 Transfer unto themselves.

*Then a begging he may go, &c.*

## IX.

To one of these professors did  
 A damsel late apply,  
 Saying, doctor pray relieve me, or  
 I surely soon shall die.

*Or a begging I must go, &c.*

## X.

My Stomach which, Sir, always was  
 So taper and so small,  
 Is grown as big as a puncheon is,  
 And round too as a ball.

*And a begging I must go, &c.*

## XI.

Says the Doctor here is water, but,  
 It soon shall feel my power,  
 So he tweedled with his fingers, full  
 The space of half an hour.

*With his animal magnetism.*

Then



## XII.

Then panting cried, dear damfel now  
 Some respite I must beg,  
 Your disease is quite transferr'd, I find,  
 For I'm full as an egg,

*With my animal magnetism.*

## XIII.

The lass no longer could refrain,  
 But wickedly she smiled,  
 Saying Doctor, I did really think,  
 I was far gone with child.

*And a begging must have gone.*

## XIV.

But since to you it is transferr'd  
 I wish you, Sir, much joy,  
 And in the happy minute hope  
 You'll have a chopping boy.

*With your animal magnetism.*



## N O T E S

ON THE FOREGOING

## B A L L A D.

(1) The terms “manœuvre and grimace,” are, in my opinion, very properly adopted by the author of the ballad, to characterize the particular mode of practice, followed by the magnetising doctors, as they are commonly called; for, in a peculiar motion of the hands and fingers, and an eager penetrating stare, seems to consist the whole of their extraordinary mystery. The Honourable Mr. N —, it may be here remarked, puts so much confidence in one of these principles of the art; that, although he begins with their ordinary motions of the hands and fingers, he never ceases, until, urged, by a furor resembling that which was wont to agitate the priestesses of Delphi, those motions become so increased in rapidity and violence, as to throw his whole body into the most extravagant and furious agitations. The reader may be assured, that were he on a visit at Dr. de M’s, and to enquire the cause of the fashes rattling, and the china shaking, he would be coolly told, it was only the Honourable  
Mr.



Mr. N —, treating an old woman : and he may be likewise assured, that, were he admitted into the Sanctum sanctorum, he would there see the old woman, in an arm chair, with her head supported by the muff of her noble operator, overcome with ennui at the frequent repetition of magnetic ecstasies, and sleeping as uninterruptedly as the King of Sweden is said to have done, by the side of a piece of ordnance momentarily discharging. There might he see also, thirty, or more, males and females, seated round a room heated with a large fire, drinking freely of warm new ale, from the hands of their benevolent doctor; and afterwards submitting to the treatment imposed on them by him, and his worthy coadjutors. — What ! a large fire and warm ale ! but surely not in the summer months ! — Yes, my kind and unsuspecting reader, 'tis really so : And can you now wonder at the scene I describe ? here may be seen two or three, overcome by the heat of the room, panting for breath, and sweating at every pore ; while others, not accustomed to a morning's draught of warm new ale, find it so disagreeable an inmate, that both stomach and bowels are engaged to expel the enemy : the harmony of the scene being compleated, by the well timed bursts of borborygmi, eructations, crepit — — Nay, Sir, why interrupt me ; if the scene be such, that ladies of fashion and delicacy condescend to act a part in it, surely, it would be



affectation, in the highest degree, for me to suppose it too indelicate for my pen to describe : but I lay no claim to any extraordinary delicacy ; I only ask to be allowed the merit of having treated this ludicrous subject, not only with candour, but with the utmost tenderness ; for not a word have I said — of the excellency of warm ale, in concealing the taste of any medicine the doctor might chuse to add to it ; nor a syllable have I said — of the considerable effects which may be produced, by the artful addition of a few grains of an almost tasteless preparation of antimony : effects which must appear to the ignorant, so extraordinary, that we need not be astonished, at their attributing them to the supernatural powers, supposed to be possessed by the doctor and the rest of the brotherhood.

(2) The epithet, “ vile,” here introduced by the writer of the song, is, to be sure, a very strong one ; nor was I entirely reconciled to it, until I had heard the following true and melancholy anecdote. A young man had been declared to be in the last stage of a consumption, by two celebrated physicians, and who had also candidly informed his friends, that medicine could only now palliate his sufferings, the cure of his disease being beyond the attainment of art ; his disconsolate parents had resigned themselves to expect the dreaded loss, when some busy friend urged them to call into their aid

Dr.



Dr. B——. The doctor, after having treated his patient for a few days, caught the father by the hand, and eagerly wished him joy of the recovery of his son, from a disease which so far from being incurable, as it had been said to be by his former physicians, would soon give way to the powers of his art. The disposition in this disease to realise every fancied ray of hope, is proverbial ; the young man fancied himself better. The father and mother of the youth, indeed, not perceiving any evident amendment, were surprised at the doctor's report ; but confiding in his judgment and veracity, they comforted themselves with the assurance of again enjoying that, which they had before despaired of, — the happiness of seeing their dear child restored to health. The doctor finding him, as he said, nearly cured, desired he might walk about a quarter of a mile to a stage, and take a ride of a few miles ; adding that, should he appear to be fatigued with his journey, he might take a dose of the wonder working panacea,—warm ale. The parents knowing, that so far from being able to walk a quarter of a mile, their son could scarcely walk across the room, had a coach to the door, into which he was with much difficulty conveyed ; this journey, for such it was to the almost dying patient, he bore so very ill, that it was feared he would die, while he was carrying up to the bed, and from that time he became hourly worse. On the third day, afterwards,



wards, when the doctor repeated his daily visit, the father, satisfied that his son was dying, gently reproached the doctor, for having thus cruelly deceived him, in a point in which he was so deeply interested. Ah! says the doctor, you little know how much I have the recovery of your son at my heart; I should not have been here this morning; since from religious motives, I seldom visit on a sabbath day, but that, as I was treating your son at my own house, on a skeleton, I, discovered he was much worse, and have come to render him all the service in my power. The youth, who was in fact dying, faintly craved of the doctor, that he would remove that terrible rattling in his throat: my dear, said he, I will; and immediately began his operations, breaking wind off his stomach with such loud belchings, and making such a rattling noise in his throat, as might be heard in any part of the house. After continuing this ridiculous mummerly about ten minutes, he told the mother he must desist; for were he to continue the treatment much longer, he should not be able to get out of the chair. — In pity to the feelings of my reader, I will be as brief, as possible, in the recital of the remainder of this disgusting tale — that same night the patient died; and the doctor being reduced to the dilemma either of allowing the frivolity of his art; or of acknowledging his ignorance of the nature of his patient's disease, and the injustice he had been guilty of,



of, in having opposed the opinions of the physicians who had preceded him; he preferred the latter, and bringing with him a friend, opened the patient, and shewed his parents, that no art could have brought about a cure, since the lungs were so much diseased as to be dissolved into an almost putrid mass. Who, on reading the above, can say the epithet vile, used by the song writer, is too strong for such dangerous quackery, and such sporting with the agonizing feelings of a parent, alarmed for the life of his child?

(3) I acknowledge, that at the first reading of this stanza, I was rather disposed to censure our ballad-maker, for thus uncivilly comparing his heroes with pick-pockets; or, as he terms them, "the nimble-finger'd gentry:" but I could not avoid being better satisfied with his expression, upon reflecting on some certain qualifications, in which they much agree; considering likewise, that they must necessarily have one common tutelar deity, Mercury; since his worshippers have always been distinguished—by the nimbleness of their fingers. I must allow, that I do not appear to mend the compliment paid them in the text; by giving them in my commentary, for their tutelar deity, the God of thieves and sharpers; but truth requires it, and I will therefore shew the grounds on which I allot them this deity, whose patronage they so ungratefully pretend to reject. The first notorious  
act



act of Mercury, was one which corresponds, most exactly, with the attempts of his present race of followers; for Mercury, on the very day on which he was born, stole some cattle from a rich herd, which Apollo himself had in keeping. Who is there that does not at the first glance, discover in Apollo the regular physician?—in the rich herd, his patients;—in Mercury, the magnetiser;—in the cattle he stole, the simple part of — but I will not offend, more need not be said, the parallel is exact. Nor will it be very difficult even to prove that Mercury was the inventor, and first practiser of this extraordinary art; from another remarkable action of his, which plainly appears to have been performed by the same power with that boasted of by the magnetisers of our days. Reader, you smile, and think you have anticipated the story, I am about to relate; you are right, — so see with me, how it corresponds. Juno, the jealous wife of Jupiter, having detected him in one of his rakish freaks, delivered the strumpet whom he had cunningly transformed into a cow, to the care of Argus; who for the sake of greater vigilance, was indulged with an hundred eyes. It was here, that Mercury, the God of pick-pockets, pimps, and magnetisers, were ready to serve his father Jove, exerted his powers of animal magnetism; for he threw poor Argus into a crisis, and set him snoring as loud as a Mayor of a corporation after an election feast. Shrink into your  
original



original nothingness, you ungrateful tribe, who dare to deny your patron. — Presume not to compare your feeble powers to that of your deity. — Labour for hours together, quiver every finger, shake every limb — to set an old woman asleep; but remember, Mercury, with one treatment, closed the hundred eyes of Argus.

(4) It is, I believe, generally allowed, that in performing their mysterious operations, they do not touch their patients; but that it is sufficient for them only to present their fingers towards their patient, to produce the most extraordinary and salutary effects. But from what I have learnt, it does not appear, that they always keep their hands off their patients; since, I have heard a very considerable practitioner, in this way, declare, that a very powerful energy passed from him to his patient, by merely applying his finger to her skin, to examine the state of the circulation. We have likewise been informed, in the public prints, that a magnetiser of some repute, in a country town, concluded his hand bills of invitation with a postscript to the ladies, requesting them to come without stays, as they might then be treated with greater convenience and energy.

(5) The ballad writer, here, evidently alludes to a power pretended to by these gentlemen of produc-



ing the most wonderful effects, when at a very considerable distance from the subject on whom the operation is performed. A curious instance of this power over absent persons, we have in a story, (the truth of which I pretend not, however, to vouch for,) related of a gentleman, who formerly amused himself with opening oysters at the Burton Ale house; but who since lived as servant with the Arch-magnetiser of Bedford-square: and there observing, how little was required to be done to gull the public, resolved to set up magnetiser himself. This gentleman being met with by one who formerly had known him, was asked; if by his art he could inform the enquirer, whether a patient, who was then in the country, might, with safety, be brought to town: and if so, would it be within the power of his art to perform a cure. The answer was promised for the next evening; when he reported, that the patient might be removed to London, with the utmost safety; and might there receive, by the magnetic art, a perfect cure. A week elapsed, when the doctor meeting the gentleman, accosts him with, Well, sir, is my patient arrived? No, says the gentleman, confusion seize you and your art together, —— for the horse died before he got half way to town. This pretended power of treating absent persons is, however, of no small use to the professors of the new philosophy; for should a patient, convinced of the folly of their pretensions, and the inefficacy of their art,



art, dismiss his magnetising doctor, and afterwards recover, under the care of a regular physician ; the patient is told, that moved by compassion, the knight of the animal magnet had continued to treat him, even whilst driving about in his carriage, to visit his other patients.

(6) That the author of the ballad has not exaggerated, in this account of the extraordinary wonders reported to be performed by these gentlemen, will plainly appear, from the relation of cures said to have been performed by Mr. De Louthembourg, which has lately been published: there we are informed, “ that Mr. de Louthembourg, with his  
“ lady, Mrs. de Louthembourg, have been made  
“ by the almighty power of the Lord Jehovah, proper recipients to receive divine manuductions,  
“ which heavenly and divine influx, coming from  
“ the radix God, his divine majesty has most graciously condescended to bestow on them (*his blessing*) to diffuse healing to *all* who have faith  
“ in the Lord as mediator, be they *deaf, dumb, lame, halt, or blind.*”

Not satisfied with the above general assertion, the writer goes on to particularize twelve cases of diseases, cured by Mr. and Mrs. De Louthembourg.

The first of these, is indeed rather of a doubtful nature; since we are told, that the mother of the



patient attributed the cure, " to the kind gentlemen of the Finsbury dispensary."

The second is " that of a woman possessed with  
" evil spirits —— she would scratch like a cat;  
" nay, she would beg a pin of women, and then  
" scratch them with it, &c. &c. &c."

Two young women, born *deaf* and *dumb* —— " Mrs.  
" Louthembourg looked on them with an eye of  
" benignity, and healed them" —— the relater says  
she heard them both speak.

Mr. Webber told the relater of these cures " that  
" he saw a man with a withered arm, cured in a few  
" minutes by Mr. de Louthembourg."

A man (whose name is forgot) " was cured of a  
" rupture instantaneously."

" A news carrier at Chelsea, was cured of an  
" abscess in his side. Mr. de Louthembourg held  
" his hand on the abscess half a minute, and it  
" broke immediately. The matter issuing from  
" the abscess, discharged itself instantly by the  
" urinary passages."

A Miss W —— " a public vocal performer,  
" was cured, but had not goodness of heart enough  
" to own it publicly."



The above list of cures is dedicated to his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury ; and the authorefs concludes her dedication, with faying, “ I therefore  
 “ prefume when thefe testimonies are fearched into  
 “ (which will corroborate with mine) your lord-  
 “ fhip will compofe a form of prayer, to be ufed in  
 “ all churches and chapels, that nothing may im-  
 “ pede this ineflimable gift from having its [free  
 “ courfe; and that public thanks be offered up in  
 “ all churches and chapels, for fuch an aftonifhed  
 “ proof of God’s love to this favoured land.”

The above extracts muft clearly fhew that which they were brought to prove ; that the author of the fong, in his account of the pretended powers of thefe gentlemen, does not attribute more to them, than they are fupposed by their adherents to poffefs. To make any further remarks on the above curious dedication, and moft extraordinary list of cures, would be to infult my readers; fince, at the firft perufal of this curious recital, every one poffeffing the fmalleft fhare of common fenfe, muft feel as Mr. De Louthembourg himfelf did; for the authorefs fays in her preface, “ I took the liberty to fend him (Mr. De Lou-  
 “ therbourg) a few copies, and was feverely reprimanded, and enjoined pofitively to fupprefs it  
 “ immediately ——— but on mature deliberation,  
 “ I conceived it better to offend an individual,  
 “ than have thoufands ftrangers to his ineflimable gifts.”



It is upwards of an hundred years since the celebrated Mr. Greatrakes amused the good people of England, with his extraordinary cures of the *deaf, dumb, lame, and blind*. His cures correspond in so many respects with those which have been attributed to animal magnetism, that I do not conceive that the mention, in this place, of him and his wonderful cures requires any apology: I therefore shall proceed, for the amusement of my readers, to give some account of both, from a pamphlet which was written by Mr. Greatrakes himself.

Mr. Val. Greatrakes was born at Waterford, in the year 1628, of parents, who possessed competent estates in that part of the world; and who took proper care of his education. At about twenty years of age, after five or six years absence, he returned to his native country; which was at that time in a most miserable and deplorable state, being torn with intestine divisions: he therefore retired for refuge to the castle of Caperquin; where, he says, “ I spent a  
 “ year’s time in contemplation, and saw so much of  
 “ the madness and wickedness of the world, that  
 “ my life became a burthen to me, and my soul was  
 “ as weary of this habitation of clay, as the Gally  
 “ slave was of the oar, which brought my life even  
 “ to the threshold of death; so that my legs had  
 “ hardly strength to carry my enfeebled body  
 “ about: all company seemed irksome and distasteful to me, ——— which caused me seldom, during  
 “ ing



“ ing that time, to go from my cell.” This extraordinary man, in the year 1649, was made a lieutenant in a troop of horse; in this situation he remained six years, when great part of the army being disbanded, and he among the rest, he returned to a country life, and resided at Affane. He was soon after this made clerk of the peace of Cork, and afterwards justice of the peace, and clerk for the transplantation. About the year 1660, he says, “ I  
 “ had an impulse, or a strange persuasion in my  
 “ own mind (of which I am not able to give any  
 “ rational account to another) which did very frequently suggest to me, that there was bestowed  
 “ on me the gift of curing the king’s evil; which,  
 “ for the extraordinariness of it, I thought fit to  
 “ conceal for some time; but at length I communicated this to my wife, and told her, that I did  
 “ verily believe, that God had given me the blessing of curing the king’s evil; for whether I  
 “ were in private or public, sleeping or waking,  
 “ still I had the same impulse; but her reply was  
 “ to me, that she conceived this was a strange  
 “ imagination.” With the hope of proving the truth of her assertion, the good woman brought to him a boy affected with the king’s evil in his eyes, cheek, and throat; but Mr. Greatrakes told her, she should now see whether this were a bare fancy or imagination, as she thought it, or the dictates of God’s spirit on his heart, “ And thereupon,” he  
 says,



says, " I laid my hand on the places affected, and  
 " prayed to God, for Jesus sake, to heal him ——  
 " in two or three days, a node almost as big as a  
 " pullet's egg was suppurated, and the throat  
 " strangely amended, and to be brief (to God's  
 " glory I speak it) within a *month* discharged itself  
 " quite, and was perfectly healed." One would  
 have imagined, that the length of time required for  
 the accomplishment of this, his first cure, would  
 have taught him, that he had been assisted by no su-  
 pernatural aid. But those minds, in which imagina-  
 tion works so strongly, as it appears to have done in  
 Mr. Greatrakes, are not easily put out of conceit of  
 any fancy they may adopt. Thus, although his next  
 cure was not completed until the end of *six weeks*,  
 yet he was satisfied, that he was selected to be the  
 instrument of the Almighty, in restoring health to  
 those who needed it. After thus practising on the  
 king's evil for about three years, he says " I found  
 " as formerly, the same kind of impulse within  
 " me, suggesting that there was bestowed upon me  
 " the gift of curing the ague. This also I told to  
 " my wife, who could not be persuaded to it."  
 But she changed her mind the next day, for he says,  
 " there came to my house a neighbour's wife, by  
 " by name Bateman, the Naylor's wife that is there,  
 " who had a most violent ague; on whom I laid  
 " my hands, and desired God Almighty to cure  
 " her; who, in mercy, heard my prayer, *and so the*  
*ague*



“ *ague run through her, and she went away immedi-*  
 “ *ately, perfectly cured of her ague.*”

Soon after this he discovered, by the like impulse, that he had received the gift of healing diseases in general; and soon acquired very considerable employ, for he says, “ That as God gave me the several  
 “ gifts from time to time, he always sent patients  
 “ that applied themselves to me.” Mr. Great-raks was himself much puzzled at God’s choosing him in preference to others, to be the performer of these wonders; nor could he tell, what he saw in him, more than in another man. But, as to the reasons why God should now cure diseases, in such an extraordinary manner; he supposed it might be, either to convert the Atheists of that age, whom he supposed to have been numerous; or to abate the pride of the papists, by making use of a protestant to perform such strange things.

To prove these points, he says, “ that there are  
 “ some pains, which afflict men, after the manner  
 “ of evil spirits, which cannot endure my hand, nay,  
 “ not my glove; but fly immediately, though six or  
 “ eight coats and cloaks be put betwixt the party’s  
 “ body, and my hand.” He also describes the different kinds of devils he had occasion to exercise his art upon; and says, “ my experience inclines  
 “ me to believe, that I have met with several in-  
 D stances,



“ stances, which seemed to me to be possessions by  
 “ *dumb devils, deaf devils, and talking devils*; and  
 “ that to my apprehension and others present,  
 “ *several evil spirits, one after another, have been*  
 “ *pursued out of a woman*, and every one of them  
 “ have been like to choak her (when it came up  
 “ to her throat) before it went forth; and when  
 “ the last was gone, she was perfectly well.—There  
 “ have been others that have fallen down immedi-  
 “ ately as they have seen me.—many when they  
 “ have but heard my voice, have been tormented in  
 “ so strange a manner, that no one that has been  
 “ present, could conceive it less than a *possession*.”

The multitude which came daily was so great, that  
 Mr. Greatraks tells us, the neighbouring towns were  
 not able to accommodate them; and occasioned  
 the magistrates, and the Bishop of the place to inter-  
 fere, requiring him to lay his hands on no more  
 within that diocese.

Soon after this, the right honourable the Viscount-  
 ess Conway, sister to the Earl of Orrery, having  
 been afflicted for many years with a violent head-ach,  
 which had resisted the endeavours of the most able  
 physicians in England and France; and hearing  
 of Mr. Greatrak's great fame, sent for him into  
 England. Here unfortunately, his art failed him;  
 for



for he could not, as he acknowledges himself, remove or abate the lady's pain in the least. He, however, remained at Ragley, the seat of Lord Conway, three weeks or a month; where he says, "many  
 " hundreds came to me from divers countries, and  
 " many were cured of their diseases and distempers,  
 " *and many were not.*"

From this place he removed to Worcester; "where  
 " the crouds which followed him were so great," he says, " that he was like to be bruised to death." Whilst at Worcester, he received an order from Lord Arlington, by command of his Majesty, to come to Whitehall: this order he obeyed, and was induced by the persuasions of Justice Godfrey and others, to remain in London; and take a house for the reception of patients, which he did in Lincoln's-Inn-fields. His operations were here witnessed by the Hon. Robert Boyle, Dr. Denton, Dr. Fairclough, and various people of fashion. But, notwithstanding this seeming strength of testimony, only a few of the cases thus witnessed need be copied, to shew, how little credit ought to be given to the absurdities contained in that collection.

In one case witnessed by Sir Abraham Cullen, Mr. Rushout and Captain Owen, we are told that  
 " Dorothy Wardant was troubled for twelve years



“ last past, with a great pain in her side, as also a  
 “ violent pain in her head; she likewise had at the  
 “ same time an ague, that held her about three  
 “ weeks; all which Mr. Valentine Greatrak’s  
 “ stroking of her cured——it being three weeks  
 “ since she was stroked, which caused such violent  
 “ motions when the pains flew from place to place,  
 “ that the raged Dorothy swooned away.”

How apposite is this case! how similar are the effects produced by “ Mr. Valentine Greatrak’s strokings,” and the mysterious operations of our modern animal magnetisers! for every one who has been present at their exhibitions must know, that a very frequent consequence of their exertions, is the “ *swooning away of the raged Dorothys.*”

“ Sarah Tuffy was troubled with a violent head-  
 “ ach, every day more or less for seven years; upon  
 “ Mr. Greatrak’s stroking her, she fell a belching,  
 “ which continued for two hours and upwards, *he*  
 “ *now and then applying his hand to her breast, &c.*  
 “ whereupon she was freed from all pains.”

“ Dean Rust, among the cures which he men-  
 “ tions, says that he saw twenty several persons in  
 “ fits of the falling sickness, or convulsions, or  
 “ hysterical



“ hysterical passions,” (the Dean acknowledges he was not wise enough to distinguish them) “ *upon the laying his hand upon their breasts,* (often upon the top of their cloaths) within a few minutes brought to their senses, so as to be able to tell where their pain lay, which he has followed till he has pursued it out of the body.”

In his certificate, the Dean doubts “ whether it be from an immediate gift, or a peculiarity of complexion, that he had a virtue more than ordinary; *for though I have seen him touch many with little or no success,* yet it must not be denied. But that I have seen too —— pains strangely fly before him, till he has chased them out of some of the extreme parts of the body,” ——the Dean likewise adds, “ I have seen by his touch, the humours put into odd and violent fermentations.—— but I can say little to the permanency of his cures,——several of those of the falling sickness, I heard had relapsed before I left the country.”

“ Robert Furnace, *the noted tinker of Clerkenwell,* his cure was talked of all over the town;——the Hon. Mr. Boyle being present when this poor man was under Mr. Greatrak’s hands;——that noble person descended to stroke the tinker’s knee, leg, and foot, with the inside of Mr. Greatrak’s



“ rake’s glove, and so proceeded to pursue his pains  
 “ from place to place, until they fled quite out at  
 “ the ends of his toes.”

“ Margery, the wife of the above named tinker,  
 “ by the application of Mr. Greatrak’s hand to  
 “ her breast, fides, and bowels, was freed from an  
 “ ague, which flew, as she said, first to her throat,  
 “ next out at her mouth, *making her tongue and lips*  
 “ *extraordinary cold in its passage.*”

“ Eleanor Dickinson, having been troubled with  
 “ an exceeding tympany in her belly, for the space  
 “ of twelve years past,—came to Lincoln’s-Inn-  
 “ fields, the place where Mr. Valentine Greatraks  
 “ used to lay his hands on the diseased, but not  
 “ being able to come near him, by reason of the  
 “ throng, she snatched some of his urine, and drank  
 “ it,—rubbed some of it on her body, some of  
 “ which she also put into her ears, and immediately  
 “ she heard the noise of the people all round about  
 “ her: then going home, she felt a queasiness in  
 “ her stomach,” (which indeed was not to be won-  
 “ dered at) “ and brake great *store* of wind, *per Anum*  
 “ and *per partem domesticam*; and then—she made  
 “ water in very great quantity, as 4, 5, or 6 gallons  
 “ in 24 hours, and continued making water, though  
 “ in less quantity; so that at this day, the skin of  
 “ her



“ her belly is as empty as a glove, or purse, and  
 “ wraps over.”\*

Examined, 26 April,  
 1666. By

Robert Boyle,  
 Wm. Smith, Baronet.  
 Wm. Denton, M. D.

How fortunate for poor Mrs. Eleanor Dickinson, that Mr. Greatraks was so negligent, as thus to allow her to snatch some of the salutiferous stream! it surely must have been by a similar impulse with that which had directed Mr. Greatraks himself, that she was induced to make so novel an experiment; by which she convinced the world of the astonishing effects, producible by laving the ears, rubbing the body, and drenching the stomach —— with the wonder-working water of Mr. Valentine Greatraks.

The author of these notes intreats the pardon of his critical reader, for having here indulged himself a little too much, in a fondness for alliteration. But, when the mind is deeply engaged in

\* The foregoing account of Mr. Greatraks, and his cures, is faithfully compiled and extracted from a pamphlet, entitled, *A Brief Account of Mr. Valentine Greatraks, and divers of the strange cures by him lately performed. Written by himself in a letter addressed to the Hon. Robert Boyle, Esq. first published in 1666, and republished in 1723.*



great and weighty matters, a want of attention to these points of less importance, he hopes may be excused. For, at this moment, is his mind engaged, in viewing the interesting scenes presented to his imagination, by eager anticipation and delusive vanity. Here,—anticipation points out to him, neglected and unattended, the exhibition of magnetic ecstasies; which were used to make *the unlearned stare*. And there——vanity shews him, the professors of the new philosophy; urged by gratitude, approaching him with thanks, for the republication of the curious case (he has just related) of Mrs. Eleanor Dickinson: and hailing him their renovator, for thus pointing out one more mode of engaging the attention of the gaping crowd. Here,——he views the tyrant Fashion, imperiously driving her slaves; whilst ever-pleasing Novelty, with all her allurements, kindly invites her fickle votaries;—to behold the high priests of Mercury, deluging the world with their wonders, from an inexhaustible source:——And there,——but it is time for the commentator, to leave the pleasing wilds of fancy, and return to the high-road of facts and reality: where he hopes to make it evident, that, should even the supernatural or magnetic energy prove not to be communicable, in this way; yet, sufficient effects may be expected from the natural and physical properties of this most sovereign remedy. But, on second thoughts, a serious disquisition on the nature  
of



of this panacea, might lead too far; he will therefore chuse a shorter path, and illustrate the subject by the following tale.

An honest farmer having met with an old acquaintance, at the public house, in the market town; where, for the disposal of his corn, he made a weekly visit; was complaining, in answer to the kind enquiry of his companion, “how all fared at home?” that his poor wife was vastly ill, having got no better, in spite of all the doctors had done for her; concluding his complaint with an exact description of her case.—“Oh, ho!” says the other, “is that all; remember me kindly to her, and tell her, if she will but take nine hairs of a *red cow’s tail*, cut them small, and swallow them in a glass of ale, every morning, for nine mornings together, she may be sure of a cure.” Ralph thanked his friend for the prescription, and, by way of return, called for another noggin of ale; which was followed by another and another, until the ale had, in a great measure, taken the place of the prescription in Ralph’s brain. For upon his return home, Ralph wishing to make his peace with his wife for his long stay, began, “Well dame, we shall soon have you well now; I met at the Bull, with our neighbour John Spriggins; who says, that you’ll get a cure to a certainty, if you will but take——a good dose of *red cow’s tail*, every morning,—hey la! I forgets the



rest of it,———'its well I remembered so much, dame; for i'faith, I had well nigh clean forgot it." The good woman was a little time before she could resolve to make the experiment, of taking so horrid a dose, as *red cow's stale*; which she, deceived by the exact similitude of sound, had supposed to be the proposed remedy; anxious, however, to obtain a cure, she gulped down her medicine three mornings; but the dose proved so violently offensive to her stomach and bowels, that, at the end of three or four days, it removed the obstruction, and with it the disease. Gratitude made her now repair to the house of the prescriber, to inform him of the effects his remedy had produced. "Oh, John," says she, "I shall ever thank you for my cure;——but sure,——" such a medicine, it made such workings in my "bowels." "Ah!" said John, laughing heartily, "it——it will tickle the inside sometimes,——meaning *the hairs of the red cow's tail*. "But," says the patient, "it was so filthy, John, why it was as salt as "any brine."——"Ah dear! Ah dear!" says John, ready to burst his sides with laughter,——"why you "surely forgot to wash the hairs first."

But to return to Mr. Greatraks, and our magnetising friends, the exact agreement between whom, in the following particulars, will, I dare say, be readily allowed by my intelligent reader. Like Mr. Greatraks, our magnetisers say——they have  
an



an impulse from God, informing them that they have the power of curing diseases; and like him——although they boast of some being cured, yet they must acknowledge, *many are not*. Like him——they find people of all ranks, who are weak enough to patronize them; and like him——they are laught at by every man of discernment. Like him——they profess to cure the *falling sickness and fits of the mother*; and like him——their very looks make their patients *fall down immediately*, and affect them so, *that no one can conceive it less than a possession*. Like him——*some few* of them refuse money for their cures; and like him——their pretended cures have no permanency. A case, in proof of this last assertion, I will here communicate.—A young woman, who for some years had been regularly, in the spring and autumn, much distressed by a violent eruption in her face, which generally lasted about a month, applied for relief to one of our illustrious magnetisers. It being fortunately about the time at which the eruption generally declined, the doctor soon obtained the credit of having performed the cure. A few sceptics indeed, proposed to wait until autumn, before they allowed the doctor their share of praise. The autumn came, and with it the odious disease. The damsel repaired immediately to the doctor, who well knowing the little chance he now had of removing the disease, ingeniously got rid of his patient, by observing,——



“ it was a peculiarity of the art, that it would not  
 “ twice remove the same disease.”

It must be acknowledged that this note is extended further than was at first proposed; notwithstanding which, it must not be closed, until the writer has paid his respects to those ladies who profess and practice the fascinating art of animal magnetising. These ladies might with the utmost justice be offended, were they to be suffered to pass unnoticed, when we have been engaged in collecting authorities, to keep in countenance the professors of the other sex; especially when we have so excellent a precedent, in the illustrious Bridget Bostock, of *Coppenhall in Cheshire*; of whom in the Gentleman's Magazine for the year 1748, we are told, that “ Old  
 “ Bridget Bostock fills the country with as much  
 “ talk as the rebels did. She cures the *blind*, the  
 “ *deaf*, the *lame* of all sorts, &c. all the means she  
 “ uses for cure, are only stroking them with fasting  
 “ spittle, and praying for them.—People come 60  
 “ miles round. In our lane, where there have not  
 “ been two coaches seen these twelve years, now  
 “ three or four pass in a day; and the poor come  
 “ by cartloads. Though money is offered her, yet  
 “ she takes none for her cures. She is about 70 years  
 “ of age, her dress is very plain; she wears a flannel  
 “ waistcoat, a green linsley apron, a pair of clogs  
 “ and



“ and a plain cap, tied with a halfpenny lace. She  
 “ hath administered to six or seven hundred in a  
 “ day. Her wonder-working power she ascribes  
 “ to the stars, and thinks she can effect any cure,  
 “ only because she fancies herself born under a lucky  
 “ planet. Having put off great numbers that came  
 “ fourscore or a hundred miles, with the frivolous  
 “ excuse of not meddling with such disorders till  
 “ after such a time, she was reproached for having  
 “ acted with great unkindness to those poor crea-  
 “ tures, who were indeed miserable objects, if she  
 “ had it in her power to relieve them; she replied,  
 “ very sharply, *What do I care? did I send for them;*  
 “ *let them stay away if they will.*”

The following instance will enable us to judge of  
 the virtue of her *fasting* spittle. “ There came to  
 “ her a woman of the neighbourhood, who had a  
 “ little redness on her fore-head, which *Bridget*  
 “ called *St. Anthony's Fire*; and having there some  
 “ foul earthen dishes in her hand, out of which  
 “ she had been eating, she immediately set them  
 “ down; *Come*, says she to the patient, *I'll rub it with*  
 “ *my spittle, though I have eat a bit of meat, it will*  
 “ *do as well.*”

The writer of the account says, “ why may we  
 “ not suppose her endowed with this gift of healing,  
 “ upon account of preserving her virginity to an  
 “ advanced age? There are some persons weak  
 “ enough



" enough to think so, and I remember a pretty cu-  
 " rious receipt for the king's evil in Mr. Scot's  
 " *Dictionary of Witchcraft*, which seems to favour  
 " such an opinion." The receipt is this: "*Let a*  
 " *virgin fasting, lay her hand upon the sore, and say,*  
 " *Apollo denieth that the heat of the plague can increase,*  
 " *where a naked virgin quencheth it, and spit three*  
 " *times on it.*" "But it is observable here, that the  
 " virgin is to be naked, and probably younger than  
 " our doctress. And yet," says the ironical  
 rogue, "I can hardly think that virginity has any  
 " such virtue annexed to it: for if that were so,  
 " what a rare number of doctresses, both old and  
 " young, should we have in every town."

I must now, once more, intrude on my reader's  
 patience, with the relation of a fact well known in  
 Bedfordshire; and then actually close this note.

A year or two ago, an arch wag, having observed  
 in the progress of animal magnetism, the ease with  
 which the public might be duped, went to Biggles-  
 wade, a market-town in Bedfordshire, and announced  
 to the inhabitants, that he was so happy as to have had  
 the power given to him of curing diseases: and that,  
 for the benefit of the good people of Biggleswade,  
 he would attend at the *pump*, in the middle of the  
 village, on the three succeeding mornings, for the  
 purpose of curing all that might apply to him.

This



This he benevolently undertook——at the small expence of *two-pence* a piece.

The next morning, according to his promise, he attended at the pump; whither also repaired many of the country folks, to pay their two-pences, and have all their maladies removed. The operation consisted in taking some of the water in the palm of his hand, as it flowed from the pump, and with it washing the face of each of his patients; which he performed with the requisite dexterity, and much to the satisfaction of his employers.

Simple and trifling as the operation may appear, yet, it is certain, the effects produced were such, that on the following morning, the number of his patients was nearly doubled; and was, on the third morning, so considerably increased, that, satisfied with the event of his experiment, and the quantity of two-pences he had obtained, he retired from the village the following evening——leaving scarcely a dirty face in all Biggleswade.

(7) In the remaining part of the ballad, our heroes are, in my opinion, deservedly ridiculed for their extraordinary pretensions to a most wonderful power indeed, that of transferring the diseases of their patients to themselves. However ridiculous this may appear, it is actually boasted of by these wonderful men.



men. Thus, I have been informed, after attempting the cure of a patient with a diseased leg, the magnetiser has become so lame, as to be obliged to request the assistance of those around him, to enable him to get into his carriage. And that another, after treating the eyes of a patient, complained, that his own eyes were affected to such a degree, as to render it necessary he should be led down stairs.

Now since it is not said, that, in these cases, the disease is destroyed, but only that it is removed from one subject to another; the following questions, highly worthy of discussion, naturally arise. What becomes of the disease at last? Is it by repeated transferrings worn out? or does it continue unaltered and communicable, *ad infinitum*?

In the curious case which I now shall relate, and which came within my own knowledge, it is very difficult to say, in what manner the doctor got rid of the load of wind and water, with which he had so kindly distended his own belly, for the relief of his poor patient. For, if the doctor had, as he pretended, transferred the disease from the patient to himself, he must also have transferred the obstructing cause, which had detained those fluids in the body of his patient:—but what became of them,  
after



after the doctor obtained them, is his business, not mine; and so to my promised case.

A poor man, in the last stage of a dropy, had Dr. ——— sent to him, by the interference of a kind and well meaning friend. The doctor, after asking a few questions, proceeded to the usual operations of *tweedling with his fingers, turning up his eyes, &c.* At the end of about twenty minutes, the doctor unbuttoned his waistcoat, and declared to his patient, he was so filled with the wind and water he had transferred from him, that he could hardly breathe; and must therefore defer the completion of his cure until the next day. The poor patient, extremely regretted the doctor's being brought into so terrible a plight, and was not a little surprised to find—his own belly as full as ever. To render my account of the case complete, I must inform my reader, that the patient, being recommended to the doctor as a *pauper*, did not think of offering a fee;—the doctor came no more to transfer the rest of the water; and in a few days the patient died.

(8) That they are much more disposed to transfer to themselves the purses of their patients, than their diseases, proofs are by no means wanting: but one may suffice, and as the writer of these notes received the following anecdote from a

F

person



person of undoubted honour and veracity, he has thought proper here to introduce it.

A patient, who had been induced by repeated flattering promises of success, to attend regularly for two months, at the house of a practitioner in this way; for the removal of a complaint, which baffled even the united powers of a heated room and warm ale; complained to the doctor of the considerable disappointment and expence he had sustained. The doctor with the utmost benevolence replied, My dear  
 “ friend, I acknowledge your disappointment must  
 “ be very great; and that you have already paid  
 “ *thirty guineas*, without having received the least  
 “ benefit; now, in consideration of these circumstances, I will, in return, give you this—*friendly*  
 “ *advice*. Pay me, at one payment, *twenty-five guineas*, which will entitle you to be taught the principles of our science; whence, you will, in time,  
 “ be enabled to perfect your own cure.” The patient thanked the doctor; and only regretted that his advice had not come two months before.

The assertion contained in this stanza ought, however, to be received with some restrictions; since there are those, who possessing excellent hearts but heated imaginations, have been gulled  
 into



into a belief of the reality of this pretended science, and have become the instruments of those whom the credulity of the public has favoured with handsome fortunes. Even with respect to those who have been so fortunate, as to have reaped considerable advantages by practising this art themselves, or by teaching it to others; we certainly can have no right to suppose them to be actuated by lucrative motives only, unless there be other circumstances, in their conduct, which will authorise such a suspicion. For, although at first thought, we may conceive ourselves justified, in suspecting those of being actuated by improper motives, whom we know to have received the most considerable pecuniary advantages, from this joint offspring of cunning and folly: yet a little reflection will convince us, that it does not necessarily follow, that a man is an impostor, and does not himself believe in that which he teaches to others, because he receives as an emolument, the price of his labours, in communicating that knowledge to the world.

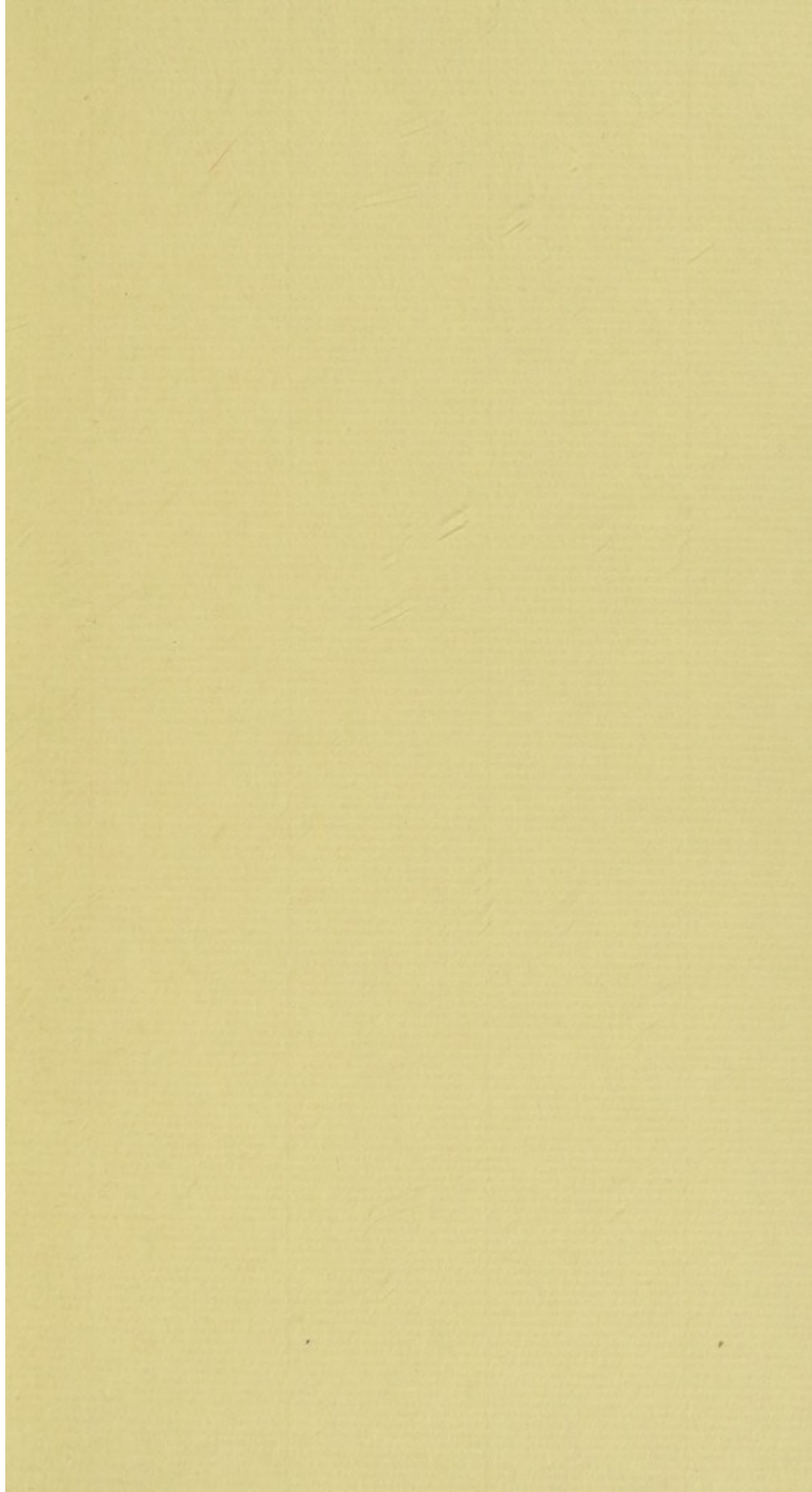
Their disciples, it must be again repeated, are, in general, those whose goodness of heart, and warmth of imagination, have prevented the strict exercise of their judgment. So far from having been influenced by sordid expectations, they have devoted themselves to this pretended science  
with



with the noblest and most benevolent intentions, having generously been at great expence, with the pleasing hope of bestowing on all around them, the invaluable blessing of health.

## THE END.







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