

**MESMERISM IN INDIA,
AND ITS PRACTICAL
APPLICATION IN SURGERY
AND MEDICINE**

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Mesmerism in India, and Its Practical Application in Surgery and Medicine by James Esdaile

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JAMES ESDAILE

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MESMERISM IN INDIA

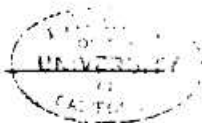
AND ITS

PRACTICAL APPLICATION IN SURGERY
AND MEDICINE.

BY

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"I rather choose to endure the wounds of those darts which envy casteth at novelty,
than to go on safely and sleepily in the easy ways of ancient mistakings.—RALPHSON.



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PREFACE TO THIS EDITION.

There is a frankness, an absence of art, about this book which makes its testimony to the power of mind over matter of double worth. No one may question the facts here recorded. They are FACTS, and they are recorded, as Truth should be, in simple speech.

It may be asked by the non-professional reader if it was necessary to present to the laity this record of the somewhat sickening surgical operations performed painlessly by Dr. Esdaile sixty odd years ago in India.

Our answer is that this is Dr. Esdaile's book, as he wrote it, and as he would wish it to be reprinted were he alive today. It will be very easy for the lay-reader to skip those portions which offend his taste. He will find sufficient other matter in these pages to repay his close attention. The Psychic Research Company has rescued this book from oblivion because it contains the simplest, clearest and most convincing data on the power of the mind to control agonizing pain.

It is nothing that we disagree with Dr. Esdaile touching the nature of the power or force manifested. To Dr. Esdaile the marvel lay in the thing—Mesmerism; in the operator, or mesmerizer. To us this book is clearest evidence of the power that lies in the subject—the mesmerized person. To the author his work was a tribute to the power of a man to help his fellow. To use it is a promise of the time to come when man shall help himself. The full importance of this collection of facts can only be appreciated when we grasp the idea that all the phenomena here produced by mesmerism are capable of reproduction by auto-suggestion. The control of pain; the restoration to health, &c., are effects which man, without the aid of another, can, and some day shall perfectly, accomplish in himself by the power of his own will while he is in a normal waking condition.

Let us honor the man who blazed the path. We have little to do now but cut away the underbrush.

SYDNEY FLOWER,

THE PSYCHIC RESEARCH COMPANY,

Chicago, May, 1902.

ENGLISH EDITOR'S PREFACE.

APPEARING before the public as the Editor of a work on Mesmerism, I trust I may be pardoned for alluding to the circumstances under which I have been called upon to undertake such a duty. Several months ago my brother, a medical officer in the service of the East India Company, surprised me by announcing that he had now found something to dispel the *enigma* of Indian life, and that his mission was to become "the Apostle of Mesmerism in India." More than twelve years ago, my attention had been arrested by reading M. Cloquet's account of his having removed a cancerous breast from a lady while in the mesmeric trance, and by his certifying her insensibility to pain. Knowing the eminence of M. Cloquet as a surgeon, and his reputation as a man of veracity, I was constrained to believe in the reality of the mysterious agent denominated Mesmerism, or Animal Magnetism; and my belief was confirmed by the fact of the operator not being a believer in Mesmerism. From that hour I never doubted that many things, scouted by most people as frauds or delusions, were merely new manifestations of this incomprehensible power. The evidence was so strong, that incredulity seemed irrational. Professional avocations hindered me paying further attention to the subject; and I had almost ceased to think of Mesmerism when it was again unexpectedly brought before me by my brother. Being thoroughly convinced of his honesty, as well as of his ability to detect imposture, I read his communications, transmitted from time to time, with the liveliest interest, and rejoiced to be at length informed that he was about to communicate his experience to the public; and that he relied on my services in seeing his work through the press, and in making any necessary alterations in the MS.

A determination to know the truth, and to afford to others the opportunity of investigating it for themselves, has induced me to read my brother's work with care, and to undertake the responsibility of preparing it for the press. In justice to him I must add, that the only alterations I have made in the MS. have been merely verbal; so that whatever merit is due to the work, either as a literary performance, or a philosophical treatise upon an imperfectly understood branch of science, none of it belongs to me.

While he will be gratified to learn that his literary offspring has assumed so little of the aspect of a changeling, by being transferred to my care, I fear that on another point he will be mortified, and that some

of his readers will share in his regret. His MS. was accompanied by nine beautifully executed drawings, also intended for publication. After consulting with friends interested in Mesmerism, it has been resolved that these drawings shall not be published. They are very striking; but, unfortunately, their very fidelity is a reason for their non-publication, for, assuredly, they are fitted to shock the delicate, who are unaccustomed to witness the fearful ravages of disease on the human frame. Moreover, to publish them would add materially to the price of the work—a result which would frustrate, to some extent at least, the object of the author, who obviously desires that the British public shall have every facility in procuring information regarding the derided science of which, and with such good reason, he is so decided an advocate.

On the probable reception of the work in this country, it may be imprudent to speculate; but I cannot help hoping that the evident honesty of the writer, and his willingness to receive assistance, even from his opponents, in detecting the imposture of Mesmerism, if imposture it be, will conciliate the most incredulous, and induce them calmly to examine a multitude of facts accumulated by a man who has never been suspected to be either a knave or a fool. Every body is alike interested in fair play being afforded to the propounders of the strange facts and theories connected with Mesmerism. It is to be borne in mind, that it may be used for evil as well as for good; and that, if we obstinately refuse even to examine the subject, we expose ourselves, defenceless, to the abuse of a power capable of being perverted to the most nefarious ends. This, perhaps, will not be reckoned a fanciful danger by those who carefully peruse the author's remarks on the singular trial for the abduction of a boy. And if from this case, corroborated by the general impression in India of the frequency of far more detestable crimes, the public arrive at the conviction that Mesmerism is a terrible engine in the hands of a villain, as we have good reason for believing it to be, surely our legislators, who spend laborious nights in perfecting bills of pains and penalties against the felonious abductors of favourite poodles and the various members of the canine race, will see it to be their duty to make the practice of Mesmerism penal, save by regularly educated medical men. If my brother's book does nothing more than arouse the public to a sense of danger, it will not have been written in vain. Small as is my personal experience of Mesmerism, I have yet, with my own hands, done enough to impress me with a profound conviction that, manifold as are the blessings it confers, it must be used with care, and that it is a most formidable source of mischief in the hands of the ignorant and the unprincipled. In a note, in the body of the work, will be found an account of the influence I exerted over a young gentleman in London. I can now relate a still more striking case. When lately inviting a lady to pay me a visit, I thus wrote to her:—"Unbeliever in Mesmerism as you are, I hope to convince you of its reality by setting you asleep." In her reply she observed:—"You will, indeed, find me hard to be convinced; but if you

can procure me refreshing sleep, it will be the greatest blessing, for I have not had a sound sleep for eighteen months." Knowing the anguish she had endured by family bereavements, and that her health was much impaired, a desire to relieve her sufferings made me resolve to try whether she could be brought under the influence of Mesmerism. An opportunity presented itself shortly after her arrival here. On the evening of the 9th of this month (June,) the oppressive heat of the weather rendered her languid; her voice was very rough, and she was evidently labouring under a slight attack of bronchitis. Believing that the inflammation might be subdued by means of Mesmerism, I requested permission to try its efficacy. This having been kindly granted, I subjected her to the usual manipulation for half an hour. She became perfectly placid, but did not fall asleep; she was merely drowsy, and disinclined to rise. No marked symptoms having been exhibited, I concluded that the experiment had failed; but, next morning, I was agreeably surprised to learn that she had passed a most comfortable night, and had slept for seven hours and a half without waking. Her voice also was clear, the expression of languor had left her countenance, and she felt so well that she ventured to dine at the house of a friend, distant three miles from the Manse. Whatever was the cause of the improvement, I was delighted to see my friend evidently better, and resolved again to mesmerise her. On our return from a saunter in the garden, on the evening of the 11th (June,) she lay down on the sofa, waiting the entrance of the servants to prayers. As they happened to be longer in coming than we expected, I said "Suppose I try to mesmerise you?" The reply being "Very well," I commenced my manipulations at five minutes before ten. Before that hour struck, we had the following conversation. "Oh! I am very sleepy." "Do you really think I am exerting any influence over you?" "How can I doubt it? I never felt this way before. I am in a state of the most delightful placidity."—"Why, then, I had better put off the prayers, and keep the house quiet for a little."—"No, no, don't do that. I am very drowsy," and with these words she relinquished the attempt to rise, and sank her head on the pillow. Having slipped out of the room, and ordered no noise to be made, I found her on my return still very somnolent, and, without saying another word, proceeded with my manipulations for twenty minutes. I then spoke, and, receiving no answer, proceeded to get a witness of my subsequent doings. Calling my housekeeper, I said—"Come and try if you can waken Mrs. C: I have mesmerised her, I think." She tried every means so to do, but in vain. Her respect for the lady would not allow her to obey my order to prick her with a pin; I therefore took a sharp-pointed instrument, and pricked her hand till the marks were visible. No uneasiness being manifested, I was now certain that the mesmeric sleep was established, and proceeded to test its intensity by loudly calling, and clapping my hands close to the face of the sleeper. Not a feature moved; and the exquisitely placid countenance of my entranced friend will long live in my memory.

As she was laid on a sofa in the dining-room, I could not permit her to remain there without sitting up all night to watch her, or causing my servants to do so. Circumstances rendering this inconvenient, I proceeded, at 11 o'clock, to demesmerise her. This proved a work of the greatest difficulty: for half an hour I used all the methods resorted to by the mesmerists, but with hardly any success. Being resolved, however, to break in upon her repose, I applied the strongest smelling salts to her nostrils, threw cold water on her face, and blew upon it with a pair of bellows. This rough usage roused her a little; but even after I got her to sit up, she fell helplessly into my arms, and, if let alone, would instantly have been as fast asleep as ever.

On questioning her next morning, she could give no account of what had happened. She only remembered that she lay down, and that I soon made her very drowsy. She acknowledged that I might have done with her whatever I chose, and expressed her conviction that had I amputated a limb, she would have been unconscious of the operation. What a power, then, is this for evil as well as for good! How foolish in people to expose themselves to the machinations of the wicked, by treating Mesmerism as a fraud or a delusion! *It is a fact*, proved by incontestable evidence; and capable of being applied to the relief of suffering humanity, or perverted so as to accomplish the designs of villainy. As a clergyman, I shall be happy to apply it, gratuitously for the relief of the sick, until medical men become convinced of the therapeutic value of Mesmerism, and introduce it into their practice. And for the encouragement of non-professional persons, who, like myself, are anxious to investigate the truth, I am glad to be able to state that a benevolent bishop in England, and his amiable family, are successfully employed in relieving the afflicted; and that my friend Mrs. C. expresses the warmest gratitude for the benefit she has derived from my mesmeric treatment.

The above remarks are for the general reader. I would now respectfully invite the attention of the medical profession to the facts detailed by my brother. He is neither a quack nor an enthusiast, but a regularly educated, truth-loving physician, whose reputation for talent and honesty is unquestionable. The facts he adduces cannot be controverted, and, as I was happy to learn from a medical man just arrived from Hooghly, are admitted both by Europeans and natives, on the spot where they occurred. If he, then, in eight months, has performed no less than seventy-six operations, besides relieving eighteen medical cases, how can medical men in this country justify their heartless apathy in regard to Mesmerism? It is a fact, in the highest degree disgraceful to them, that our doctors will not be persuaded even to try whether their patients can be benefitted by the mesmeric agency. They insist on going on inflicting tortures, without an attempt to ascertain whether they may not be obviated by Mesmerism. The Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London permitted Dr. Copland, without a word of disapprobation, to declare that "pain is a wise pro-