

**HYPNOTISM,  
MESMERISM AND THE  
NEW WITCHCRAFT**

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Hypnotism, Mesmerism and the New Witchcraft by Ernest Hart

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# HYPNOTISM, MESMERISM

AND THE

## NEW WITCHCRAFT

BY

ERNEST HART

FORMERLY SURGEON TO THE WEST LONDON HOSPITAL  
AND OPERATING SURGEON TO ST MARY'S HOSPITAL, LONDON

*WITH 90 ILLUSTRATIONS*

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## PREFACE

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THE papers here brought together have recently appeared in the 'Nineteenth Century' and the 'British Medical Journal,' and are reprinted by permission. They are published to meet the wishes of some who have suggested to me it might prove useful and acceptable that they should be collected into a small volume, and thus become more available for current reference than they would otherwise have been. They were so favourably received at the time of publication that I may venture to hope it is not presumptuous to give them this more permanent shape. Nothing has been written in the way of criticism which seemed to me at all substantial, or to call for any modification of the text; so that while I can hardly hope that their somewhat aggressive tone will pass altogether without disapproval from a certain

school of psychical researchers, yet I may venture to think that they will now, as they did when first published, meet with general acceptance from the medical and scientific world, and that they will serve a useful purpose in dissipating some popular errors and a good deal of pseudo-scientific superstition, superimposed on a slender basis of physiological and pathological phenomena. They may be of some service, also, in unmasking a prevalent system of imposture which had imposed upon a good many journalists and men of literary culture.

ERNEST HART.

38 WIMPOLE STREET, W.

March 1898.

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## HYPNOTISM AND HUMBUG.<sup>1</sup>

*The Attraction of the Unknown—The Early History of Mesmerism—  
Some Control-experiments—Natural Sleep and Hypnotic Sleep—  
Hypnotism of Animals—The Follies of Telepathy and of  
'Animal Magnetism.'*

THE unknown has always had a great attraction for every class of mind, and whoever promises to lift for us the veil of the mysterious and to afford us a glimpse into the unknown world may always count upon a large following. It is the infirmity of great minds as of small. The poet, the mystic, the imaginative philosopher, share its higher privileges; the charlatan, the quack, and the stage performer, its greater profits. There is one phase of the pursuit of the unknown, and one method of manipulating it, which has had the privilege of exciting the interest and inflaming the imagination of mankind in all periods of history, in every phase of civilisation, and in every part of the world; probably even amongst prehistoric peoples, and certainly amongst aboriginal savages. It is the endeavour to search out hidden forces and mysterious qualities of the mind—to

<sup>1</sup> An Address delivered in Toynbee Hall.

discover other methods of transmitting mental impressions than those of sight, speech, and touch; other avenues than those of the five senses; and other means of mental influence than those everywhere known and visible. It is with this quest, and with some of its ancient vestiges and strange modern developments, that I purpose to deal. Hypnotism, which is now the subject of much intelligent and well-directed modern research, and is also, unfortunately, the plaything of a class of wandering stage performers, is the lineal descendant of many ancient beliefs. It was known to the earliest races of Asia and amongst the Persian Magi; and to this day the Yogis and Fakirs of India throw themselves into a state of hypnotic ecstasy and reverie by fixation of gaze. In many convents of the Greek Church it has been practised since the eleventh century, as it is still by the Omphalopsychics, by whom hypnotic reverie is obtained by steadily gazing at the umbilicus. Modern hypnotism, meamerism, telepathy, animal magnetism, thought-reading, or thought-transference, are of the family which in earlier times, and when men were less wont to analyse natural phenomena by rational methods, brought forth the practices of the Magians, the antics of the demoniacs and the possessed, the expulsion of evil spirits by exorcism, the healing of the king's-evil by laying on of hands, the serious acceptance and judicial punishment of the hallucinations of the witches, and the fantastic cruelty of