

**HUMBUGS OF NEW-YORK:
BEING A REMONSTRANCE
AGAINST POPULAR DELUSION;
WHETHER IN SCIENCE,
PHILOSOPHY, OR RELIGION**

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Humbugs of New-York: Being a Remonstrance Against Popular Delusion; Whether in Science, Philosophy, or Religion by David Meredith Reese

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REMONSTRANCE

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WHETHER IN

SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, OR RELIGION.

BY

DAVID MEREDITH REESE, M. D.

*"An idol is nothing; and error is nothing; but these notions are the most dangerous things in the world."
"He that is careful of himself was not made for the public."*

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TO
THE CONSTITUTED GUARDIANS
OF THE
PUBLIC HEALTH, PUBLIC MORALS, AND PUBLIC PEACE;

AND ESPECIALLY

To all Instructors of Youth,

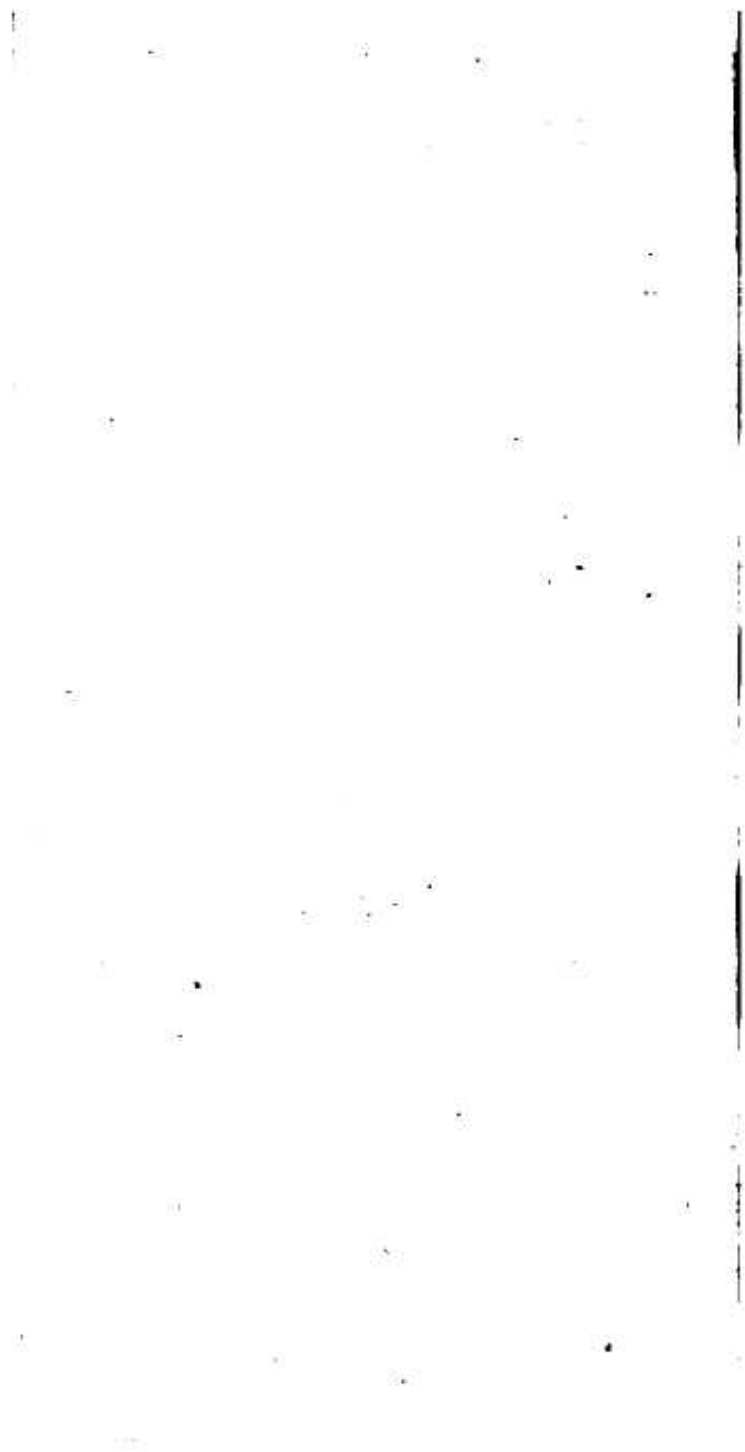
THIS HUMBLE ATTEMPT TO FURNISH A CORRECTIVE

TO THE

PREVAILING FANATICISM OF THE DAY,

IS RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



Gift
Tappan Press, Ass
2-23-1932

P R E F A C E .

THE quaint, and, in the estimate of fastidious critics, the vulgar term which is employed upon the title page of this work may, in the opinion of many readers, be exceptionable; and by such, an apology for its use may be expected. While the partisans of each of the sects, — in science, philosophy, and religion, — which have been chosen for animadversion, may loudly protest against the profanation of their favourite study, or chosen occupation, by classifying it with the *Humbugs* of the day. Believers in the “celestial science of Animal Magnetism,” for example, will be shocked at the high handed wickedness of placing them on a level with the deluded victims of Ultra-Abolitionism; — while the disciples of the latter delusion will be so outraged in their pious feelings, at being classed with the former, that they will anathematize the author, for having “named the two in the same day;” and still worse for having given their “hobby” so conspicuous a place in this gallery of humbugs. Indeed it is possible that those who have become the dupes of either of the impostures which are the subjects of the present volume, while they have not yet swallowed the rest, will admit the justice of the homely epithet by which all the others are designated, and only complain of its inappropriateness to themselves, or their creed. So that it is plain, from these and the like reflections, that in ushering this volume into the world, the author can expect little mercy, or quarter, from that portion of the public, who have already been ensnared among the victims of

the impostures upon popular credulity, which he here reprobates, and condemns. *Their* fanaticism may be, and probably is, incurable by human means; but it is with the uninitiated, and unsophisticated portion of the community, — with the rising generation especially, — that he hopes to be successful, in *preventing* what he might otherwise fail to remedy.

In explanation of the employment of the inelegant phrase, “humbug,” as the qualifying epithet for each of the subjects herein described, the author would allege its singular appropriateness, and its conventional use; as well as the authority of Noah Webster, that veteran lexicographer, who defines this word to signify “an imposture.” By this latter synonyme, we understand any system of science, philosophy, or religion, which “seems to be what it is not.” And when such a system is found to “steal away men’s brains,” by ingenious sophisms and false logic; or by its appeals to the corrupt and baser passions of the shallow thinkers, who abound in every community; or in any other way intoxicating the “weak sisters and female brethren,” whose intellectual imbecility renders them an easy prey to delusion; such an imposture is surely, by way of eminence, entitled to be called a humbug. The greater the sanctimonious pretensions of those who practise upon the popular credulity; — the louder their professions of superlative or exclusive humanity, philosophy, or religion; — the more marvellous and supernatural the signs, wonders, and discoveries, of which they proclaim themselves the inventors and proprietors, the more dangerous and mischievous they are to the public, and the greater reason there is that they should be detected and exposed.

But while each of the parties criticised in the present work may complain of being described as the dupes to their chosen humbug, there are more who will be disappointed that so few species of the

genus are named, out of the great multitude of reigning humbugs with which our city and country abounds. And to such the author would say that he has only introduced a few of the more prominent species; because neither his leisure, nor the limits of this single volume would suffice, for a more extended investigation; though he is aware that there are multiplied examples of popular delusion, which are perhaps equally entitled to animadversion, and equally to be deprecated. He has, however, been careful to introduce the most successful, and the most mischievous among the reigning impostures; — and especially those, to assault which requires either great moral courage, or entire indifference to personal vituperation. Of the former, the author is ashamed to confess, he has too little; and for the goodly portion of the latter, which he has acquired, he is indebted to the experience he has derived by former conflicts with the votaries of some of these, and the like flagitious humbugs. And having here encountered the most formidable of the tribe, and exposed himself to the running fire of the whole phalanx of the most prominent impostors and their dupes; when he shall have outlived their combined resentment, he may possibly gather time and strength for volume No. 2, in the same series, after volume No. 1, shall have done its work. Meanwhile should another and an abler hand extend favour to the benevolent object of this work, by expostulation with the American public against being devoured by imported fanaticism, and transatlantic humbug, such an author would, if successful, be indeed a public benefactor. He would deserve the thanks of every patriot, philanthropist, and Christian, throughout this land; and he would receive this reward from all such, as are not already engulfed in the vortex of popular frenzy and enthusiasm.

The present humble effort, it is devoutly hoped, will contribute to encourage the preparation of a more ample and elaborate work, from some of those statesmen, philosophers, philanthropists, or