

THE RATIONALE OF MESMERISM

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The Rationale of Mesmerism by A. P. Sinnett

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THE RATIONALE OF MESMERISM

BY

A. P. SINNETT

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"KARMA," ETC., ETC.



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. OLD AND NEW THEORIES	1
II. THE MESMERIC FORCE	23
III. THE REAL LITERATURE OF MESMERISM	36
IV. SIDE-LIGHTS ON MESMERIC PHENOMENA	85
V. CURATIVE MESMERISM	104
VI. ANESTHETIC EFFECTS AND RIGIDITY	128
VII. THE NATURE OF SENSITIVENESS	140
VIII. CLAIRVOYANCE	168
IX. MESMERIC PRACTICE	214
INDEX	229

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

THE
RATIONALE OF MESMERISM.

CHAPTER I

OLD AND NEW THEORIES.

It is necessary at the outset that I should explain why I am writing about mesmerism and not about hypnotism. Names are, after all, but tickets put by conventional agreement upon things or branches of knowledge, and if, in the first instance, a hundred years ago, when the matter began to attract notice in Europe, the word "hypnotism" had been adopted to describe certain abnormal conditions of the human body and the human faculties, we need not, at this stage of the proceedings, have quarreled with the expression. But, though it has become so strangely popular quite recently, the term "hypnotism" merely represents, as regards its actual origin, a misconception of the facts

2 THE RATIONALE OF MESMERISM.

relating to the abnormal conditions just mentioned, coupled with a very unworthy disposition to slander the first important exponent of all this knowledge in modern times and to cover a cowardly retreat from denials which had become no longer tenable.

In so far as the term "hypnotism" is consciously preferred by some modern investigators, that preference rests on the idea that the earlier belief in the days when nothing of the kind was spoken of except "mesmerism," has been shown by later experience to be scientifically erroneous. The early belief was that something in the nature of a subtle fluid passed from the mesmeric operator to the subject; whereas some experimentalists of the modern school have ascertained that results alleged to have been obtained by mesmerism can be brought about where no operator takes part in the undertaking. Some people by simply working for themselves apparatus of a suitable sort, by gazing, for example, at the rapid flashes of a revolving mirror, or by merely concentrating their attention on a spot of bright light, will be enabled to bring on a certain abnormal, or shall we say cataleptic, condition of their nerves, which will in its turn superinduce