

THE NATURE OF MIND AND HUMAN AUTOMATISM

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The nature of mind and human automatism by Morton Prince

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MORTON PRINCE

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BY

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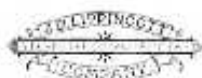
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PREFACE.

THE basis of the following work was written some eight or nine years ago during my student days at the medical school, and afterwards served as a graduation thesis. Having been urged to publish this thesis by my friends, it was enlarged between two and three years ago to its present size. I do not think that the views expressed in the earlier essay have been changed in any important particular, though the phrasology has been in many passages altered, partly to make it harmonize with the conventional forms of expression used generally by writers on this subject, and partly because mature reflection made me aware that some of the original terms and phrases employed either did not correctly explain my meaning, or were lacking in precision and consequently capable of different interpretations. Many points which were of necessity merely touched upon in the earlier essay and hence liable to misinterpretation, have been since greatly expanded, and, especially in the chapter on "Self-Determination," explained more fully, extended reasons being given for the conclusions expressed. The final chapter, on "Materialism," has been entirely added. As I have pursued my studies on this subject, the views of other writers have been so far incorporated and criticised as has been thought would make the subject-matter clearer.

The primary object of this book is to discuss certain problems of mind and matter—particularly the relation between the mind and the brain—simply as questions of psychology and physiology, without regard to the bearing they may have on philosophical doctrines. Still, all such questions lie so deeply at the root of the latter, that it is impossible to discuss the one without regarding the effect they have upon the other. Hence I have not hesitated to enter into the doctrine of Materialism so far as it is affected by the conclusions arrived at. Such questions as the relation of the mind to the body constitute the foundation of Spiritualism and Materialism. The latter, as a result of the great advancement which has been made by science during the last half-century, has of recent years awakened renewed interest and discussion. This has been directly due in no small degree to the writings of such men, among others, as Spencer, Huxley, Clifford, and Maudsley, in England, Vogt, Moleschott, and Büchner, in Germany, who, whether all of them have espoused materialistic opinions or not, have at any rate given new energy to the materialistic school, and aroused the opposition of the anti-materialists. It is not always easy, however, to correctly classify many prominent writers, as so much that is directly contradictory is found in their writings. It is not uncommon to read on one page that a given author emphatically denies materialism, and on the next to find what is apparently the most pronounced materialism. But, notwithstanding the strong ground on which it is intrenched, and the great help which it has received from science, materialism has met with strong opposition. Its oppo-

nents, it must be confessed, have made their attacks from all sides, with considerable vigor, and effectively brought to bear arguments based on philosophy and science. And yet, in spite of all its short-comings, materialism is essentially the philosophy of science, and hence that which must eventually prevail. All attacks against it have served only to show its weak places, not to break it down. Still, it cannot be denied that some of the objections urged against such forms of materialism as have been maintained by even its ablest advocates have been well founded. This, it seems to me, has not been the fault of the doctrine, but rather of its expounders. Not only have false meanings been attributed to it by its opponents, but even its advocates have not always understood its first principles, and the conclusions which have been drawn from scientific data have sometimes been directly in contradiction to the teachings of experience. Whatever merit the views advocated in the following pages may have, it is to be hoped that they at least harmonize some of the hitherto conflicting theories and facts, and that the really valid objections to materialism are avoided. In the maintenance of the materialistic nature of mind, certain difficulties have almost universally been recognized, especially on the side of "automatism," "self-determination," and in the application of the law of the Correlation of Forces, etc., which it has been difficult to overcome. Nay, more, while it has been seen that mind is to be regarded as some sort of "manifestation of matter," yet most writers are ready to admit the impossibility of explaining the exact connection between the two, and confess an insoluble mystery. Many of

the most thoroughgoing materialists content themselves with stating the intimate union of the mental and physical worlds, without attempting to explain *how* they are united. The views maintained in the following pages, it is thought, both overcome these difficulties and furnish a satisfactory explanation of many of the mysteries of the mind, including its relation to the body and other kindred questions. The conclusions expressed as to the nature of the mind avoid, I believe, the objections which have proved fatal to other materialistic doctrines.

There is one writer whose writings I regret to have overlooked until long after this work was completed, and a short time before going to press. I refer to the late Professor Clifford, who, so far as I know, is the only writer whose views on the relation of the mind to the body coincide with those expressed in these pages. I regret that it was not practicable to refer to Clifford's writings more fully in the text, but references have been made in foot-notes when there appeared to be reason for doing so.

The original essay was withheld from print during these many years for several reasons, not the least among them being the desire to reflect well on so difficult a subject, which has already baffled some of the ablest minds the world has ever produced, before committing myself to a public expression of opinion. But I may add that continued study and maturer thought has only strengthened me in the views originally formed.

BOSTON, March, 1885.

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