

MESMERISM THE GIFT OF GOD:

IN REPLY TO

“Satanic Agency and Mesmerism,”

A SERMON

SAID TO HAVE BEEN PREACHED

BY THE REV. HUGH McNEILE:

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND

BY A BENEFICED CLERGYMAN.

“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”—Luke xviii. 27.

G. S.

LONDON :

WILLIAM EDWARD PAINTER, 342, STRAND.

Price Threepence.

1843.

7 1

1 1

MESMERISM THE GIFT OF GOD :

&c.

London, June, 1843.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You are aware that my attention has lately been directed to a Sermon, published in the *Penny Pulpit*, and actively circulated through the country, entitled "Satanic Agency and Mesmerism," and alleged to have been preached in Liverpool by the Rev. Hugh M'Neile.

This sermon is not published under the authority, or with the consent of Mr. M'Neile, and so far he is not responsible ; but inasmuch as its publication and sale are matters of general notoriety, and that application having been made to him from a highly respectable quarter for a disavowal of its contents, though he did not acknowledge them, as he took no steps to deny them ; and as we are informed that the short-hand writer, from whose notes this sermon was printed, is prepared to make an affidavit of the accuracy of his report, I am led to believe that some such a sermon, in the same, or nearly similar language, was *actually* preached by Mr. M'Neile.

Now a sermon put forth with the *prestige* of such a name, however unfairly and unwarrantably made use of, certainly deserves every respectful consideration. The number, moreover, of Mr. M'Neile's admirers, and the zeal* with which they distribute this publication among the thoughtful and the religious, give additional importance to its contents ; and when it has come to my own knowledge that several parties have been prevented from adopting or witnessing the curative effects of Mesmerism, through scruples of conscience raised by this very discourse, I was prepared to bestow upon it a much more careful perusal than intrinsically it deserved.

Believing, then, as I do most fully, that Mesmerism is a mighty remedial agent, mercifully vouchsafed by the beneficent Creator for

* My readers may judge of the activity with which anti-Mesmerists and their emissaries circulate this sermon, when they learn that some thousand copies have been sold, and a reprint called for.

the mitigation of human misery—a remedy to be employed, like every other remedy, prayerfully, thankfully, and with a humble dependence on the will of Him who sent the chastisement, and can alone remove it; having daily reason, too, to bless God for the introduction of this very remedy within the circle of my own family, it is difficult for me to express the amazement, the regret, the feelings akin to something like shame, with which I first read this most deplorable publication. And knowing the delusion under which so many labour on this question—a delusion which, as the natural result of the vulgarest ignorance and superstition, the unfortunate language of this sermon has tended so greatly to foster, I feel it to be nothing short of a sacred Christian duty laid upon me to use my endeavours to lessen the error. And if these few pages should be the means of removing the prejudices of but one family, or of alleviating the pains of but one afflicted sufferer, through his adoption of the Mesmeric power, the knowledge of it would give me a gratification, which I would not exchange for all the eloquence and popularity of Mr. M'Neile.

In writing, therefore, in behalf of Mesmerism, in opposition to the views of Mr. M'Neile, I hope to secure an indulgent hearing by stating that I am neither Deist, Materialist, nor Rationalist; that I belong to no school of philosophy, “falsely so called,” but am a humble, though I fear, unprofitable Christian. Nay, not only am I a believer in the same Gospel with Mr. M'Neile, but a member and minister in the same Church, entertaining nearly the same doctrinal views, adopting nearly the same Scriptural interpretations, and holding certainly in equal abhorrence with himself everything of an irreligious and infidel character. I think it desirable to state thus much, though, unfortunately, of an egotistical character, because the prejudices of many pious and well-meaning persons have unhappily connected the practice or belief of Mesmerism with antichristian or Deistical views.

To much, therefore, of the former part of this sermon no Scriptural reader can offer any objection. Where it presents from the Bible a digest of the evidence for Satanic agency, and of the condition of the fallen angels, and of their power over the race of man; where their fearful spiritual influence on our depraved nature and deceitful hearts is laid bare in all its deformity; to all this the well-instructed Christian tremblingly subscribes. When, therefore, Mr. M'Neile is alleged to state, “not only that there did exist such a thing as Satanic agency, but that it continued to exist after the incarnation of Christ; that it continued to exist amongst men after the resurrection of Christ; that it is predicted to exist until the second coming of Christ;” to all these and similar positions I am not prepared to express any dissent. But when, from these premises, he goes on to assert, that certain peculiar facts, recorded in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, and of the reality of which he does not appear to doubt, are, “beyond all question, beyond the course of nature,” or, in other words, supernatural and the result of some miraculous or diabolical agency, what thinking mind does not see that such a conclusion is most illogical and absurd? Is there no other alternative? Is nothing else possible? Is nothing

else probable? Before so strong and momentous a decision were thus peremptorily pronounced, should not a fair and candid man at least stoop to enquire, to investigate, to consider calmly, whether some better explanation were not admissible? Should a lover of truth—should a friend to whatever might alleviate suffering humanity, thus hastily and, *ex cathedra*, deliver an adverse opinion upon a science which, to say the least, is at present only in its infancy? If we cannot admire the reasoning faculty that this sermon evinces, can we, on the other hand, praise its charity? “In forming a judgment of this (says Mr. M’Neile), I go, of course, on what I have read. *I have seen nothing of it*, nor do I think it right to tempt God by going to see it. I have not faith to go in the name of the Lord Jesus and to command *the Devil* to depart.” Really, any one would suppose that he were reading the ignorant ebullition of some dark monk in the middle ages, rather than the sentiments of an educated Protestant of the nineteenth century. What is this but a revival of the same spirit that called forth a papal anathema against the profound Galileo? What, but an imitation of the same objections which pronounced the doctrine of Antipodes as incompatible with the faith, and maintained that the theory of Columbus threw discredit on the Bible? Verily, the University of Salamanca, which opposed the dogged resistance of theological objections to the obscure Genoese, and the Inquisition at Rome, that condemned the philosopher of Pisa, might claim a kindred associate in the minister of St. Jude’s! For, according to Mr. M’Neile, Mesmerism must be “nothing but human fraud for gain sake,” or something “beyond the power of *unassisted* man to accomplish.” Is my brother-divine, then, so intimately versed in all the mighty secrets of Nature? Has he so thoroughly fathomed her vast and various recesses, that he ventures to pronounce everything that may be contrary to, or beyond his own knowledge and experience, as the invention of evil spirits, or the contrivance of evil men? Is there nothing new to be discovered? Are the regions of light and life exhausted and laid bare? Have we at last reached the *ultima thule* of art and science? “*It is not in nature* for any one to bear to be so treated,” says Mr. M’Neile, authoritatively; introducing at the same time and in the midst of the same sentence this evasive and contradictory exception, “*so far as we have yet learned.*” And having previously assumed the sinfulness of Mesmerism, and rather regretted that he had not “the faith to bid the *Devil* to depart,” he again goes on, and says “*there may be some power in nature.....* some secret operation..... some latent power in nature, which is now being discovered..... something like the power of compressed steam..... or like electricity.” *Why*, this is the very point in question. This is the very subject of the controversy. This is the very fact which the large and increasing body of believers in Mesmerism confidently assert. And “if there *may* be such a power in nature,” why does he prematurely denounce it as diabolical, and the act of Satan, before the truth has been fairly and fully established? Why not wait, and examine, and patiently and prayerfully study the statements, the experiments, and the results that present themselves, and with a serious thinking spirit

revolve the evidence of the whole matter, and say whether perchance it may not be the "gift of God" (Eccl. iii. 13). "Be not rash with thy mouth (says the royal preacher), and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few" (Eccl. v. 2). Surely it were the part of a wise and sober Christian, who remembereth that "nothing is impossible with God," to weigh a great and curious question like this in a humble posture of mind, and not rashly to pronounce of his fellow-men, who, for their faith and their attainments in grace, may, for aught he knows, be as acceptable with the Saviour as himself, that they are agents and instruments of the evil one! Washington Irving* tells us, that when Petro Gonzales de Mendoza, Archbishop of Toledo and Grand Cardinal of Spain, became first acquainted with the views of Columbus, he feared that they were tainted with heterodoxy, and incompatible with the form of earth described in sacred Scripture. But we read, that "farther explanations had their force," and "he perceived that there could be nothing irreligious in attempting to extend the bounds of human knowledge, and to ascertain the works of creation;" and the great cardinal therefore gave the obscure navigator a "courteous and attentive hearing." It would ill become an anonymous writer like myself to utter one word of disparagement against so experienced a minister as Mr. M'Neile. I have listened with too great pleasure to his "reasonings on righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come," to permit any depreciatory language to escape from me; but he must bear with me when I add, that with all his eloquence and power, he might find a wholesome lesson for improvement in the example of this great Roman Catholic prelate, when listening to the novel theories of the unknown Columbus. But with one breath to say, that there *may* "be such a power in nature," and with another to describe men, who simply make use of that power, as those who deal with "familiar spirits," does appear the most monstrous instance of inconsistent condemnation we ever met with; it is a begging the whole question with a vengeance; it is a summary judgment without appeal; it is a decision affecting papal infallibility. And yet this competent jurymen says, "*I have seen nothing of it*, nor do I think it right to tempt God by going to see it."

Apropos of "seeing nothing of it!" The minister of St. Jude's is not the only party who shrinks from this evidence of his senses. He says, that in these reported cases there must be either collusion or something supernatural; but he evidently adheres to the latter opinion, for he adds afterwards, "and if, *as I judge*, there be anything *supernatural* in it;" and he only regrets that he has not faith to play the part of exorciser and bid the devil depart; and from want of this faith refuses to be present. But there are members of a learned, aye and liberal body, from whom we might expect better things. In that profession which is alike distinguished for its humanity, its ability, its love of science, its love of truth, its large and comprehensive philosophy, it is

* "Life of Columbus," vol. i., book 2.

to be hoped that the far greater number would be ready to give, even to the hateful study of Mesmerism, the benefit of a faithful and dispassionate enquiry. We are sure that there are many who would cheerfully admit that the field of usefulness is enlarged by it, and the means of lessening human ills considerably extended. We know that there are several, who, at the risk of damaging their worldly prospects, do not hesitate to step forward fearlessly and manfully, as believers in, and practisers of, the calumniated science. At the head of this noble and independent band, first and foremost stands the name of ELLIOTSON—a tower of strength in itself, and alone able to confer distinction on any cause, however honourable. From among the *younger* members of the profession there are to be found many zealous and talented men following in his train, anxiously devoting their attention to the study, gathering facts as they arise, and prepared to employ their aid among the means of cure at their disposal. *O si sic omnes!* For there are others, who, to judge from their language, would seem to have the same horror at being witnesses of Mesmeric phenomena as the bat has at the approach of *light*. These striking facts they either include under the insolent charge of “fraud,” or the more courteous and convenient phrase of “imagination.” They sneer or smile when the subject is brought forward, according to their own turn of mind, or rather according to the temper of those with whom they argue. But to be *present*, to have their names bruited about as testimonies of a fact—to be unable to resist their own convictions, to be unable to remain in the bliss of ignorance, this is a position from which they fall back with a secret dread of approaching danger. They can be sharp-sighted enough in detecting narrowness of spirit in any other quarter, advocates for freedom of conscience in theology, ameliorators of our criminal code in matters of jurisprudence, liberal, tolerant, and haters of abuse; but the moment that Mesmeric phenomena are proposed as auxiliaries to their practice, that instant they are as sensitive, as angry, as staunch adherents of what is old—as stout opponents of what is new, as though the charter and privileges of their order were being jeopardied for ever! Doubtless, in all experiments of a strange and novel character, the public do expect from the medical profession the most cautious, slow, and deliberate frame of mind. They expect from their closer cognizance of subjects of this nature the most searching, scrutinizing, hesitating conduct. Nay, they would not even be displeased to see an enquiry carried on in a sceptical, unbelieving spirit. But still they *do* expect enquiry of some kind: they do not expect to see a subject of this important nature treated with the vulgarest vituperation and ridicule; its supporters stigmatized as credulous, its operators defamed as fraudulent, its patients mocked at as impostors. They do not expect to see the heads of a profession which piques itself pre-eminently on its liberality, exhibiting the bigotry of the priest, and the special pleading of the lawyer. Look, for instance, at what took place a few years back at the London University. Often is the world invited to sneer at the blind prejudices that disfigure the banks of the Isis; but in spite of all the faults of Alma Mater, in spite of all her past and present

absurdities, I am ready to contrast her conduct on a memorable occasion with the intolerance and hatred of novelty that recently marked the more modern institution. Are the circumstances under which Locke was expelled from Christ Church one whit more disgraceful than the treatment which induced Dr. Elliotson to withdraw his name from the Professorship in the University of London? Was the temple of science more liberal than the hall of logic? Was the new foundation more friendly to enlightened investigations than the old? In the ancient seat of learning, the timidity or servility of a Dean and Chapter expunged the name of the philosopher from the books of his college at the mandate of an arbitrary sovereign; but the vacancy in the Professor's chair was the result of an opposition to physiological experiments on the part of *soi-disant* friends to free and scientific enquiry. Turn again to the proceedings of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society. See the alarmed and almost frantic feelings with which certain parties discussed the memorable account of the amputation of a thigh during the patient's Mesmeric state. See how anxious they were to put the matter down, and bury the facts in oblivion. A Bible thrown into a Spanish convent could not have more convulsed its inmates than did this unfortunate treatise that learned assembly. Mr. Topham has much to answer for. One * great medical reviewer declared that he would not believe the facts had he witnessed them himself. A leading and pre-eminent operator, whose praise is at this moment in all our mouths, expressed his perfect satisfaction with the condemnatory reports made by others, and *par consequent* the needlessness that he should *be present and examine them himself!* Really, in passing through the account of this debate, in noting the anxiety of certain members to expunge all record of the proceedings from their minute book, I could have fancied that I was reading the discussions of a knot of mendicant friars terrified at the dawn of the Reformation; I felt myself transplanted, as it were, into the Vatican, where was a letter from Luther, frightening the holy conclave from its propriety. All the time that I was reading the speeches of certain opponents, there kept involuntarily rising up in my mind the outcry of Demetrius, the Ephesian silversmith, "Our craft is in danger to be set at nought; and, sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth" (Acts xix. 25, 27). One would suppose that these gentlemen would remember the treatment of Harvey by the profession, the "*Circulator*," as he was termed by them; the averted eye that at first was turned on Jenner; and the disbelief with which many great and mighty discoveries have been received, and be more cautious and circumspect for the future. Oh! if a love of ancient usages—if a hatred of new and unpalatable truths is to bear away the bell, Oxford may now hide her diminished head, Salamanca "pale her uneffectual fires," the doctors of the Sorbonne part with their old pre-eminence, for competitors are stepping in from the "liberal professions," able and willing to take the lead. And yet we are all aware of the sarcasms with which "the faculty" and

* See Elliotson's "Numerous Cases," &c.

the "philosophers" treat the "learned ignorance" of the clergy, and their presumed dislike to scientific enquiry; and perhaps we are too often a fair subject for such animadversion, more especially if many such sermons, as the one under discussion, are delivered by us; but I can tell "the profession" in return, that I should have more hope of bringing home a new and important truth to the minds of an ignorant and superstitious peasantry than of combating successfully the bigotry of the philosopher, and the prejudices of an educated and scientific assembly.

But to return to Mr. M'Neile. After certain criticising observations, as to the scientific character of some Mesmeric proceedings, on which we will speak presently, he refers to the well-known "magnetic experiment" of the operation for a cancer in France, which a lady underwent without feeling any pain in its progress, and mentions it as "recorded in a report made by the Committee of the Royal Academy at Paris." And so determined is he to discover the evil spirit at work in the business, that he says—"If this be a falsehood, there is something almost *supernatural in the fact*, that we have a whole academy joining to tell the public this lie. If it be a truth, if the fact be so, then here, beyond all question, is something *out of the range of nature—out of the present power of man*, unless this is a new science." In this age of discoveries and marvels, surely a thinking mind need not deem it so very incredible, that some large addition to scientific knowledge, or even a "new science," as he calls it, should be brought to light. We have of late seen so many of the wonders of God's providence made manifest to our view—wonders, of whose existence our forefathers had not the shadow of a suspicion, that the Christian, while he contemplates them all with thankfulness and awe, might rather be expected to adopt the apostolic language, and say, "*we know but in part*," and we "*see but through a glass darkly*." "Lo! (said the patient Job, while he was acknowledging the power of God to be infinite and unsearchable)—lo, these are *parts* of his ways; but how *little a portion* is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" (xxvi. 14). But, says Mr. M'Neile, on the contrary, "*we know* what sleep is, and *we know* what pain is?" Does he, indeed, "*know*" what sleep is! Is he so accurate a physiologist that he is acquainted with all its varieties, its appearances, its modifications and actions, according to the changes and conditions of the human frame? Does he too "*know*" what pain is? Is he so deeply read in pathology that he is prepared to state unerringly its effect upon the body of man under every possible contingency? Why he himself says—"We *do not know* all the properties of matter certainly, and there *may* be some occult property in matter which these men have discovered, and which may have the effect, when applied to the human frame, of rendering it *insensible* to pain." Again, I say, this is the point at issue. Why may there not be such an "occult property in matter," the beneficent "gift of God" for the use of his creature man, without calling up diabolical machinery to explain the difficulty? In an admonition that he gives to the medical profession, he quotes Shakespeare, and begs respectfully to suggest to them, that there are "more things in heaven

and earth than are dreamt of in their philosophy.” *They* might, with a beautiful propriety, fling back upon him his own quotation, and request him to apply it to this very question. A Christian minister, however, would rather go to the inspired volume, and say—“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words *without knowledge*. Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.....Have the *gates of death* been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Hast thou perceived the *breadth of the earth*? Declare, if thou *knowest it all*. Where is the way where light dwelleth?—and as for darkness, where is the place thereof? That thou shouldst take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldst know the paths to the house thereof?” (Job xxxviii. 3, &c.) The Almighty Father, whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways past finding out, hath hidden from the curious eyes of man the reasons and explanations of many of his gifts, and left us to grope ignorantly in the dark upon subjects the most familiar, and which are for ever present around us. But is this outside and superficial acquaintance with the works of nature to shut out from our remembrance the ever-present agency of the hand of God? To condemn Mesmerism as an abomination of the devil, because little or nothing is yet known respecting it, is a line of argument, which, if pressed to its absurd conclusion, would ascribe half the wonders of creation to the care and contrivance of the spirit of evil. What, for instance, is our life—the bodily life of man? In what does it consist? What is its immediate and secondary cause? What produces it—what terminates it—what gives it vitality and continuance? I believe that the best physiologists are not prepared with any positive opinion on the matter. Some consider (and with great show of probability) Electricity to be analogous to the principle of life. Some consider Electricity to be *the* principle of life. We are aware that all nature abounds with electric matter—it is here and everywhere; perchance, under God, in it we “live and move and have our being.” We hear of Galvinism, and Magnetic-eletricity, or Electro-magnetism, and its efficacy, through machines, upon the human body, in relieving paralysis, and rheumatism, and different neuralgic disorders. Why might not Mesmerism, or Animal-magnetism, as it would appear to be appropriately called, be Electricity under a different character? Its results are often the same, or rather very similar. Why might not the electric fluid of the operator unite itself under various modifications with the electric fluid of the patient, and thus act with a curative influence upon the principle of life within us? It is Mr. McNeile himself, who in this sermon has referred to Electricity, and to the shock of the Galvanic battery; and I would, therefore, just remind him, that in the study of this very subject there is yet much darkness; that there is yet much to learn; that we do not yet know how far its action is connected with the principle of life—and certainly we would defy him to prove that Mesmerism or Animal-magnetism is not an essential portion of the system.

And this brings us to Mr. M'Neile's main argument, upon which he appears to plume himself most confidently, for he repeats it over and over again under various phases:—"I would wish (says he) that the professors of this science should state the *laws of nature* by the *uniform action* of which this thing is done.....Let them put forward the elements of the science in a scientific manner.....It belongs to philosophers, who are honest men, and who make any discovery of this kind, to state the uniform action.....We hear of these experiments—but hear nothing of a scientific statement of the laws.....Let us have the laws of the science.....I consider that no Christian person ought to go near any of these meetings, or *hear any of these lectures*, until a statement shall be made, grounded on a scientific assertion of the laws by which this thing is said to act." And so on *passim* to the end of the sermon.

Now this argument, perseveringly as it is repeated, may be disposed of very easily.

First, in regard to his demand, that "the laws of this science be stated" clearly and "in a scientific manner." To this there can be no objection. This is a just and legitimate challenge. Nay, we would say in his own words, "Science is open and above-board to all who will examine it—it courts examination; let us not listen to it, so long as they keep it secret, and hide the nature of it." True, most true. But who keeps it a secret? Who hides the nature of it? The believers in Mesmerism are earnestly solicitous that the most open, public, free, and full examination of the subject and its details should be constantly taking place. They invite its enemies and impugnors to be present. They call upon the most prejudiced and the most partial to come with their prejudices and partialities, and witness *facts*. All they require, on the other hand, is an honest and candid conclusion out of an "honest and good heart." But are Mesmerists to be blamed for not stating the laws and principles of this system, when they do not know them themselves? Does Mr. M'Neile remember, that Mesmerism is yet but in its cradle? That, *practically*, it has been but little known except within a few short years? In saying this, we are of course aware, that those who have looked farthest into the question, maintain that for centuries back, the Egyptians, and, perhaps the Chinese, have been acquainted with it; and that, at intervals, it has been always more or less known. To me the great wonder is, that an art within the reach of everybody, should have remained so long a secret; however, the fact is, that publicly and philosophically the system has only been recently studied. At this very moment, numbers of cautious observant men are noting down facts as they arise, with a view to a safe and surer conclusion. On the great Baconian system of induction, they are recording the experiments, the variations, the modifications, as they present themselves; and when these shall be well established, they will come to the theory. Would Mr. M'Neile have the *theory first* declared, and the *facts* collected *afterwards* to prove it. This might be convenient, but hardly philosophical. Our opponent must be content to wait patiently a few years,

before his demand of having the general laws of the science scientifically stated, can be properly complied with. Mesmerism is yet in its infancy. We cannot yet state "*how* a pass of the thumb, or a movement of the fingers acts on human flesh"—we cannot yet state "*how* it stops the circulation of the blood so as to resist the strengthfulness of the human frame"—we cannot yet state "*how* it prevents the delicate touch being felt in the cutaneous veins." But because we cannot yet give a scientific statement of the matter, are we to forbear its use as a remedial agent, or to ascribe these unknown properties to the "devices of the Devil?" In the cognate or analogous science of mineral magnetism, the peculiar cause of union between magnetic pyrites and iron had been for years altogether inexplicable—and perhaps, with all our knowledge of electricity, is not even yet satisfactorily explained. But was the mariner to deny himself the use of the compass in the stormy and trackless ocean, or to attribute the influence of the loadstone to the contrivance of Satan, because the "*how*," and the "*why*," and the "*wherefore*" had not been philosophically accounted for? All he could say was, that the needle was guided by the finger of that Divine Being, whose ways were in the great deep, and whose footstep are unknown. And all we can say is, that Mesmerism is the good "gift of God" for the use of his creature man, though its immediate and secondary causes are at present inexplicable—the good gift of that merciful and Almighty Father, who is "always, everywhere, and all in all."

And, secondly, as to his expectation that the laws of this science should act "*uniformly*,".....It is a part (says he) of all nature's laws that they shall act uniformly.....If it be in nature, it will operate uniformly, and not *capriciously*. If it acts *capriciously*, then there is some *mischievous agent* at work." Of course in this implied charge of capriciousness, or want of uniformity, he refers to a variation of the symptoms or phenomena exhibited respectively by different patients. And in consequence of this variation, which must be admitted, his hearers are taught that the "sin of witchcraft" has ensnared the operators, and that some mocking, juggling fiend has taken possession of the patient. Now in regard to nature's laws, we at once agree that they are fixed, consistent, and unalterable. The physical world abhors "capriciousness." "Comets are regular," and nature "plain." It is for this reason that sciences are called "exact." To take an instance or two at random, we know that in the process of crystallization, certain bodies invariably assume certain specific forms; and that in Electromagnetism, the mutual attraction or repulsion of electrified substances is directly proportional to the quantity of electricity conjointly in each of them. All these facts fall under the category of general laws. And does Mr. McNeile imagine that the laws which govern Mesmerism are not equally fixed, consistent, and uniform, though *phenomena vary* when the *accidents differ*? Does he imagine that a seeming "capriciousness" or eccentricity, is not in reality a sure unalterable result of some unknown or unexplainable cause. We would lay it down as an unequivocal position, admitting of no exception, that where the acci-

dents are the same, where the relative circumstances of the operator and the patient are precisely similar, the effects or phenomena would be as certain and regular as in any of those sciences termed exact. But the difficulty is to find this precise undeviating resemblance—this absence of all difference, and hence the *apparent* want of uniformity. In so sensitive, delicate, varying a frame as the human body, so subject to “skyey influences”—so affected by diet, clothing, lodging, and climate—so changed by a thousand minor incidents, could the same uniformity of action be expected as in inert matter or mechanical substance? Is it probable, that a patient, wasted by years of depletion and violent medicines, and with whom blisterings, and cuppings, and leechings had gone their round, would exhibit the same symptoms as some robust and hearty sportsman, whose constitution had been tried by nothing of the same order? Would not a diet of port wine or porter produce a very different habit of body from that created by blue pill and Abernethy’s biscuits? We are taking certain extreme and opposite conditions; but when we reflect that the circumstances of constitution, of custom, of food, of disease, admit of as many varieties as the human face divine; that these varieties form the habit of body; and that it is upon our bodies so modified, that Mesmerism acts, common sense must see that perfect uniformity of result is hardly probable. For instance, with one party, the Mesmeric sleep is obtained at the first sitting; with another, not for several days or weeks. One patient recognizes the hand of the operator, and cannot endure the touch even of a relative; with another, to be touched by either is a thing indifferent. One only hears the voice of the operator; another, without preference, answers any speaker. Nay, with the same patient the symptoms vary at various sittings. Still, in spite of all this, we say, that in main essential points, the resemblance or uniformity is very remarkable; that the properties, as thus developed, have an evident affinity; but if Mesmerisers are not able to lay down broad general rules, predictive of positive results, the fault is to be found in our imperfect acquaintance with a new study, in the difficulty of the science and the delicacy of the human frame, which is its subject. But is there any thing strange in this? Surely we might find something very analogous in our favourite illustration from natural philosophy. The nature of electricity, for instance, is not so perfectly known, that a law could be laid down by general reasoning, so as to foretell of a certainty the manner in which electrified bodies would act, *in any position*, in which they might be respectively placed. Do we therefore, say that there is no uniformity; or, as Mr. M’Neile might say, that there is no electricity, or rather, that the whole is determined by the accidental caprices of Satan? No; we answer that the distance of the *positive* and *negative* bodies being known, and no derangement arising from other or accidental causes, their uniformity of action is certain; but we add, that as philosophers could not determine a just theory of all this from the physical principles of electricity, it was necessary to proceed by observation and comparison of phenomena, before the law of variation could be fully established. And so it is in

Animal-magnetism ; it will be by observation, by induction of various and numerous particulars, as exhibited in individuals of various constitutions and habits, that any approach to a consistent theory of action can be established. All this will require much time, and many and tedious experiments ; and my own opinion certainly is, that in the operation of this system on so sensitive a subject as the human frame, it will be almost impossible to lay down specific and positive rules of its effects, in all cases and under every modification of temperament.

And this, forsooth, is the foundation on which the weighty charge of Satanic agency is attempted to be built ! These the reasons on which Christian men are warned against going near Mesmeric meetings, or hearing any Mesmeric lectures ! I would not speak with harshness of any language or conduct that appeared to take its rise from motives of piety, however misdirected ; but where so mischievous a delusion has taken root, both justice and humanity require us to say, that never in the history of the human mind has an idle and miserable bugbear been created from more weak and worthless materials. If there be anything *supernatural* in the matter, it is that a man of Mr. M'Neile's acknowledged abilities could have given utterance to such puerilities ; and that when they were published, any parties could care to distribute them to their neighbours ; and that when read, any single mind could have been influenced by the perusal. But, verily, it is something to have a reputation—it covers a multitude of follies ; for, like *Sir Oracle*, you may then lay down the law to your deluded followers. I have felt sometimes ashamed at encountering this solemn trifling with earnest argument—but even since this letter has been commenced, I have met with two additional instances, in which a superstitious awe on the subject of Mesmerism, produced exclusively by this sermon, had seized the minds of the unhappy sufferers, and deterred them from employing a remedy peculiarly adapted to relieve them. It seems incredible—yet such were the facts ; truth is stranger than fiction ; and so I resumed my pen with an increased desire of doing some little good in abating the folly. I hoped to remind the admirers of our friend at Liverpool, that powerful as he is, his power rather lies in the command of language than in the strength of argument—that he carries more sail than ballast ; and, certainly, that when he scattered around him such words as “witchcraft” and “necromancy,” and called down, as it were, a fire from heaven on the heads of benevolent lecturers, the minister of St. Jude's had altogether forgotten “what spirit he was off.”

What, then, is the state of mind with which “wise, prudent, and Christian men should meet the present state of the question ?” I would not have them, from a disgust at the tendencies of this sermon, join the ranks of the infidel, and laugh to scorn the doctrine of Satanic agency, as the invention of men—holy Scripture teaches it ; experimental religion confirms it ; for we all unhappily know that the “Devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour ; but I would have them be cautious not to confound the ways of Providence with the works of the evil one ; I would have them remember

"how little a part" of God's wonders are yet laid bare to his creatures ; I would have them look into the subject with a devotional spirit, anxious for truth, not rashly condemning that of which they are ignorant, lest haply, in their presumption, "they be found to be fighting against God." "Christian men" need not fear to be present at scientific lectures or physiological experiments, if they go in a Christian spirit. Hard words are no argument. Accusations of "morbid curiosity," and "foolish novelties," and "devilish devices," carry no proofs of their truth to the *thinking* pious believer. If he goes, he goes with prayer—he goes with the Bible, if not in his hand, yet in his heart ; he goes to study the book of God's works by the book of God's word ; he goes with the full remembrance that "no science can save a soul," no natural knowledge bring us nearer to God. But if, on the other hand, it be sickness or bodily pain that hath entered into the Christian's dwelling, and that his knowledge of the healing properties of Mesmerism should lead him to make experiment of its power, what are the feelings with which he would commence a trial of this unknown and unseen remedy ? He would "walk by faith and not by sight." He would regard it as only one out of many thousand gifts, bountifully bestowed upon us in this life by a merciful Creator ; he would value it as a blessing sent to cheer and comfort him, when other and more customary means were failing to relieve him. He would turn to its use with prayer, with humble hope, with pious confidence ; he would feel that the issue was yet with God, and the divine will would be his own. He would not, like the impious king recorded in Scripture, forget the Lord, and seek only physicians. No : the great Physician of the cross, the healer of our leprosies, bodily and spiritual, would, after all, be his main and only refuge. To Him would he look at morning, at noontide, and at the evening hour. Yea, he would feel that it was good to be afflicted, if his afflictions and their earthly remedies made him better acquainted with his own heart, and brought him to a closer and more abiding communion with his Saviour and his God !

I trust, that in some slight degree, these are the serious and thankful feelings, with which I myself have been enabled to regard the subject. None but a few members of my family are aware of the sad and harrowing scenes, which for weeks we were called upon to witness—the sleepless nights, the racking pains, the wasted form, the tortures of the mind no less than of the body, and "all the sad variety of woe ;" and how at last, when opiates and all the usual "appliances and means to boot," had not only failed to ease, but even tended to aggravate ; when he who was at once both the friend and the physician had run the round of art, and tried in vain all that skill and kindness could suggest ; when the "silver cord was on the point of being loosed," and our hope was as the giving up of the ghost—that *then* was suddenly realized that great Scripture truth, "that which is impossible with man, *is possible with God.*" Our prayers were heard, when it was least expected ; Mesmerism was introduced among us, and from that hour we saw the finger of God leading us on to health and to hope ;

we saw a gradual, steady, progressive improvement setting in, attended by circumstances of relief which no language can express. But it is not the object of this letter to dilate on the interesting phenomena which attended our proceedings; you know that they were remarkable enough to establish the truth of the science, if no other case had ever been brought forward. My wish is to dwell on the religious aspect of the question. And my prayers ought to be, that He who "bringeth low and lifteth up" may perfect the good work he has begun, and not only bestow upon us the blessing of health, but the blessing of an obedient and thankful heart.

As for you, my kind and valued friend, who, under God, was the instrumental means of restoring some measure of happiness to our circle, I cannot conclude without expressing all we owe to your steady Christian kindness, your patience, your perseverance, your "hope against hope," and your cordial heartfelt sympathy: but I forbear—and I will only add, that it gives me the sincerest gratification and pride to subscribe myself,

Yours, most faithfully and truly,

G. S.