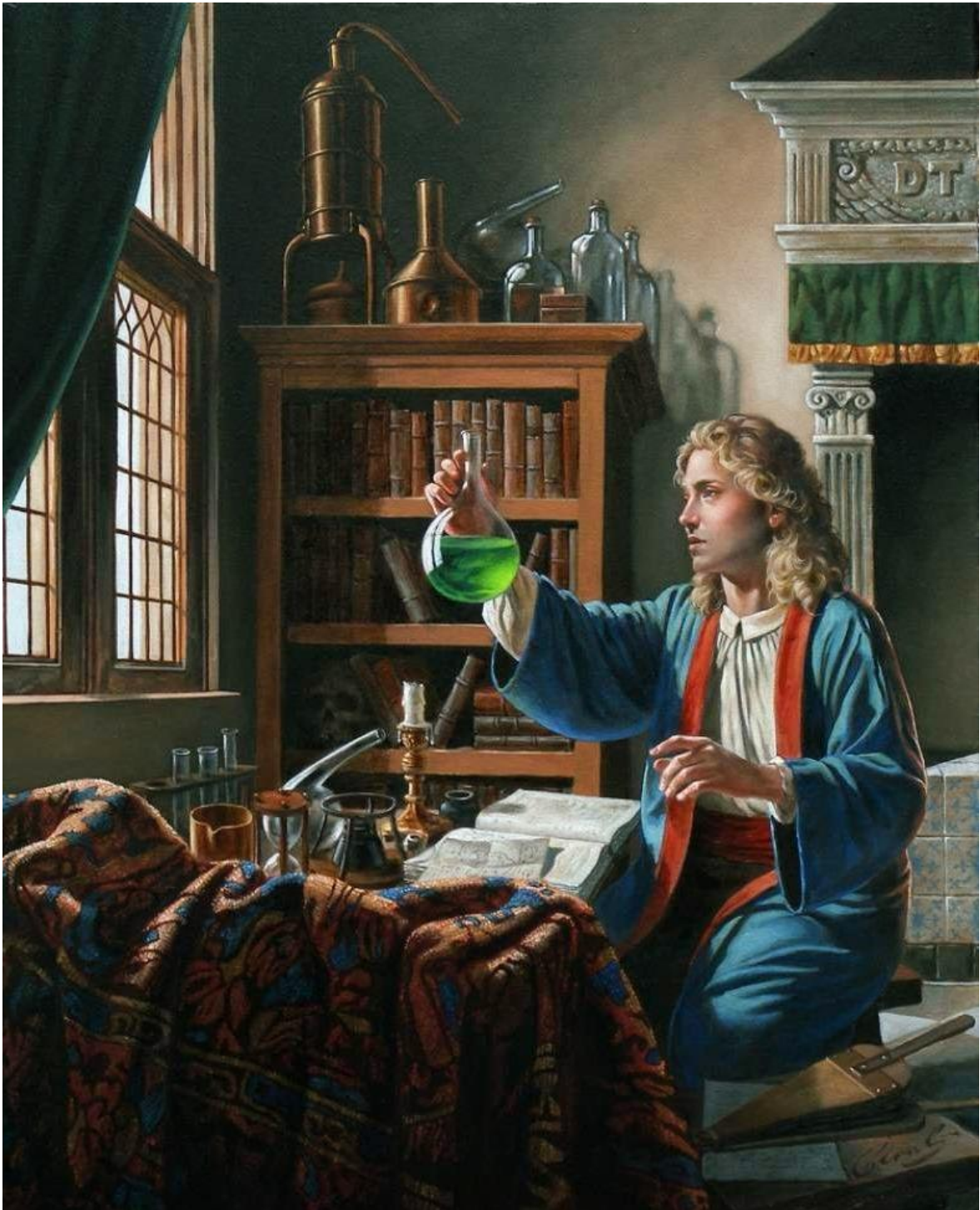


*Magic is the Occult
Knowledge of Natural Law*



First published in the *Spiritual Scientist*, Boston, Vol. III, October 14th, 1875, pp. 64-65.
Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE SCIENCE OF MAGIC) I pp. 134-43.¹
Frontispiece by Michael Cheval.

HAPPENING TO BE ON A VISIT TO ITHACA, where spiritual papers in general, and the *Banner of Light* in particular, are very little read, but where, luckily, the *Scientist* has found hospitality in several houses, I learned through your paper of the intensely interesting, and very erudite attack in an editorial of the *Banner*, on “Magic”; or rather on those who had the *absurdity* to believe in Magic. As hints concerning myself — at least in the fragment I see — are very decently veiled, and, as it appears, Col. Olcott alone, just now, is offered by way of a pious Holocaust on the altar erected to the angel-world by some Spiritualists, who seem to be terribly in earnest, I will — leaving the said gentleman to take care of himself, provided he thinks it worth his trouble — proceed to say a few words only, in reference to the alleged *non-existence* of Magic.

Were I to give anything on my own authority, and base my defence of Magic only on what I have seen *myself*, and *know* to be true in relation to that science, as a resident of many years’ standing in India and Africa, I might, perhaps, risk to be called by Mr. Colby — with that unprejudiced, spiritualized politeness, which so distinguishes the venerable editor of the *Banner of Light* — “an irresponsible woman”; and that would not be for the first time either. Therefore, to his astonishing assertion that no *magic* whatever either exists or has existed in this world, I will try to find as good authorities as himself, and maybe, better ones, and thus politely proceed to contradict him on that particular point.

Heterodox Spiritualists, like myself, must be cautious in our days and proceed with prudence, if they do not wish to be persecuted with all the untiring vengeance of that mighty army of “Indian Controls” and “Miscellaneous Guides” of our bright Summer Land.

When the writer of the editorial says, that “he does not think it at all improbable that there are humbugging spirits who try to fool certain aspirants to Occult knowledge, with the notion that there is such a thing as magic”(?) then, on the other hand, I can answer him that I, for one, not only think it probable, but I am perfectly sure, and can take my oath to the certainty, that more than once, spirits, who were either ele-

¹ [This article was written by H.P. Blavatsky as a reply to Mr. Colby who denied in the *Banner of Light* the existence of Magic. After the cutting had been pasted in her Scrapbook, Vol. I, pp. 70-71, Blavatsky made some pen and ink remarks and additions, which are shown herewith in footnotes appended as indicated by Blavatsky herself. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

mentary or very unprogressed ones, calling themselves Theodore Parker, have been most decidedly *fooling* and disrespectfully *humbugging* our most esteemed Editor of the *Banner of Light* into the notion that the Apennines were in Spain, for instance.

Furthermore, supported in my assertions by thousands of intelligent Spiritualists, generally known for their integrity and truthfulness, I could furnish numberless proofs and instances where the Elementary Diakka, *Esprits malins et farfadets*, and other such-like unreliable and ignorant denizens of the spirit-world, arraying themselves in pompous, world-known and famous names, suddenly gave the bewildered witnesses such deplorable, unheard-of, slip-slop trash, and betimes something worse, that more than one person who, previous to that, was an earnest believer in the spiritual philosophy, has either silently taken to his heels; or, if he happened to have been formerly a Roman Catholic, has devoutly tried to recall to memory with which hand he used to cross himself, and then cleared out with the most fervent exclamation of *Vade retro, Satanas!*¹ Such is the opinion of every educated Spiritualist.

If that indomitable Attila, the persecutor of modern Spiritualism, and mediums, Dr. G. Beard, had offered such a remark against Magic, I would not wonder, as a too profound devotion to blue pill and black draught² is generally considered the best antidote against mystic and spiritual speculations; but for a firm Spiritualist, a believer in invisible, mysterious worlds, swarming with beings, the true nature of which is still an unriddled mystery to everyone — to step in and then sarcastically reject that which has been proved to exist and believed in for countless ages by millions of persons, wiser than himself, is too audacious! And that sceptic is the editor of a leading Spiritual paper! A man, whose first duty should be, to help his readers to seek — untiringly and perseveringly — for the TRUTH in whatever form it might present itself; but who takes the risk of dragging thousands of people into error, by pinning them to his personal rose-water faith and credulity. Every serious, earnest-minded Spiritualist must agree with me, in saying, that if modern Spiritualism remains, for a few years only, in its present condition of chaotic anarchy, or still worse, if it is allowed to run its mad course, shooting forth on all sides, idle hypotheses based on superstitious, groundless ideas, then will the Dr. Beards, Dr. Marvins, and others, known as scientific (?) sceptics, triumph indeed.

Really, it seems to be a waste of time to answer such ridiculous, ignorant assertions as the one which forced me to take up my pen. Any well-read Spiritualist, who finds the statement “that there ever was such a science as magic, has never been proved, nor ever will be,” will need no answer from myself, nor anyone else, to cause him to shrug his shoulders and smile, as he probably has smiled, at the wonderful attempt of Mr. Colby’s spirits to reorganize geography by placing the Apennines in Spain.

¹ [“Step back, Satan,” is a Medieval Catholic formula for exorcism, recorded in a 1415 MS. found in the Benedictine Metten Abbey in Bavaria.]

² [A combination of a blue, mercury-based pill, and a saline aperient mixture called the common black draught, was a standard cure for constipation in early 19th century England and elsewhere. It was particularly valued on ships of the Royal Navy, where sailors and officers were constrained to eat rock-hard salted beef and pork, old stale biscuits (hardtack), and very little fruit, fibre, or other fresh food once they were at sea for an extended period.]

Why, man alive, did you never open a book in your life, besides your own records of Tom, Dick and Harry descending from upper spheres to remind their Uncle Sam that he had torn his gaiters or broken his pipe in the Far West?

Did you suppose that Magic is confined to witches riding astride broomsticks and then turning themselves into black cats? Even the latter superstitious trash, though it was never called Magic, but Sorcery, does not appear so great an absurdity for one to accept, who firmly believes in the transfiguration of Mrs. Compton¹ into Katie Brinks. The laws of nature are unchangeable. The conditions under which a medium can be transformed, entirely absorbed in the process by the spirit, into the semblance of another person, will hold good whenever that spirit or rather *force* should have a fancy to take the form of a cat.

The exercise of *magical* power is the exercise of *natural* powers, but SUPERIOR to the ordinary functions of Nature. A miracle is not a violation of the laws of Nature, except for ignorant people. Magic is but a *science*, a profound knowledge of the Occult forces in Nature, and of the laws governing the visible or the invisible world. Spiritualism in the hands of an adept becomes Magic, for he is learned in the art of blending together the laws of the Universe, without breaking any of them and thereby violating Nature. In the hands of an experienced medium, Spiritualism becomes UNCONSCIOUS SORCERY; for, by allowing himself to become the helpless tool of a variety of spirits, of whom he knows nothing save what the latter permit him to know, he opens, unknown to himself, a door of communication between the two worlds, through which emerge the blind forces of Nature lurking in the astral light, as well as good and bad spirits.

A powerful mesmerizer, profoundly learned in his science, such as Baron Du Potet, Regazzoni, Pietro d'Amicis of Bologna, are *magicians*, for they have become the adepts, the initiated ones, into the great mystery of our Mother Nature. Such men as the above-mentioned — and such were Mesmer and Cagliostro — *control* the spirits instead of allowing their subjects or themselves to be controlled by them; and Spiritualism is safe in their hands. In the absence of experienced Adepts though, it is always safer for a naturally clairvoyant medium to trust to good luck and chance, and try to judge of the tree by its fruits. Bad spirits will seldom communicate through a pure, naturally good and virtuous person; and it is still more seldom that pure spirits will choose impure channels. Like attracts like.

But to return to Magic. Such men as Albertus Magnus, Raymond Lully, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Robert Fludd, Eugenius Philalethes, Khunrath, Roger Bacon and others of similar character, in our sceptical century, are generally taken for visionaries; but so, too, are Modern Spiritualists and mediums — nay worse, for charlatans and poltroons; but never were the Hermetic Philosophers taken by anyone for fools and idiots, as, unfortunately for ourselves and the Cause, every unbeliever takes ALL of us believers in Spiritualism to be. Those Hermeticists and philosophers may be disbelieved and doubted now, as everything else is doubted, but very few

¹ [In her *Scrapbook*, Vol. I, p. 32, H.P. Blavatsky added the following remarks to a cutting describing *séances* with Mrs. Compton:

This Mrs. Compton is a real *wonderful* medium. She is a true electric battery worked by the Elementals.

— Boris de Zirkoff.]

doubted their knowledge and power during their lifetime, for they always could prove what they claimed, having command over those forces which *now command* helpless mediums. They had their science and demonstrated philosophy to help them to throw down ridiculous negations, while we sentimental Spiritualists, rocking ourselves to sleep with our “Sweet By-and-By,”¹ are unable to recognize a spurious phenomenon from a genuine one, and are daily deceived by vile charlatans. Even though doubted then, as Spiritualism is in our day, still these philosophers were held in awe and reverence, even by those who did not implicitly believe in their Occult potency, for they were giants of intellect. Profound knowledge, as well as cultured intellectual powers, will always be respected and revered; but our mediums and their adherents are laughed and scorned at, and we are all made to suffer, because the phenomena are left to the whims and pranks of self-willed and other mischievous spirits, and we are utterly powerless in controlling them.

To doubt Magic is to reject History itself as well as the testimony of ocular witnesses thereof, during a period embracing over 4,000 years. Beginning with Homer, Moses, Hermes, Herodotus, Cicero, Plutarch, Pythagoras, Apollonius of Tyana, Simon the Magician, Plato, Pausanias, Iamblichus, and following this endless string of great men, historians and philosophers, who all of them either believed in magic or were magicians themselves, and ending with our modern authors, such as W. Howitt, Ennemoser, H.R. Gougenot des Mousseaux, Marquis de Mirville and the late Éliphas Lévi, who was a magician himself — among all these great names and authors, we find but the solitary Mr. Colby, Editor of the *Banner of Light*, who ignores that there ever was such a science as *Magic*. He innocently believes the whole of the sacred army of Bible prophets, commencing with Father Abraham, including Christ, to be merely mediums; in the eyes of Mr. Colby they were all of them acting under control! Fancy Christ, Moses, or an Apollonius of Tyana, controlled by an Indian guide!! The venerable editor ignores, perhaps, that spiritual mediums were better known in those days to the ancients, than they are now to us, and he seems to be equally unaware of the fact that the inspired Sibyls, Pythonesses, and other mediums, were entirely guided by their High Priest and those who were initiated into the Esoteric Theurgy and mysteries of the Temples. Theurgy was *magic*; as in modern times, the Sibyls and Pythonesses WERE MEDIUMS; but their High Priests were magicians. All the secrets of their theology, which included *magic*, or the art of invoking ministering spirits, were in their hands. They possessed the science of DISCERNING SPIRITS; a science which Mr. Colby does not possess at all — to his great regret no doubt. By this power they controlled the spirits at will, allowing but the good ones to absorb their mediums. Such is the explanation of *magic* — the real, existing, *White* or sacred magic, which ought to be in the hands of science now, and would be, if science had profited by the lessons which Spiritualism has inductively taught for these last twenty-seven years.

¹ [A Christian hymn with lyrics by S. Fillmore Bennett and music by Joseph P. Webster. It is recognizable by its chorus:

In the sweet by and by
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.
In the sweet by and by
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.]

That is the reason why no trash was allowed to be given by unprogressed spirits in the days of old. The oracles of the sibyls and inspired priestesses could never have affirmed Athens to be a town in India, or jumped Mount Ararat from its native place down to Egypt.

If the sceptical writer of the editorial had, moreover, devoted less time to little prattling Indian spirits and more to profitable lectures, he might have learned perhaps at the same time, that the ancients had their illegal mediums — I mean those who belonged to no special Temple, and thus the spirits controlling them, unchecked by the expert hand of the magician, were left to themselves, and had all the opportunity possible to perform their capers on their helpless tools; that such mediums were generally considered *obsessed* and *possessed*, which they were in fact; in other words, and according to the Bible phraseology, “they had the seven devils in them.” Furthermore, these mediums were ordered to be put to death, for the intolerant Moses, the magician, who was learned in the wisdom of Egypt, had said, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”¹ Alone, the Egyptians and Greeks, even more humane and just than Moses, took such into their Temples, and when found unfit for sacred duties of prophecy [they] *were cured*, in the same way as Jesus Christ cured Mary of Magdala and many others, by “casting out the seven devils.” Either Mr. Colby and Co. must completely deny the miracles of Christ,² the Apostles, Prophets, Thaumaturgists, and Magicians, and so deny point-blank every bit of the sacred and profane histories, or he must confess that there is a POWER in this world which can command spirits, at least the bad and unprogressed ones, the elementary and Diakka. The *pure ones*, the disembodied, will never descend to our sphere, unless attracted by a current of powerful sympathy and love, or on some useful mission.

Far from me the thought of casting odium and ridicule on all³ medium. I am not⁴ myself a Spiritualist, if, as says Colonel Olcott, a firm belief in our spirits,⁵ immortality, and *the knowledge* of a constant possibility for us to communicate with the spirits of our departed and loved ones, either through honest, pure mediums, or by means of the Secret Science, constitutes a Spiritualist. And⁶ I am not of those fanatical Spiritualists, to be found in every country, who blindly accept the claims of every “spirit,”⁷ for I have seen too much of various phenomena, undreamed of in *America*. I *know* that MAGIC does exist, and 10,000 editors of Spiritual papers cannot change my belief in what I know. There is a white and a black magic; and no one who has ever travelled in the East, can doubt it, if he has taken the trouble to investigate. My faith being firm I am, therefore, ever ready to support and protect any honest medium — aye, and even occasionally one who appears *dishonest*; for I know but too well,

¹ [Exodus xxii, 18]

² If he ever lived — which is more than doubtful.

[Cf. “Jesus Ben Pandira, the historical Christ,” in our Buddhas and Initiates Series.]

³ [“our” corrected to “all.”]

⁴ [“I am” corrected to “I am not.”]

⁵ [“souls” corrected to “spirits.”]

⁶ [“But” corrected to “And.”]

⁷ [“spirit” enclosed in quotes.]

what helpless tools and victims such mediums are in the hands of unprogressed, invisible beings. I am furthermore aware of the malice and wickedness of the elementary,¹ and how far they can inspire not only a sensitive medium, *but any other person* as well. Though I may be an “irresponsible woman” in the eyes of those who are but “too responsible” for the harm they do to EARNEST Spiritualists by their unfairness, one-sidedness, and spiritual sentimentalism, I feel safe to say, that generally I am quick enough to detect whenever a medium is cheating *under control*, or cheating consciously.

Thus magic exists and has existed ever since prehistoric ages. Begun in history with the Samothracian mysteries, it followed its course uninterruptedly, and ended for a time with the expiring theurgic rites and ceremonies of Christianised Greece; then reappeared for a time again with the Neo-Platonic, Alexandrian school, and passing, by initiation, to sundry solitary students and philosophers, safely crossed the mediæval ages, and notwithstanding the furious persecutions of the Church, resumed its fame in the hands of such adepts as Paracelsus and several others, and finally died out in Europe with the Count de Saint-Germain and Cagliostro, to seek refuge from the frozen-hearted scepticism in its native country of the East.

In India, magic has never died out, and blossoms there as well as ever. Practised, as in ancient Egypt, only within the secret enclosure of the Temples, it was, and still is, called the “sacred science.” For it is a science, based on natural occult forces of Nature; and not merely a blind belief in the poll-parrot talking² of crafty, elementary ones, ready to forcibly prevent *real, disembodied* spirits from communicating with their loved ones whenever they can do so.

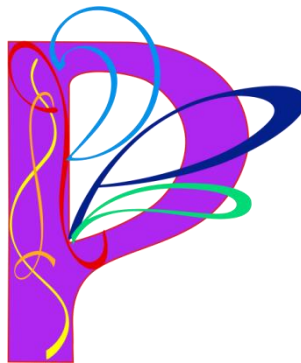
Some time since, a Mr. Mendenhall devoted several columns in the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, to questioning, cross-examining, and criticizing the mysterious Brotherhood of Luxor. He made a fruitless attempt at forcing the said Brotherhood to answer him, and thus unveil the sphinx. I can satisfy Mr. Mendenhall. The BROTHERHOOD OF LUXOR is one of the sections of the Grand Lodge of which *I am a member*. If this gentleman entertains any doubt as to my statement — which I have no doubt he will — he can, if he chooses, write to *Lahore* for information. If perchance, the *Seven of the Committee* were so rude as not to answer him, and would refuse to give him the desired information, I can then offer him a little business transaction. Mr. Mendenhall, as far as I remember, has two wives in the spirit world. Both of these ladies materialize at M. Mott’s, and often hold very long conversations with their husband, as the latter told us of several times, and over his own signature; adding, moreover, that he had no doubt whatever of the identity of the said spirits. If so, let one of the departed ladies tell Mr. Mendenhall the name of that section of the Grand Lodge I belong to. For *real, genuine, disembodied* spirits, if both are what they claim

¹ [Cf. Definition of Elementaries: “. . . in all such strange events showing a malicious, wicked intelligence underlying them, our theory of the elementaries, or earth-bound incarnated thoughts of evil men who have passed away, holds as good as ever. Such phenomena pin all believers in the “angel world” more firmly than ever between the horns of a very disagreeable dilemma. They have either to admit with the Christians the existence of the devil, or with the Kabbalists that of the “elementaries.” To speak frankly, and in all sincerity, we fail to perceive any substantial difference between a Christian devil — originally a “fallen angel” — and a bad, wicked “spirit” — or a departed soul — each of which the spiritualists hold as being of angelic divine origin.”

— *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (PRANKS OF “SPIRITS” AMONG LAYMEN) II pp. 509-10]

² [Chattering like a parrot.]

to be, the matter is more than easy; they have but to enquire of other spirits, look into my thoughts, and so on; for a disembodied entity, an immortal spirit, it is the easiest thing in the world to do. Then, if the gentleman I challenge, though I am deprived of the pleasure of his acquaintance, tells me the true name of the section — which name three gentlemen in New York, who are accepted neophytes of our Lodge, know well — I pledge myself to give to Mr. Mendenhall the true statement concerning the Brotherhood, which is not composed of spirits, as he may think, but of *living* mortals, and I will, moreover, if he desires to, put him in direct communication with the Lodge as I have done for others.¹ Methinks, Mr. Mendenhall will answer that no such name can be given correctly by the spirits, for no such Lodge or either Section exists at all, and thus close the discussion.



¹ [H.P. Blavatsky added on the margin:

And so he did and — abused me in a vile way in the papers for my offer. The *Spirits* proved to be ignoramuses!!

It is most likely, however, that this refers to the *last* sentence of the article. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]