



# "Animal Magnetism": The "Cotemporary" Roots of Whitman's "Is Mesmerism True?"

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NOTES



“ANIMAL MAGNETISM”: THE “COTEMPORARY”  
ROOTS OF WHITMAN’S “IS MESMERISM TRUE?”

LONG BEFORE HE published the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, Walt Whitman was invested in mesmerism, which at that time was also known as “animal magnetism,” a term coined by its founder Franz Anton Mesmer. Only six years after Charles Poyen, mesmerism’s most successful evangelist in antebellum America, first began lecturing in the United States, Whitman already had publicly admitted his “belief” in mesmerism. He did so in an August 1842 *New York Sunday Times* editorial that was first cited by Harold Aspiz in 1980. Aspiz’s use of the editorial is worth quoting in full:

During these years, Whitman had already accepted the teachings of mesmerism. In August, 1842, he informed the readers of the *New York Sunday Times* that “[s]ome seasons ago” he had ceased to be “a devout disbeliever in the science of Animal Magnetism,” a few lectures and demonstrations having convinced him that “there is such a thing as Mesmeric sleep” and that the “strange things done by the subject at the will of the Magnetizer” are not the result of collusion or fraud, but that hypnotic manipulation and “Mesmeric somnambulism” are beneficial. He was excited by the artistic implications of mesmerism, declaring that it “reveals at once the existence of a whole new world of truth, grand, fearful, profound, relating to that great mystery, in the shadows of which we live and move and have our being, the mystery of our Humanity.” Thereafter he remained interested in this half-science, and he utilized it in his poems, particularly in characterizing the Whitman persona.<sup>1</sup>

Given Whitman’s language as described by Aspiz here, it is no surprise that the 1842 editorial, titled “Is Mesmerism True?,” has loomed large in the limited literature to date on Whitman and mesmerism. Aspiz, an excellent reader of the mesmeric Whitman, was canny in underlining the importance of this editorial, the content of which establishes a great deal about Whitman’s early relationship to mesmerism. As Aspiz’s excerpting suggests, it would have been one thing for Whitman to have claimed that he found mesmerism intriguing or baffling

or unsettling or even, possibly, potentially meaningful. It was another altogether for him to have reported his belief in it—that it was true—and that it provided deep insight into the “mystery” of human life. It is worth noting, too, that the August 1842 issue of the *Sunday Times* was Whitman’s first as the *Times*’s new editor: that is, he used the first page of his first issue to highlight the question, “Is Mesmerism True?”

For decades, scholars following Aspiz have confirmed the importance of Aspiz’s excerpted lines. David S. Reynolds in *Walt Whitman’s America: A Cultural Biography* and *Walt Whitman* (2005) cites the *New York Sunday Times* as his source, but he quotes only passages that Aspiz already had used in his 1980 discussion of the editorial.<sup>2</sup>

The same observation holds true for Arthur Versluis’s analysis of Whitman’s grasp on mesmerism in his *The Esoteric Roots of the American Renaissance* (2001).<sup>3</sup> Versluis, like Reynolds, cites the *New York Sunday Times* in his footnote as the source of this quote, but, again like Reynolds, he excerpts only language that Aspiz already had quoted. I note this discrepancy between Reynolds’s and Versluis’s cited source (the *New York Sunday Times*) and, apparently, actual source (Aspiz) not to nitpick the clearly extensive research performed by these scholars, but instead to point out that the *Sunday Times* editorial is very difficult to find, and that Aspiz has been its mouthpiece for decades. It appears that Aspiz is the last person on record to have read the editorial in full, until now.

I have discovered that Aspiz and those following him quoted many, but certainly not all, of the most interesting parts of the editorial. Also, they in fact repeatedly *misquoted* the original, which actually states that “the very first fact of Mesmerism” reveals not “a whole *new world of truth*”—as all of these scholars put it—but, instead and intriguingly, “a whole world of *new truth*” (emphases added).

The complete editorial can be seen here, published for the first time since 1842, in Figure 3 and in a full transcription at the conclusion of this essay.<sup>4</sup>

The following are Whitman’s opening lines in “Is Mesmerism True?”:

Wise men, says a Spanish proverb, change their minds often—fools never. Those people who are so bitter against Mesmerism, might not do themselves damage by bearing that axiom in mind.

Unquestionably, it is well, amid this age of humbug,<sup>5</sup> to pry with jealous and careful eyes, into the claims of a new doctrine. But when facts are presented—when a long array of truths and undeniable occurrences are ready to support a system—it is no sign of judgment to cry that system down, merely because it is novel. (2)

Like the now-familiar words quoted by Aspiz, these newly available lines—with their appeal to the “wise” and rejection of “fools”; with their certain “Unquestionably”; with their assurance that “facts,” “truths,” and “undeniable occurrences” are available for those who are not already “bitter”—say a great deal about Whitman’s stance on mesmerism in 1842.<sup>6</sup> They say, perhaps, more about Whitman than the words that Aspiz does quote, because it turns out that these two opening paragraphs and the editorial’s two closing paragraphs are the sum total of Whitman’s actual original writing in his 1842 editorial.

The truth is that the vast majority of “Is Mesmerism True?” is cribbed directly from an earlier editorial, one that may or may not have been written by Whitman. Whitman’s lack of originality in 1842 was not hidden from the nineteenth-century reader. In the first sentence of the third paragraph—that is, immediately following the opening two paragraphs quoted above—Whitman does, in fact, credit “a cotemporary [sic] writer, speaking of this subject” to introduce the first long quotation. The first sentence of the fourth paragraph also reminds the reader that the content already had appeared elsewhere, with the parenthetical phrase “(we quote again from our author)” introducing a second long passage that occupies the entire paragraph. The fifth and sixth, or final, paragraphs, like the first two, appear to be original in August 1842. In summary, then: the first two and final two short paragraphs of the editorial were original in 1842; the middle two paragraphs—the longer, meatier ones—came from an earlier source.

Surprisingly, when Aspiz cited this 1842 editorial, he lifted liberally from both the borrowed and new prose without remarking on their different provenance.<sup>7</sup> Of the quotations Aspiz included, the following first appear in the 1842 Whitman editorial: “[s]ome seasons ago,”

THE  
UNITED STATES MAGAZINE  
AND  
DEMOCRATIC REVIEW.

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VOL. IX.

DECEMBER, 1841.

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ANIMAL MAGNETISM.\*

"I never said it was probable: I only said it was true," says Monk Lewis, and so say the Mesmerists. And what is more, they do not content themselves with simply asserting the truth of the existence of that wonderful power and effect implied in the name we have prefixed to this paper, but they have accumulated, and are daily accumulating, such masses of evidence in support of their assertion, that it becomes even more difficult, to the open and candid mind, to withhold than to yield its assent.

The two works referred to at the foot of the page are among the most important, as they are the most recent contributions of authentic testimony and scientific investigation, to the knowledge of these startling mysteries of our nature, already before the English and American public. Mr. Townshend is generally known to occupy such a position, as well in the world of letters and learned lore, as in the Church of which he is a distinguished member, that no incredulity will be hardy enough to charge him with anything resembling imposture or deception, when he thus appears before the bar of the public opinion, as a witness to what

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\* *Facts in Mesmerism, or Animal Magnetism.* With reasons for a dispassionate inquiry into it. By the Rev. Chauncy Hare Townshend, A. M., late of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. First American Edition, with an Appendix, containing the Report of the Boston Committee on Animal Magnetism. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, MCCCXLI.

*Human Physiology.* By John Elliotson, M. D. Cantab. F. R. S. Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians; President of the Phrenological Society; Late Professor of Medicine in University College, London, and Physician to University College Hospital; Formerly Physician to St. Thomas's Hospital, and President of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, &c. &c. &c. Fifth Edition, 8vo. pp. 1200. London, 1840.

Figure 1. First page of "Animal Magnetism" from *The Democratic Review*.

“a devout disbeliever in the science of Animal Magnetism,” “there is such a thing as Mesmeric sleep,” and “strange things done by the subject at the will of the Magnetizer.”

Aspiz’s remaining two quotations, then, were those Whitman copied from the earlier editorial. These were the phrase “Mesmeric somnambulism” and the memorable quote discussed earlier, which has been so often repeated by other scholars (Reynolds twice, Versluis, Bruce Mills<sup>8</sup>) to establish Whitman’s early position on animal magnetism: that mesmerism “reveals at once the existence of a whole new world of truth, grand, fearful, profound, relating to that great mystery, in the shadows of which we live and move and have our being, the mystery of our Humanity.” It is no surprise, I think, that Aspiz credited this language to Whitman, and that this final sentence has been so readily accepted by others as Whitman’s: it just sounds and feels like him, with its confidence and grandiloquence (“at once,” “a whole new world”); its list of adjectives minus a conjunction (“grand, fearful, profound”); and its stringing together of many long phrases into one rhythmical, comma-punctuated sentence (these are the phrases ending with “of truth,” “profound,” “great mystery,” “have our being,” and “our Humanity”). The 1841 text does, in fact, seem to bear the marks of Whitman’s journalistic and editorial styles, and even of his later poetic style.

I have discovered that the original editorial, titled “Animal Magnetism,” was published in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* in December 1841.<sup>9</sup> This was only eight months before “Is Mesmerism True?” The 1841 *Democratic Review*’s editorial, unlike the relatively short *Sunday Times* piece, is rather long. For its time, very early in what had not yet become the American mesmeric craze of the mid-1840s, it is an astonishingly positive story on the wonders of the “new science” of mesmerism. Like Whitman in the *Sunday Times*, this editorial voice offers fervent support of the “truth” of animal magnetism. The 1841 *Democratic Review* article begins:

“I never said it was probable: I only said it was true,” says Monk Lewis, and so say the Mesmerists. And what is more, they do not content themselves with simply asserting the truth of the existence of that wonderful power and effect implied in the name we have prefixed to this paper [“Animal Magnetism”], but they have

accumulated, and are daily accumulating, such masses of evidence in support of their assertion, that it becomes even more difficult, to the open and candid mind, to withhold than to yield its assent.”<sup>10</sup>

Also like Whitman in the 1842 editorial, this writer makes his case in part by distancing himself from the practitioners and promoters of mesmerism: *they* are “the Mesmerists,” not he.

In the nineteenth century, the *Democratic Review* was a respected venue that regularly featured well-known writers and thinkers. The December 1841 issue in question included poetry by John Greenleaf Whittier (“Democracy”), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (“God’s-Acre”), and William Cullen Bryant (“A Dream”). The venue also gave new writers a forum; for instance, in the very same issue, we find a short story called “Bervance: or, Father and Son,” and earlier in the same volume of the magazine another called “Death in the School-room: a fact” (August 1841), and yet another titled “Wild Frank’s Return” (November 1841). These three texts were the first literary stories published by a 23-year-old who had until then been known (and for long after would be known) primarily for his journalism, a young man writing under the name “Walter Whitman.”<sup>11</sup>

What does the new discovery of this 1841 article mean to Whitman studies?<sup>12</sup> Is it possible that “Animal Magnetism” is a newly discovered Whitman editorial? “Is Mesmerism True?” was published only eight months after “Animal Magnetism,” which appeared in a volume alongside three short stories by Whitman. “Is Mesmerism True?” features only four new, short paragraphs; the remaining paragraphs are all exact duplications of the earlier text. “Is Mesmerism True?” names neither the author nor the title of its “cotemporary” source, leaving room for speculation.

Perhaps the *Democratic Review* essay had been influential enough, and so widely read, that Whitman in his editorial role at the *Sunday Times* assumed his readers would recognize his allusion to it.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps Whitman quoted so liberally from the first editorial because that particular issue of the *Democratic Review* in question, the first periodical that we know of to feature his own fiction, was a well-thumbed volume deeply familiar to him, a new editor in search of a ready topic

for his first editorial. Or, perhaps Whitman himself wrote the original 1841 article, and he was actually quoting himself as the “cotemporary author” in 1842.<sup>14</sup>

Whether Whitman originally wrote the 1841 *Democratic Review* text or merely copied it into his 1842 *Sunday Times* editorial, what we see in “Is Mesmerism True?” is Whitman not only revealing his own interest in mesmerism but also playing a surprisingly important role in establishing the credibility of animal magnetism in New York and the nation in the early 1840s, just as the phenomenon really began to take off. Even if he did not write the 1841 editorial titled “Animal Magnetism,” he chose to quote from it in his own 1842 piece, in his capacity as editor of the paper, with unstinting admiration and confirmation of its arguments. His willingness to stake his new job on it speaks volumes about his position on the matter of mesmerism. He must have imagined that the editorial would appeal to more readers than it alienated, or at least that it would provoke interest and conversation. If nothing else, these two editorials prove that Whitman—always aware of the currents of popular culture around him, and always a salesman—had his finger on the pulse of a city and nation that were ready to embrace mesmerism.

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## NOTES

1 Harold Aspiz, *Walt Whitman and the Body Beautiful* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 154. Despite Aspiz's attribution of "Is Mesmerism True?" to Whitman, the editorial is not included in Walt Whitman, *The Journalism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), though the editors ascribe three other pieces in the same issue of the *Sunday Times* to Whitman (1:143-145).

2 See David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 260, and *Walt Whitman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 92. Both passages are almost identical excerpts from Aspiz's use of the editorial discussed earlier.

3 Arthur Versluis, *The Esoteric Origins of the American Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 165.

4 [Walt Whitman], "Is Mesmerism True?" (*New York Sunday Times*, August 14, 1842), 1-2. This paper was not related to the current *New York Times*. Many thanks to Archives Specialist Marlaine DesChamps at the Schaffer Library of Union College in Schenectady, New York, who was able to access and copy the editorial for me, although it is "in very fragile condition" (email May 3, 2013). The remainder of the August 14, 1842, edition of the *Sunday Times* is also available at the Schaffer Library. This is apparently the only extant copy of this issue of the paper.

5 Whitman also uses the word *humbug* more than twenty years later, in 1864, when writing to his mother about visiting the spirit medium Charles H. Foster. It is interesting to speculate about whether he use this phrasing because he finds the whole business of mediumship, mesmeric or otherwise, a humbug, or because he believes in it and just finds this particular person a humbug: "I am going to a spiritualist medium this evening, I expect it will be a humbug of course, I will tell you next letter." See Walt Whitman to Louisa Van Velsor Whitman, March 31, 1864. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* ([www.whitmanarchive.org](http://www.whitmanarchive.org), ID: loc.00815). Later, he reported, "Well, mother, I went to see the great spirit medium Foster, there were some little things some might call curious perhaps, but it is a shallow thing & a humbug—a gentleman who was with me was somewhat impressed, but I could not see any thing in it worth calling supernatural—I wouldnt [sic] turn on my heel to go again & see such things, or twice as much—we had table rappings & lots of nonsense—I will give you particulars when I come home one of these days—" (Walt Whitman to Louisa Van Velsor Whitman, April 5, 1864 [WWA ID: loc.00816]).

6 *Facts in Mesmerism*, the title of Townshend's book, might explain Whitman's use of the word *facts* in the second paragraph of the editorial: "But when facts are presented—when a long array of truths and undeniable occurrences are ready to support a system—it is no sign of judgment to cry that system down, merely because it is novel." Note that his story "Death in the School-Room" in the 1841 *Democratic Review* is also subtitled, "a fact."

7 It is highly probable that Aspiz was working from handwritten notes on the editorial, rendering the nods toward the “cotemporary writer” easier to miss, and that Reynolds, Versluis, Mills, and others simply never saw the original. Other inconsistencies do exist in Aspiz’s account of the editorial. According to Aspiz, in “Is Mesmerism True?” Whitman “reviewed” Chauncy Hare Townshend’s influential *Facts in Mesmerism* (1840) (Aspiz 269, fn. 7). But, in the 1842 editorial, Whitman mentions the book only in passing, using only the phrase “an appendix to the Boston edition of Townshend’s work.” While this does establish Whitman’s knowledge of the book, it doesn’t quite constitute a review. Aspiz elsewhere describes *Facts in Mesmerism* not as a book Whitman reviewed but as “a volume on mesmerism that the poet perused a dozen years before publishing his masterpiece” (144). Whitman’s understanding of Townshend remains unclear in these characterizations of the editorial. Townshend’s book, along with John Elliotson’s *Human Physiology* (1840), were listed as the subjects of “Animal Magnetism” (see Figure 4).

8 See Bruce Mills, *Poe, Fuller, and the Mesmeric Arts: Transition States in the American Renaissance* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 165.

9 “Animal Magnetism,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 9 (December 1841), 515-527. The entire volume of this periodical, including “Animal Magnetism” and Whitman’s short fiction, is available on Google Books.

10 “Animal Magnetism,” 515.

11 The *Democratic Review* also published Whitman’s short stories in January 1842 and May 1842.

12 The two editorials combined reveal the minimum extent of Whitman’s mesmeric knowledge as of 1841 and 1842. We thus know that Whitman knew about Chauncy Townshend, Robert Collyer, and the Colquhoun report. This is in-depth knowledge to possess so very early in the history of American mesmerism.

13 The influence of this particular article may also have been a result of its prime alphabetical placement as the first story listed in the index to volume 17 of the magazine (Whitman’s “Wild Frank’s Return” was listed last). See figure 3.

14 In December 1841, at the time of Whitman’s first known, verified publications in the *Democratic Review*—his three short stories—the progressive John L. O’Sullivan was its editor. The details of Whitman’s relationship with O’Sullivan are generally unknown, though “in his late years Whitman recalled O’Sullivan as ‘a handsome, generous fellow. He treated me well’” (Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, ed. Gertrude Traubel and William White [Carbondale/Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University, 1982], 6:379). For more on Whitman and the *Democratic Review*, including its “liberal political orientation” and “reputation for excellence in literature,” see Susan Belasco Smith’s entry on the “*Democratic Review*” entry on the “*Democratic Review*” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Walt Whitman*, ed. J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Routledge, 1998), 175. The entry is also available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.



SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 14, 1842.

IS MESMERISM TRUE ?

Wise men, says a Spanish proverb, change their minds often—fools never. Those people who are so bitter against Mesmerism, might not do themselves damage by bearing that axiom in mind.

Unquestionably, it is well, amid this age of humbug, to pry with jealous and careful eyes, into the claims of a new doctrine. But when facts are presented—when a long array of truths and undeniable occurrences are ready to support a system—it is no sign of judgment to cry that system down, merely because it is novel.

One thing, says a cotemporary writer, speaking of this subject—“One thing is certain—that when the barrier is once removed which confines our belief to the old limits of our habitual ideas and experience—when we once make the first step beyond the ancient beaten pathway, and admit a belief of a single one of the seeming ‘miracles’ or ‘impossibilities’ of Mesmerism—no reason remains why we should refuse, on reasonable evidence, to proceed further. A thousand impossibilities are not more impossible than one. The very first fact of Mesmerism reveals at once the existence of a whole world of new truth, grand, fearful, profound, relating to that great mystery, in the shadow of which we live and move and have our being, the mystery of our Humanity. When we plant the first footfall upon the threshold of the portal to which this astonishing discovery introduces us, long and deep are the reverberations which come forth from the yet dark depths that lie beyond it. And while they may bid us tremble with awe, and perhaps with fear, they at the same time prepare our minds for untold and unimagined wonders to be disclosed by our further investigation—wonders to which our present obscure and feeble vision, both of eye and of mind, cannot pretend to assign a limit.

To those (we quote again from our author) who refuse to believe even in the first fundamental fact, of the production of the state commonly termed the Mesmeric somnambulism, by the process of the magnetic manipulation—a state of extraordinary sleep-waking, during which a peculiar relation, of either nervous or mental influence and connexion, exists between the active and the passive parties to the process—to these we have nothing to say. It were about as wise to discuss with Hottentot or Esquimaux those general truths of astronomy, or of any of the natural sciences, which are familiar almost to the infant schools of a New England town. They must read and learn, or seek opportunities of personal observation. Or else, if they prefer it, they may remain content in the slumber of their own conceit, until some of these days they will wake up to find themselves objects of ridicule

for the antiquated ignorance to which they have clung, while the general intelligence about them has been making a silent progress, to which they will simply serve the double purpose, more convenient than honorable, of milestones and laughing-stocks. It may be well, however, in passing, to hint to such readers, in the way of friendly advice and caution, that even on the part of the most eminent of such authorities as may have pronounced, to a greater or less extent, against Animal Magnetism, after investigation more or less complete, this first point at least is always conceded. The celebrated commission of the French Academy of Sciences of 1784, whose report dealt to Mesmerism a blow which has generally been supposed by those who know nothing about it to have been one of annihilation—even this committee have no hesitation in recognising this fact; however they may attempt to explain away its attendant phenomena,—however they may seek shelter from one difficulty of belief behind another not less incomprehensible; by ascribing to a vague principle, of a purely mental and spiritual character, which they term “imagination,” physical effects of the most surprising kind, for which a much more intelligible explanation is to be found in some of the theories of the Mesmerists. To the more favorable report of the commission of 1832, which Mr. Colquhoun’s translation has made accessible to the English reader, we will not here pause to refer. Imperfect and unsatisfactory as it is, this report fully recognises many of the principal claims of Mesmerism. It will probably suffice for the most sceptical of our readers to refer him to the record of the late committee of investigation in Boston, before which Dr. Collyer exhibited some of the mesmeric phenomena. This committee was composed of about twenty-five of the most respectable gentlemen of that city—the three professions of the pulpit, the bar, and the medical faculty, being about represented in its composition. The report of its proceedings is contained in an appendix to the Boston edition of Townshend’s work; from which it appears that, one after another, the incredulity of its members as to the reality of the peculiar somnambulant condition caused by the Mesmeric process yielded to the evidence which was brought before them; so that they finally adopted, with entire unanimity, a resolution, declaring, that while they refrain from expressing any decisive opinion as to “the science or principle of animal magnetism,” they freely confess that, in the experiments of Dr. Collyer, “certain appearances have been presented which cannot be explained on the supposition of collusion, or by a reference to any physiological principles known to them.

Some seasons ago, we were ourself a devout disbeliever in the science of Animal Magnetism. We have since attended a number of lectures and experiments, and are convinced that there is such a thing as Mesmeric sleep—and, while we are not enough of a philosopher to account for the strange things done by the subject at the will of the Magnetizer—we think it folly to refer them to collusion. That reason will not suffice.

We are promised by a scientific gentleman of this city, some curious facts relating to Magnetism, which we shall give in due time.

Figure 2. 1842 editorial “Is Mesmerism True” from *The Times*.

CONTENTS OF VOL. IX.

	Page.
Animal Magnetism . . . . .	515
Antho'n's, Prof., Classical Dictionary . . . . .	133
_____ and the Democratic Review — Note . . . . .	304
_____ Dictionary and Defence . . . . .	360
Antiquities of Central America . . . . .	162
Armstrong's History of the Late War, &c. . . . .	45
Ashes of Roses . . . . .	482
Berrance; or, Father and Son, by WALTER WHITMAN . . . . .	560
Boy, the, and his Angel, by MRS. C. M. SAWYER . . . . .	143
Channing's, Dr., Recent Writings . . . . .	315
Chess Players, the, by JAMES K. ARMSTRONG . . . . .	20
Common Lot, the, by S. WALLACE CONE . . . . .	250
Conspiracy of Catiline, by A. DAVEZAC, Esq. . . . .	144
Death in the School-room — a fact, by WALTER WHITMAN . . . . .	177
Democracy, by J. G. WHITTIER . . . . .	527

Figure 3. Index for Volume IX of the *Democratic Review*.

THE  
UNITED STATES MAGAZINE  
AND  
DEMOCRATIC REVIEW.

VOL. IX.                      DECEMBER, 1841.                      No. XLII.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

I. ANIMAL MAGNETISM . . . . .	Page. 515
<i>Facts in Mesmerism, or Animal Magnetism. With reasons for a dispassionate inquiry into it. By the Rev. Chauncy Hare Townsend, A. M., late of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. First American Edition, with an Appendix, containing the Report of the Boston Committee on Animal Magnetism.</i>	
<i>Human Physiology. By John Elliotson, M. D. Cantab., F. R. S. Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians; President of the Phrenological Society; Late Professor of Medicine in University College, London, and Physician to University College Hospital; Formerly Physician to St. Thomas's Hospital, and President of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, &amp;c. &amp;c.</i>	
II. DEMOCRACY.—By J. G. Whittier . . . . .	527
III. SKETCHES OF CHARACTERS OF THE MIDDLE AGES.—No. III.—THE ESQUIRE.—By the Author of "The Brothers," "Cromwell," &c. . . . .	529
IV. THE FIRST LESSON; OR, THE BOY AND THE PHILOSOPHER, . . . . .	537
V. THE HOME-LEAGUE . . . . .	539
VI. LANDSCAPE GARDENING AND RURAL ARCHITECTURE . . . . .	554
<i>A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, adapted to North America, with remarks on Rural Architecture, illustrated by engravings. By A. J. Downing.</i>	
VII. BERVANCE; OR, FATHER AND SON.—By Walter Whitman . . . . .	560

Figure 4. Table of Contents for the December 1841 issue of *Democratic Review*.

*The Times*, Sunday Morning, August 14, 1482.

### IS MESMERISM TRUE?

WISE MEN, SAYS a Spanish proverb, change their minds often—fools never. Those people who are so bitter against Mesmerism, might not do themselves damage by bearing that axiom in mind.

Unquestionably, it is well, amid this age of humbug, to pry with jealous and careful eyes, into the claims of a new doctrine. But when *facts* are presented—when a long array of truths and undeniable occurrences are ready to support a system—it is no sign of judgment to cry that system down, merely because it is *novel*.

One thing, says a cotemporary [sic] writer, speaking of this subject—“One thing is certain—that when the barrier is once removed which confines our belief to the old limits of our habitual ideas and experience—when we once make the first step beyond the ancient beaten pathway, and admit a belief of a single one of the seeming ‘miracles’ or ‘impossibilities’ of Mesmerism—no reason remains why we should refuse, on reasonable evidence, to proceed further. A thousand impossibilities are not more impossible than one. The very first fact of Mesmerism reveals at once the existence of a whole world of new truth, grand, fearful, profound, relating to that great mystery, in the shadow of which we live and move and have our being, the mystery of our Humanity. When we plant the first footfall upon the threshold of the portal to which this astonishing discovery introduces us, long and deep are the reverberations which come forth from the yet dark depths that lie beyond it. And while they may bid us tremble with awe, and perhaps with fear, they at the same time prepare our minds for untold and unimagined wonders to be disclosed by further investigation—wonders to which our present obscure and feeble vision, both of eye and of mind, cannot pretend to assign a limit.

To those (we quote again from our author) who refuse to believe even in the first fundamental fact, of the production of the state commonly termed the Mesmeric somnambulism, by the process of the magnetic manipulation—a state of extraordinary sleep-walking, during which a peculiar relation, of either nervous or mental influence and connexion, exists between the active and the passive parties to

the process—to these we have nothing to say. It were about as wise to discuss with Hottentot or Esquimaux those general truths of astronomy, or of any of the natural sciences, which are familiar almost to the infant schools of a New England town. They must read and learn, or seek opportunities of personal observation. Or else, if they prefer it, they may remain content in the slumber of their own conceit, until some of these days they will wake up to find themselves objects of ridicule for the antiquated ignorance to which they have clung, while the general intelligence about them has been making a silent progress, to which they will simply serve the double purpose, more convenient than honorable, of milestones and laughing-stocks. It may be well, however, in passing, to hint to such readers, in the way of friendly advice and caution, that even on the part of the most eminent of such authorities as may have pronounced, to a greater or less extent, against Animal Magnetism, after investigation more or less complete, this first point at least is always conceded. The celebrated commission of the French Academy of Sciences of 1784, whose report dealt to Mesmerism a blow which has generally been supposed by those who know nothing about it to have been one of annihilation—even this committee have no hesitation in recognising this fact; however they may attempt to explain away its attendant phenomena,—however they may seek shelter from one difficulty of belief behind another not less incomprehensible; by ascribing to a vague principle, of a purely mental and spiritual character, which they term “imagination,” physical effects of the most surprising kind, for which a much more intelligible explanation is to be found in some of the theories of the Mesmerists. To the more favorable report of the commission of 1832, which Mr. Colquhoun’s translation has made accessible to the English reader, we will not here pause to refer. Imperfect and unsatisfactory as it is, this report fully recognises many of the principal claims of Mesmerism. It will probably suffice for the most skeptical of our readers to refer him to the record of the late committee of investigation in Boston, before which Dr. Collyer exhibited some of the mesmeric phenomena. This committee was composed of about twenty-five of the most respectable gentlemen of that city—the three professions of the pulpit, the bar, and the medical faculty, being about represented

in its composition. The report of its proceedings is contained in an appendix to the Boston edition of Townshend's work; from which it appears that, one after another, the incredulity of its members as to the reality of the peculiar somnambule condition caused by the Mesmeric process, yielded to the evidence which was brought before them; so that they finally adopted, with entire unanimity, a resolution, declaring, that while they refrain from expressing any decisive opinion as to "the science or principle of animal magnetism," they freely confess that, in the experiments of Dr. Collyer, "*certain appearances have been presented which cannot be explained on the supposition of collusion, or by a reference to any physiological [sic] principles known to them.*"

Some seasons ago, we were ourself a devout disbeliever in the science of Animal Magnetism. We have since attended a number of lectures and experiments, and are *convinced* that there is such a thing as Mesmeric sleep—and, while we are not enough of a philosopher to account for the strange things done by the subject at the will of the Magnetizer—we think it folly to refer them to collusion. That reason will not suffice.

We are promised by a scientific gentleman of this city, some curious *facts* relating to Magnetism, which we shall give in due time.