

P R E F A C E.

I DO not expect this book to stand upon its literary merits; for if it is unsound in principle, felicity of diction cannot save it, and if sound, homeliness of expression cannot destroy it. My primary object in offering it to the public is to assist in bringing Psychology within the domain of the exact sciences. That this has never been accomplished is owing to the fact that no successful attempt has been made to formulate a working hypothesis sufficiently comprehensive to embrace all psychic phenomena. It has, however, long been felt by the ablest thinkers of our time that all psychic manifestations of the human intellect, normal or abnormal, whether designated by the name of mesmerism, hypnotism, somnambulism, trance, spiritism, demonology, miracle, mental therapeutics, genius, or insanity, are in some way related; and consequently, that they are to be referred to some general principle or law, which, once understood, will simplify and correlate the whole subject-matter, and possibly remove it from the domain of the supernatural. The London Society for Psychical Research, whose ramifications extend all over the civilized world, was organized for the purpose of making a systematic search for that law. The Society numbers among its membership many of the ablest scientists now living. Its methods of investigation are purely scientific, and painstaking to the last degree, and its field embraces all psychic phenomena. It has already accumulated and verified a vast array of facts of the most transcendent interest and importance. In the mean time a large number of the ablest scientists of Europe and America have been pursuing independent investigations in the phenomena of hypnotism. They too have accumulated facts and discovered principles of vast importance, especially in the field of mental therapeutics,—principles which also throw a flood of light upon the general subject of Psychology.