



PROFESSOR B. B. WILLIAMS.

IN CONSEQUENCE of having, last week, been disappointed in obtaining a biographical sketch of the celebrated DOCTOR B. BROWN WILLIAMS, and also, because the Portrait we published, was not so good as it might have been, we are induced to head the following sketch with an engraving which is true to life. It was engraved from a daguerreotype, taken by Mr. Rice, 194 Canal street.

The gentleman, whose likeness is so truthfully represented in the above engraving, has, within the last six years, created such an extraordinary excitement upon the subject of "Mental Alchemy," or the relations existing between "mind and matter," throughout the United States, as to entitle him to be ranked among the distinguished personages of the age. As such we regard him.

DR. WILLIAMS was born in Pitt County, North Carolina, some thirty-five years ago. About ten years since, he turned his attention to the study of medicine, but, having a mind too liberal to be confined to any one particular *ism*, he was determined to investigate all the different and antagonistic ideas in relation to the origin and cure of diseases; and, for that purpose, he attended the lectures of all the various schools of medicine with which the country abounds.

He commenced to practice medicine in Greenville, N. C., on the banks of Tarr River, in the same county in which he was born; and, in less than six months we learn that his practice equalled that of the oldest and most experienced physicians of the neighborhood.

Just before leaving college, he had seen a gentleman Mesmerise a lady, by taking hold of her hands, looking her in the eye, and making a few passes from the head down. Although he had always been, up to this time, a skeptic on the subject of Mesmerism, he was now convinced of its truth, from the fact that the lady, while under mesmeric influence, told him the impressions of his own mind, and other things which he was quite confident were unknown to any person but himself.

The abnormal condition of the nervous system, produced by Mesmerism, it seems, opened to Dr. Williams a world of thought; and, upon examining the respiratory condition of the surface of the subject, he concluded that this must be the state of the nervous system, where the recuperative forces had more than ordinary power to relieve a diseased body. Being a man who always does his own thinking, and who is independent enough to act out his own thoughts, he devoted the leisure hours he could snatch from his daily professional duties, as a practising physician, to the study and practice of Mesmerism; and he soon discovered that there is a normal, as well as an abnormal condition of the nervous system, by which the mind can be intelligibly impressed.

After he had successfully practiced medicine for about three years, he gave it up, and commenced giving public lectures on Magnetism. He also explained, and illustrated by experiment, his new discoveries, in the condition of the nervous system; showing that many persons can be operated upon, without being previously subjected to any influence whatever—or, in other words, that the normal forces of nature supply to many persons, while in the enjoyment of full health, that constant reactive condition of the nervous system, which in others can only be brought about by an effort, and which had, up to that time, been supposed to result only from the nervous fluid manipulations and passes of magnetizers.

The greatest opposition he encountered, in presenting these discoveries, was from professional mesmerizers, who contended that, for any effect to be produced, it was necessary for the operator to pour in the nervous fluid from his own body to that of the person on whom he was operating. Very soon, however, those who opposed the discoveries of Dr. Williams, rendered at discretion; for they found, by repeated experiments, that his theory was correct.

In order to satisfy himself that there could be no doubt as to the originality and truthfulness of his discoveries, he went to the Literary Institute, at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and gave a full course of lectures, submitting the results of his experiments to the professors. Professor Green, now Bishop of Mississippi, and Professor Hooper, after having investigated the subject, for some weeks, published in the *Raleigh Register*, the following card:

"CHAPEL HILL COLLEGE, N. C., Nov., 1847.
The undersigned have witnessed the experiments, and attended the private lectures of Dr. B. B. Williams, on Mesmerism and animal magnetism. The phenomena exhibited in the latter, presented the subject in a new light, and were of such a character as to compel us to believe in the reality of the principle which produces these remarkable effects. The experiments were conducted with the utmost fairness, and the operator, at all times, invited the most rigid scrutiny.
"We take pleasure, also, in bearing testimony to the gentlemanly and obliging deportment of Dr. Williams, during our brief acquaintance with him.

"W. M. GREEN, Professor.
"J. D. B. HOOPER, Professor."

The above testimonial, from such a distinguished source, inspired him with new energy, and he entered the field as a lecturer on Electro-Psychology, with hopes that have since been more than realized. We have heard of cures innumerable that he has performed by the agency of this science; and, in nearly every city and town that he has visited, he has left behind him many individuals restored to health, after they had given up all idea of recovering. In Fayetteville, North Carolina, a young lady of high respectability was thrown from her horse, by which her spine was so injured that she could not walk. She had entirely lost the sense of feeling in her lower limbs. This happened, as we learned, about fifteen months before Dr. Williams visited the town, and all the medical skill and ingenuity of the county had been exhausted in fruitless endeavors to restore to her the power of locomotion. In one week from the day in which Dr. Williams undertook the cure, he succeeded in restoring sensation and motion, and the young lady was, in a few days after, as well as ever! Many other cures of a similar character might be mentioned, but our space forbids their enumeration in this article, and the power of the Doctor over disease is so well known as not to require a superabundance of proof.

In Cheraw, South Carolina, Dr. Williams became acquainted with Dr. McLane, an old practitioner of nearly forty years. Notwithstanding the confirmed skepticism of this gentleman, he was so impressed by the lectures and experiments of Dr. Williams, that he joined his private class, to study the science, in which he made so much progress, that, ten months after, he wrote to Dr. Williams:—

"I am sure you will be pleased to learn that my success in the use of human electricity, or electro-psychology, in the cure of disease, has been fully equal to the high expectations which your able and interesting course of lectures excited. I have cured palsy and other diseases that would not yield to physical agents."

In Charleston, South Carolina, Dr. Williams met with great success. His audiences and private classes comprised the most eminent men of the city, among whom was Rev. J. Bovee Dods, who was then preaching in that city; but who is more familiarly known to New Yorkers as "Dr. Dods," the celebrated lecturer on Animal Magnetism. Dr. Dods was, for year

nearly universally conceded to be the most lucid lecturer on Animal Magnetism in the United States; and, it must, therefore, have been unusually gratifying to Dr. Williams, to have a man of so wide-spread a reputation as Dr. Dods cast aside his former processes and theories, and join his class as a student of Electrical-Psychology. At the close of the course of lessons, Dr. Dods was appointed on a committee of three, who drew up the following "card," which we copy from the *Charleston Courier* of July 4th, 1848:

DR. WILLIAMS.—Your class, embracing seventeen members, authorize us, the undersigned, to address to you the following card:

CHARLESTON, S. C., July 3, 1848.

To B. B. Williams, Professor of Electrical Psychology;
Dear Sir,—Having heard you deliver a course of most interesting public lectures on *Electrical Psychology*, demonstrating its truth by experiments the most brilliant, novel, and conclusive—and having been members of your private class, and listened to your instructions with pleasure, we feel constrained to acknowledge, as a tribute of respect justly due yourself, that we deeply feel its importance as a most safe, powerful and sanative agent in nervous diseases, and highly value the instructions we have received from you upon this most interesting subject.

And, moreover, we are sensible, that as a truth, it has, under your energy and discretion, triumphantly passed the ordeal of public scrutiny, and fully merited the solid stamp of approbation. We heartily recommend it to the public favor wherever you may go; and though the sycophant may sneer at its power, yet we are fully sensible that the smile of welcome will mantle the lips of the philanthropist at your approach.

In behalf of the class,
JOHN R. WATSON, }
W. H. DAVIS, } Committee.
J. R. DODS. }

In the winter of 1849-'50, Dr. Williams delivered twelve courses of lectures, of six lectures each, in Washington City, where he excited so much interest on the subject of Electrical-Psychology, that many senators and representatives became members of his private classes. In fact, it would appear from the testimonials of his classes that we have seen in papers published in different parts of the Union, that there has been but one opinion expressed of him and his lectures, wherever he has been. In New Bedford, where Mesmerism was first presented to a public audience in the United States, he delivered a course of lectures, in November, 1850, to a class of over fifty persons, who published in the *New Bedford Mercury* a "card," expressing their belief in the science of Electro-Psychology, and their admiration of the lucid explanations and interesting experiments of Dr. Williams. We copy the following from the *New Bedford Mercury* of November 7, 1850:

"A CARD.

"The undersigned have attended the course of Electro Psychological Lectures, delivered in this city by Dr. B. B. Williams, and take pleasure in expressing their satisfaction at his explanations of the theory of Electro Psychology, Mesmerism and Clairvoyance, and with the interesting experiments which have accompanied the explanations.

"We have gained much information from these lectures, which we value, and are assured that all who may feel disposed to attend the course, will acquire an amount of knowledge which will fully compensate them for their time and attention—Charles Atmy, B. Rodman, Sylvanus Thomas, James B. Congdon, Jos. Cokent, Edward L. Baker, C. R. Tucker, William C. Coffin, William J. Rotch, A. L. Gleason, Nathaniel Cobb, Edward Stetson, S. G. Driscoll, William Hathaway, Benjamin Evans, O. Prescott, Judge S. Court of Massachusetts.

Dr. Williams came to this city in December last, and commenced lecturing here and in Brooklyn under inauspicious circumstances. The previous failures of magnetizers and psychologists to produce any permanent or general interest among us, operated much against him, as it was supposed that there was nothing new in his theory and experiments. His audiences were therefore quite small, at first. In Brooklyn, for the first few evenings not more than from twenty to fifty persons attended; but, after eight or ten lectures had been delivered, the hall, which seats from one thousand to one thousand two hundred persons, was always full, and as many more were turned away, nightly, unable to gain admittance. He has already delivered more than thirty public lectures in that city, and taught upwards of three hundred students, in private classes. Yet, the interest in Mental Alchemy still increases; and, at one of his late public lectures, in the Brooklyn Institute, the audience unanimously passed a resolution requesting him "to continue his lectures and experiments indefinitely."

In this city, when Dr. Williams first commenced lecturing in Bleecker Buildings, his audiences were also quite small. Soon, however, they became so large, that he found it necessary to engage Metropolitan Hall; and the delight expressed by the thousands that throng that spacious building, on every evening he lectures, and the chagrin of the hundreds who are unable to obtain seats, would seem to justify the conclusion, that there is not a hall in the city large enough to contain those who are anxious to witness his wonderful experiments.

Dr. Williams is a strong religionist, in the most comprehensive sense of the word. He is an able, enthusiastic, and successful defender of the bible; and, in this respect, he differs from many believers in the inferior departments of the science that he is propagating. He is dignified, grave, and earnest in his demeanor, and rarely indulges in pleasantries. A few evenings ago, however, he was rudely interrupted, in the midst of an eloquent defence of divine revelation, by a man who rose and asked abruptly, "When will pain, sorrow and death cease?" "When we cease to eat pork, beans, and potatoes," promptly retorted the Doctor, not at all disconcerted, and resumed his discourse. As it happened, and unknown to Dr. W., the interrogator was a Jew, well known to many of the audience, and that fact, coupled with the abruptness of the question, and the prompt reply and presence of mind of the Doctor, "brought down the house."

We are happy to announce that Dr. Williams has engaged Metropolitan Hall for several months, and that he will lecture and experiment there, every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings. The other three evenings he lectures at Brooklyn; and, every Monday, he devotes his attention to curing the poor, free of charge, at his rooms, 166-68 Fulton street, Brooklyn; and, on Wednesdays and Fridays, at the same place, to those who are able to pay. His office hours are from 9 to 3 o'clock. He has not yet commenced applying his science to the cure of diseases in this city. There is a wide field for him here, and we hope he will meet with his accustomed success when he does.

The learned Sir David Brewster, in a late publication, remarks, "The phenomena of the magnetic state are as well established as the facts in any physical science, still their philosophy cannot be explained."—It has, if learned gentlemen in our own country are not mistaken, been reserved for Dr. Williams, a man who has had to struggle with the world from his infancy upwards, to carve his own way through life, and to earn the means of acquiring an education before receiving it—a man who owes more of his knowledge to his indomitable will, and to his faculty of gathering at truth piecemeal, as he was buffeted about the world, than to the "facilities" that surround young men of more distinguished parentage—it has been reserved for this man, we say, to explain the philosophy of Magnetism, and other mental phenomena. Dr. Williams leaves the United States for England, we believe, early next fall, and from the plainness of manner and fairness in his experiments being, in almost every particular, entirely new, we have no doubt of his equal success across the Atlantic.