



The Fraud of Modern "Theosophy" Exposed: And the Miraculous Rope-Trick of the Indian Jugglers Explained

John Nevil Maskelyne

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Stage magician and inventor John Nevil Maskelyne (1839-1917) made it his mission to expose fakes and charlatans who claimed supernatural abilities for personal gain. In 'The Fraud of "Theosophy" Exposed' (1912) he applied his fine mind and acerbic wit to debunking the founding gurus of the Theosophical Society and, most particularly, the outrageous hoaxer Helen Petrovna Blavatsky, or 'Madame Blavatsky' as she was commonly known. He regarded her as the greatest impostor of all time: "Hypnotism may account for the extraordinary influence and fascination which Madame Blavatsky was able to exercise over some people, and yet she was one of the most repulsive women one can imagine. A glance at the excellent sketch of her in this pamphlet will show that she had the appearance of being a gross, vulgar, sensual adventuress. (She turned the scale at 17 stone.) The enormous ring upon her hand, she said, possessed magical power. She had an enormous appetite, consuming vast quantities of fat meat, although her doctrine teaches that it is a deadly sin to eat meat. She had an insatiable love for tobacco, and was seldom seen without a cigarette in her mouth. Her language at times was too bad for publication." This new edition, with the text reset, includes notes that provide some additional background information.

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