

*Chapter 5*

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## **Magic in England— John Cavendish Dudley**

**OCCULTISM—THE LETTER-SHADOWS OF FATE—  
THE SUPERMUNDANE BELIEFS—BOHEMIAN WONDER—  
AMONG THE MAGICIANS—THE INNER LIGHT—  
CURATIVE AND PROPHETIC POWERS.**

**B**efore I had completed my educational term in Europe, I had the misfortune to lose my good father; but immediately after his death I received letters from my mother and our Hindoo connections, directing me to enter upon a course of study in a certain military school in England, where I was to fit myself for following my father's profession of arms in India.

Although I was greatly averse to this course, and would have preferred any other occupation rather than that of a soldier, I found the arrangements for my continuance in Europe were made contingent upon my compliance with these directions, and I had become so warmly attached to Professor von Marx, and his affection for me had become such an indispensable element in my existence, that I was willing to avail myself of any opportunity that would enable me to remain near him, if not absolutely so much in his society as formerly.

My mother informed me that honorable distinction and rapid military promotion awaited me in India, through the influence of my father's Connections and the high estimation in which his noble services had been held, and she besought me not to blight all the hopes she had founded upon my compliance and good conduct, and concluded by referring me to the parties in Europe who would carry out her wishes by providing for my studies in the English military school. Professor von Marx seemed half amused as well as not a little pleased with the sorrow and reluctance I exhibited at the prospect of my separation from him. He told me his professorship at B \_\_\_\_\_ had been accepted rather as a means of diverting attention from the more occult pursuits he delighted in, than from any necessity on his part to occupy himself in scholastic duties.

Being, as he said, free to come and go as he pleased, and having conceived an attachment for me which would render our separation mutually painful, while he advised me not to oppose the wishes of my friends in their choice of a profession, he completely reconciled me to my enforced absence from Germany by frequently visiting me in England, and spending much of his time in a quiet lodging near my school, where he occupied himself in his conceal or reveal his will to me at pleasure, and without a word spoken. I knew when he willed to shut his thought from me, and at such times I was a blank.

When there was no such mental wall erected between us, all was as clear and lucid to me as if he were myself. I prepared myself to walk or ride with him, came and went as he wished, and all without a word spoken or a gesture made.

Professor von Marx was, I now know, fondly attached to me, and, I think, pitied my fearful subjection to his will even whilst he enjoyed its triumphant exercise.

This true gentleman was gravely courteous to the female sex, but never seemed to realize the slightest attraction towards them as companions. He understood them, as indeed he understood every one he approached; but though he never conversed with me on the subject, I perceived that he viewed the yielding and intuitive characteristics of the female mind with lofty contempt, and his intense and all-absorbing devotion to the peculiar studies he had adopted made him coldly indifferent to the attractions of female beauty. Eminently handsome in person, and polished though cold in manner, he might have commanded the adoration of even the fairest in any land. Why I alone, of all the human family, ever seemed to move his stoical heart to the least emotion can only be accounted for on the hypothesis that there was something of a reciprocal action in the magnetic processes which had so wonderfully bound me to and that in the absorption of his magnetic influence on my part, he involuntarily received in exchange influences from the elemental life, which he displaced in my organism. Magnetizers not unfrequently imbibe some of the qualities of disease, or even the psychological tendencies of their patients, and call it sympathy.

When the term of my studies at the English military school ended, I accompanied my beloved friend on a tour through Europe and the East, which occupied us for many months, at the end of which, Professor von Marx informed me that his presence would be required for several months in London, upon business of importance connected with the interests of a certain society with which he was associated. As I had never visited the great British capital, my dear master promised himself much satisfaction from my introduction to a highly esteemed English friend of his, and the opportunity that would be afforded me for observing the progress of occultism amongst its votaries in England.

Dark, blighting, and inauspicious was the day when first Professor von Marx and myself established ourselves in an old-fashioned, time-worn mansion, a portion of which we were to rent during our stay in London. The fire blazed in the grate, and the mellow light of softly gleaming lamps lent a cheering lustre to the scene, however, as we sat, on the first evening of our arrival, in company with two guests to whom we had dispatched letters of introduction, and who had hastened to welcome us, at the earliest possible moment, to the British metropolis.

One of our visitors, a gentleman of most estimable character and high social position, was an old college companion of Professor von Marx, and it appears that in early youth they had been sworn friends, and associates in many of the societies to which the professor belonged. This gentleman, who subsequently enacted a most important part in the drama of my own fateful life, I do not feel at liberty to name, but for the sake of perspicuity I shall beg my readers to recognize his frequent appearances in these pages under the nom de plume of Mr. John Cavendish Dudley. The personage who accompanied Mr. Dudley was, like himself, a distinguished occultist, but his chief object in making us this early visit was to press upon us the hospitalities of his town and country residences; in fact, he was, as he expressed it, turning with impatience to renew his early intimacy with the esteemed friend of his boyhood, Felix von Marx, and he could scarcely be persuaded that the professor was immovable in his resolution to retain a private home for himself and his adopted son, as he called me, during our stay in England, and only to make occasional visits from thence to the houses of friends.

Mr. Dudley and his companion, Sir James M\_\_\_\_\_, were very enthusiastic in their description of the wonderful seances they enjoyed amongst the occultists of Great Britain. They surprised us by citing the names of a great many persons highly distinguished both in the ranks of fashion and literature, who were members of the British branch of an association to which Professor von Marx had been elected an honorary member, and to which they both belonged. They assured us the professor's high renown as an adept of the most remarkable power, and mine as the famous somnambulist of the Berlin Brotherhood, had already preceded us, and our arrival was looked forward to with the utmost impatience by the students of occultism in Great Britain.

They expected much of us, too, because they were led to believe the German mind was more than ordinarily capable of analyzing the unseen, and mastering the mysteries of the imponderable. A few hours' conversation with these gentlemen, however, convinced us that in point of varied experience, their magical information was not quite equal to our own, though they had visited Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and almost every part of Scandinavia, carefully acquainting themselves with the wild legendary lore of those regions, and taking part in many of their singular ceremonies of spiritual invocation.

In Lapland, Finland, and the northeastern part of Russia, our new acquaintances had beheld so many evidences of inborn occult powers amongst the natives that they had come to a conclusion which the well-informed Spiritualist of modern times will no doubt be ready to endorse, and that is, that certain individuals of the race are so peculiarly and organically endowed, that they live, as it were, on the borders of the invisible world, and from time to time see, hear, act, and think under its influence, as naturally as other individuals do who are only capable of sensing material and external things.

Moreover, our friends had arrived at the opinion that certain localities and climatic influences were favorable or otherwise to the development of these innate occult endowments.

Experience had shown them that mountainous regions or highly rarefied atmospheres constituted the best physical conditions for the evolvement of magical powers, and they therefore argued that the great prevalence of supermundane beliefs and legendary lore in those latitudes arises from the fact that intercourse with the interior alms of being is the universal experience of the people, not that they are more ignorant or superstitious than other races. Mr. Dudley had brought to England with him a schaman, or priest, of a certain district in Russia, where he had given extraordinary evidences of his powers. This man's custom was to array himself in a robe of state, trimmed with the finest furs and loaded with precious stones, amongst which clear crystals were the most esteemed.

In this costume, with head, arms and feet bare, the schaman would proceed to beat a magical drum, made after a peculiar fashion, and adorned with a variety of symbolical and fantastic paintings.

Commencing his exercises by simply standing within a circle traced on the ground, and beating his drum in low, rhythmical cadence to his muttered chantings, the schaman would gradually rise to a condition of uncontrollable frenzy; his hands would acquire a muscular power and rapidity which caused the drum to resound with the wildest clamor, and strokes which defied the power of man to count.

His body, meantime, would sway to and fro, spin around, and finally be elevated and even suspended several feet in the air, by a power wholly unknown to the witnesses. His cries and gesticulations were frightful, and the whole scene of "manticism" would end by

the performer's sinking on the earth in a rigid cataleptic state, during which he spoke oracular sentences, or gave answers to questions with a voice which seemed to proceed from the air some feet above his prostrate form. During my stay in England I was present at several experimental performances with this schaman, and though he could unquestionably predict the future and describe correctly distant places and persons, Professor von Marx and myself were both disappointed in the results which we expected to proceed from his very elaborate modes of inducing the "mantic" frenzy. Mr. Dudley accounted for the inferiority of his protege's powers by stating that the atmosphere was prejudicial to his peculiar temperament, and though he had striven to surround him with favorable conditions, it was obvious he needed the specialties of his native soil and climate for the complete evolvement of the phenomena he had been accustomed to exhibit.

Amongst the distinguished persons into whose society Professor von Marx and myself were now admitted, we found several individuals of the magical type, who had been imported by earnest students from different countries, for the purpose of aiding their investigations. One of these mystics was a native of the Isle of Skye, and had been remarkable for his gift of "second sight." Panoramic representations of future events, with all the vivid imagery of well-defined persons and circumstances, would be presented to this man's waking vision, like a picture daguerreotyped on the atmosphere.

Another of the marvel-workers was a young Laplander, whose powers and methods of awakening them were not unlike those of the schaman described above, only that he seemed to possess an innate faculty of clairvoyant perception, which did not always necessitate the magical frenzy to call into play.

There were several other personages, all imported from northern lands, through whom our new friends attempted to conduct experiments; but it seemed that in each case the powers for which these weird people had been distinguished, had either diminished or utterly failed them when taken away from the influence of their home surroundings. The islander from Skye had only beheld one vision since he had quitted his native shores, and that was the scene of a shipwreck, in which, as he affirmed, he was destined to perish, and for which reason he had steadily refused to return home, although his gifts as a seer were now suspended. It is a curious fact, and worthy of record, that this Skye man, having been placed in service as a gardener, was arrested for theft, convicted, sentenced to transportation, and after having been removed to the convict ship, finally perished in a gale, during which the ship, with all her hapless load of crime and suffering, was lost.

We, that is, my master and myself, saw little or nothing amongst the "magicians" whom our new friends had taken such trouble to surround themselves with, that equalled the experiences of our Teutonic associates, but our opportunities for enlarging our sphere of observation strengthened our belief in the following items of spiritual philosophy: First, that there are individuals who possess by nature all the prophetic, clairvoyant, and otherwise supermundane powers which are only to be evoked in different organisms by magical rites or magnetic processes.

Next, we found another and still larger class, who seemed externally to have no extraordinary endowments of a spiritual nature, yet in whom the most wonderful powers of inner light, curative virtue, and prophetic vision could be awakened through artificial means, the most potent of which were the inhalation of mephitic vapors, pungent essences, or narcotics; the action of clamorous noise or soothing music; the process of looking into glittering stones and crystals; excessive and violent action, especially in a circular direction; and lastly, through the exhalations proceeding from the warm blood of animated beings. All

these influences, together with an array of forms, rites, and ceremonials which involve mental action and captivate the senses, I now affirm to constitute the art of ancient magic, and I moreover believe that wherever these processes are systematically resorted to, they will, in more or less force, according to the susceptibility of the subject, evoke all those occult powers known as ecstasy, somnambulism, clairvoyance, the gifts of prophecy, healing, etc.

We derived another remarkable item of philosophy from our researches, which was that under the influence of some of the magical processes practiced by our new associates, the human organism can not only be rendered insensible to pain, but that wounds, bruises, and even mutilation can be inflicted upon it without permanent injury; also, that it can be rendered positive to the law of gravitation, and ascend into the air with perfect ease.

Also the body can be so saturated with magnetism, or charged with spiritual essence, that fire cannot burn it; in a word, when the body becomes enveloped in the indestructible essence of spirit, or the soul element, it can be made wholly positive to all material laws, transcending them in a way astonishing and inexplicable to all uninstructed beholders. Of this class of phenomena, history has made such frequent mention that I feel justified in calling attention towards the array of evidence we possess on the subject. Let me refer to the "Convulsionaires of St. Medard;" the history of the "French Prophets of Avignon;" the still more recent accounts of the frightful mental epidemic which prevailed in the district of Moraine, in 1864; the now well-attested facts of supermundane power enacted by the fakirs, brahmins, and ecstasies of the East, and many of the inexplicable physical and mental phenomena attributed to monastic "ecstasies."

Amongst the "Convulsionaires of St. Medard" and the possessed peasants of Moraine, one of the most familiar demonstrations of an extra-mundane condition was the delight and apparent relief which the sufferers represented themselves as experiencing when blows, violent enough, as it would seem, to have crushed them bone by bone, were administered to them. At the tomb of the Abbe Paris, and amongst the frenzied patients of Morzine, the most pathetic appeals would be made that sturdy, powerful men would pound and beat their bodies with huge mallets and the cries of "Heavier yet, good brother! Heavier yet, for the love of heaven!" were amongst the words that were most constantly uttered.

During the fearful struggle maintained by the brave and devoted prophets of the Cevennes against their oppressors, every history, whether favorable or antagonistic, makes mention of the exhibitions by which Cavillac and others of the "inspired" proved their ability, under the afflatus of ecstasy, to resist the action of fire.

Amongst a vast number of records concerning the mystical power of the spirit to act upon and through matter, we may cite the lives of some of those remarkable personages canonized by the Catholic church as saints.

In the experiences of Saint Teresa, Saint Bridgetta, Saint Catherine, and many other "holy women," we are confidently informed that an actual "stigmata" was developed on their hands, feet, and sides, in imitation of the wounds attributed to the martyr of Calvary. Their foreheads were encircled by marks as of a crown of thorns, and drops of blood were seen to ooze from the stigmata at stated periods.

Of the Arabian fire-eaters and Hindoo ecstasies, I shall have more to say hereafter; for the present I close this long and discursive chapter with a few passages of explanation concerning the existence of magical practices and magical experiments in stern, gloomy, matter-of-fact old England.

Nearly all the English gentlemen to whom Professor von Marx had letters of introduction were members of secret societies, and, with one exception, pursued their studies in the direction of magic, deeming they could ultimately resolve the nature and use of all occult powers into a scientific system, analogous to the magical art as practiced in the days of antiquity. The one exception which I refer to is an order that owes nothing of its working on existence to this age or time. Its actual nature is only recognized, spoken, or thought of as a dream, a memory of the past, evoked like a phantom from the realms of tradition or myth; yet as surely as there is a spirit in man, is there in the world a spiritual, though nameless and almost unknown association of men, drawn together by the bonds of soul, associated by those interior links which never fade or perish, belonging to all times, places, and nations alike. Few can attain to the inner light of these spiritually associated brethren, or apprehend the significance of their order; enough that it is, has been, and will be, until all men are spiritualized enough to partake of its exalted dispensations. Some members of this sublime Brotherhood were in session in England, and their presence it was which really sent thither my master and myself, at the time of which I write.

That there should exist within the very heart of rationalism and Christian piety, England, more than one secret society addicted to magical practices and superstitious rites, but above all, that the highest order of mystics in the world should be uttering its potent spells in the midst of the great modern Babylon, dedicated to the worship of mammon and pauperism, is a statement so startling and original that I expect few but the initiated into its actualities to credit me, and many of my readers, especially good, honest, matter-of-fact English people themselves, to denounce me as a lunatic or a modern Munchausen. I can only say, I write of that which I know, and of what many esteemed and reputable citizens, in their private experiences, know likewise; and if good, honest, matter-of-fact English people would only remember there might be realms of being both higher and lower than man's, links of connection and mutual understanding throughout the universe, and some few things more in heaven and earth than they (worthy folk) dream of in their philosophy, the magicians of England would not feel compelled, for their credit and honor's sake, to make their societies secret ones.

As it was, the clairvoyants, seers, and weird subjects whom the societies procured for their experiments were generally employed in families, shops, or some simple ways of business, which effectually concealed their real characters. The magical experiments were conducted with the strictest reserve and caution; and it is only since the advent of Modern Spiritualism, with its remarkable and wide-spread commonplaces in wonderful things, that the world has begun to discover that spiritual facts and experiences in Great Britain are several years older than the movement of the last quarter of a century.

It was some few weeks after our arrival in London, and one night just as I was taking leave of my dear master for the night, that the following conversation ensued between us:

"Louis, you have hitherto taken no part amongst these English magicians. I have secluded you from all exercise of your powers because—but you know the reasons, do you not?"

"Perfectly, my master; you wished me to have some rest; and to imbibe fresh force for future efforts; furthermore, you desired that I should have calm and deliberate opportunities for observation. Is it not so?"

"You understand me thoroughly; and now, what conclusions have you arrived at, from all you have witnessed?"

"Conclusions! O my master, I am more and more lost in an ocean of speculation; more wildly tossed than ever before on the unresting billows of a shoreless sea! I realize the interference and all-persuasive power of invisible realms of being, but who or what they are becomes to me each day an ever-deepening mystery. I perceive each hour fresh evidences of a wonderful and mysterious fountain of influence in human beings—aye, at times in the animal creation also; but who can fathom its depths, gauge its possibilities, define where it lies, or pronounce upon its destiny? The earth and the creatures that live upon it are all dual, and evidently maintain a dual existence; but I know no more the limitations of my own being than I do of the 'double goers' who flash before our eyes like tongues of flame or meteoric lights. Alas! alas! I think, believe, hope, and fear too much, and know too little."

"You shall know more; know—aye, even the absolute, soon, my Louis," rejoined the Professor, with a deeper glow on his cheek and a more brilliant flash of his star-like eyes than I had ever seen before; then, after a strange, long pause, in which he seemed fixed and abstracted like one entranced, he drew a letter from his bosom, glanced at it, and heaved a sigh so deep that it almost amounted to a wail. That letter he turned over several times his hand, gazing now on the large seal which closed it, now on the direction, which was in his own bold writing, and marked simply, "To my Louis." The painful sigh, the first and only token of deep emotion I had ever heard from this man, was repeated several times; at length he placed the letter in my hands, saying with an air of singular solemnity: "Keep this in the most secret repository you have, and never open it until a voice, the most authoritative to you on earth, shall say, 'The time has come. Open and read!'"

"Good-night, Louis. Your experiences as a mystic in England are now about to commence."

"Good-night, my master," I responded aloud, adding mentally, "Would God they were about to close in the sleep that knows no waking!"

"The death-sleep of earth is the waking life of eternity," murmured a sweet, low voice, close to my ear. I started, and looked for the speaker. Professor von Marx was gone, and the luminous apparition of the beautiful Constance flitted by me like an electric flash, and vanished into the darkness, so much the more profound that she had been there.

