

## THE DIVINING ROD.

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**I**T will not be necessary to detain you by any long statement as to the antiquity of the belief in the powers of a Divining Rod in the hands of a Diviner, or as to the universality of the recognition of these powers among all nations of which we have any records. The Old Testament contains many references to the power of a rod or wand in skilled hands, whether of divine prompting or of human magical art. The records of the Chaldeans, and of the Pharaohs of Egypt, show a similar use of a rod to produce super-normal results. The Arabs and the Negroes, the North American Indians, and the Maoris, alike used the Wand of the Adept, of the Voodooist, or the medicine-man. Throughout the history of mediæval and modern Europe we find references to the Divining Rod, in succession to the well-known classical allusions of the Greek and Roman authors to Rhabdomancy.

The uses of the Divining Rod have been to discover water-springs, to locate metals and their ores, and, at any rate in olden times, to discover criminals, murderers and thieves, dead persons and hidden treasure.

It is only with the question of the power of the rod in skilled hands to discover water and metals that it is proposed now to treat.

It has been the fashion of the Victorian age to decry and condemn all powers which the science of the day failed to explain. But our science is not absolute truth, it is progressive in its knowledge, and it corrects to-day what it supplied as true yesterday. When we find a thing believed in by some persons and scoffed at by others, we should pause to enquire if there be not an element of truth, as well as a share of falsity, in both the belief and the ridicule. Ignorance (said Lander Bruton) is the parent both of blind belief and of scepticism, and leads not only to implicit belief in untruth, but also to a rash denial of what is true.

While then the powers of the Dowser—a word in common use, but of uncertain origin—and of the Divining Rod, have been derided by most of us for fifty years past, we may take notice that there are numerous records of success in discovering underground water and metals to be found recorded. A summary of these was given by Dr. Hutton, in 1814, by Dr. Mayo in 1857, by Vaughan Jenkins and Pease in 1884; and in 1883 Dr. R. Raymund read a

lecture to the American Institute of Mining Engineers and said—“after deducting all necessary exaggerations and attempts at fraud, there remains a residuum of scientific value of proof of the action of the Divining Rod when used to find springs of water and deposits of metallic ores.”

Our present-day investigators of occult manifestations are tending to explain mental phenomena of a super-normal sort by the workings of subconscious mind, and curious physical effects by reflex action arising from our subliminal consciousness.

Professor Barrett after long study laid down that: “The movement of the Divining Rod is due neither to trickery nor to conscious voluntary effort, but is an automatic action that occurs under certain conditions in certain individuals, and that it arises from an involuntary and unconscious suggestion impressed upon the mind.”

Accompanying the muscular movement which changes the position of the rod, there is at times a spasm and a peculiar sense of feeling ill from the emotion of the occurrence. The suggestion, leading to the motion of the hands and rod, may arise from various causes, by auto-suggestion, through the senses from the environment, or from some unexplained faculty of transcendental perceptive power of the diviner, allied to genius. Some such persons have appeared able to succeed only when profoundly impressed, with the normal self-consciousness in abeyance, or even in hypnosis, when the consciousness is entirely submerged.

Professor Barrett proposes to explain the instances, inexplicable at present, by science, by attributing the results to the subconscious perceptive power commonly called “clairvoyance.”

There is one point of considerable interest in the occurrence of the movement of the Divining Rod in the hands of *bona fide* workers with it, viz., that the conscious and visible motion of the rod follows, perhaps immediately, but does not coincide with the alleged cause—the hidden stream of water, spring, etc. This delay or hesitancy is called by Barrett, who has himself noticed it, the “hysteresis,” or the lagging behind of the effect from the cause. The rod’s motion, the involuntary muscular action with emotional disturbance—these he calls the language of the subconscious life. He remarks that the same delay of perception is found to occur in examples of thought-transference, in the physiological reflex action to stimuli, and to a magnetising force acting upon soft iron.

The Divining Rod of recent times has been a twig of the hazel bush, apple or beech tree, cut so as to provide a straight piece ending in two branches of nearly equal size; the length is immaterial so long as the two arms are long enough to give a grasp for the hands, and the single portion of equal or of greater length to act as a pointer and able to turn upwards or downwards. Some diviners use it only when fresh, others can use it when even dry.

In olden times there were rules declaring certain days and hours as most propitious for the cutting of the rod ; these have long since passed into disuse. Certain prayers and conjurations also were employed according to rules of the magic arts, in the Middle Ages, by European professors of occult powers.

The true diviner, when introduced to the locality where water or metal is to be sought, does not study the configuration of the ground, but proceeds to walk across and across as his impulses lead him ; and appears to have no sensations of any unusual nature until he traverses the water-spring, water-course, or mineral upon which his attention is concentrated. When successful, we observe him to stop and appear deeply impressed with some sensation, the free end of the rod turns upwards or downwards, as the case may be, a spasm runs through his hands and arms, and he declares that he cannot resist the muscular effort which has been obviously experienced by him.

Professor Barrett, who has made very extensive researches into the records of dowzers, and many experiments, concluded that as many as 75 to 80 per cent. of trials for water have been successful.

The sensation of the turning of a Divining Rod is an amazing experience on the first occurrence. I have felt it and have never forgotten it. It is comparable only to the surprise and astonishment felt by the experimenter who first feels a small, round, one-legged table move beneath his hands, without his act or intention, but in fulfilment of his hope of table-turning power.

It was many years ago I went with a dozen other persons by invitation to the house of an entire stranger, to see an exhibition by a West of England dowser. We were told that across, but beneath, a large suburban London garden, there ran an old water-course from an adjacent spring ; and the dowser was invited to locate it. Several of the visitors, and I among them, expressed a wish to make the trial. We were shut up in the front sitting-room, while the dowser made his attempt, and he at once found the water-course. I made a trial and found it. While crossing the lawn at a certain place, as I walked holding the forked twig in my two hands, with the single stalk pointing horizontally before me, there came a sudden quite unexpected distortion of my hands, the single end of the stick twisted upwards irresistibly, causing almost a spasm of pain in the muscles of the thumbs and fore-arms—and then it was gone. The experience was quite unique, and more like the cramp of a magneto-electric current than any sensation known to me. The host assured me that I also had found the water-current as I crossed it : no other visitor succeeded in doing so.

While in our newspapers we still read occasionally of the successful use of the twig of a tree as a Divining Rod, especially in the search for springs of water, and more rarely as a means for finding

metallic deposits—we must not omit to note that our modern science has made use of the magnet for the latter purpose, using a magnetic dipping needle, and watching its deflections as it is passed along over the ground. Attempts in the same direction have also been made by testing the electrical resistance of the earth, at various places, by means of constant currents.

Most recently, however, the telephone has been brought into use, to appreciate differences in sound when electric currents are passed through the ground, and a very sensitive telephone is put also in connection with the earth. Changes of musical note occur when metallic ores are present, but it has not yet been found possible to ascertain the nature of the metal or the amount lying beneath the surface. Metal rods are driven into the ground, two or three hundred feet apart, and a powerful alternating current of perhaps twenty to forty thousand volts is passed through the earth, and the effects are observable for a mile or more around.

The natural sciences have made enormous strides of advance during our life-time, but man is still very ignorant of the intangible forces which surround him and which affect both his mind and body. Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers ; and we stand upon the shore of an unknown sea of life and evolution, watching the rise of the sun of nature, and a new world coming into being.