



# A Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism ( Volume Two )

*James Clerk Maxwell*

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MAGNETISM. CHAPTER I.

ELEMENTARY THEORY OF MAGNETISM.

371.] CERTAIN bodies, as, for instance, the iron ore called load stone, the earth itself, and pieces of steel which have been subjected to certain treatment, are found to possess the following properties, and are called Magnets. •

If, near any part of the earth's surface except the Magnetic Poles, a magnet be suspended so as to turn freely about a vertical axis, it will in general tend to set itself in a certain azimuth, and if disturbed from this position it will oscillate about it. An un-magnetized body has no such tendency, but is in equilibrium in all azimuths alike.

372.] It is found that the force which acts on the body tends to cause a certain line in the body, called the Axis of the Magnet, to become parallel to a certain line in space, called the Direction of the Magnetic Force.

Let us suppose the magnet suspended so as to be free to turn in all directions about a fixed point. To eliminate the action of its weight we may suppose this point to be its centre of gravity. Let it come to a position of equilibrium. Mark two points on the magnet, and note their positions in space. Then let the magnet be placed in a new position of equilibrium, and note the positions in space of the two marked points on the magnet.

Since the axis of the magnet coincides with the direction of magnetic force in both positions, we have to find that line in the magnet which occupies the same position in space before and

after the motion. It appears, from the theory of the motion of  $\bullet$  bodies of invariable form, that such a line always exists, and that a motion equivalent to the actual motion might have taken place by simple rotation round this line.

To find the line, join the first and last positions of each of the marked points, and draw planes bisecting these lines at right angles. The intersection of these planes will be the line required, which indicates the direction of the axis of the magnet and the direction of the magnetic force in space.

The method just described is not convenient for the practical determination of these directions. We shall return to this subject when we treat of Magnetic Measurements.

The direction of the magnetic force is found to be different at different parts of the earth's surface. If the end of the axis of the magnet which points in a northerly direction be marked, it has been found that the direction in which it sets itself in general deviates from the true meridian to a considerable extent, and that the marked end points on the whole downwards in the northern hemisphere and upwards in the southern. ...

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