

# The Medical Electricians: George A. Scott and His Victorian Cohorts in Quackery

Robert K. Waits

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## The Medical Electricians: George A. Scott and His Victorian **Cohorts in Quackery**

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The Medical Electricians: George A. Scott and His Victorian Cohorts in Quackery Robert K. Waits George Augustus Scott, although he gained notoriety (and riches) selling 'electric' cure-alls, was a wideranging entrepreneur. Scott left behind legitimate legacies: successful manufacturing businesses in Massachusetts and London, and a famously unsuccessful mercantile cooperative in New York. The story of 'Dr. Scott,' a quack peddler of Electric brushes, corsets, and belts, electric in name only, is intertwined with those of several other Victorian Medical Electricians. He mentored protégés who became infamous for quackery: Cornelius B. Harness, in England, and John R. Foran in America; and tangled with a feisty Brooklyn competitor, William C. Wilson, who later took up with Foran. George Scott was not a physician, and avoided referring to himself as Doctor except in his audacious advertisements. He did not seek personal publicity (an attribute rare among quacks) but was well known socially. Scott died a wealthy man at age 48, and his Pall Mall Electric business persisted for years, the last known advertisements appeared in the 1920s. Here are the advertisements and adventures of Scott, Harness, Wilson, Foran and their colleagues in quackery during the latter part of the Nineteenth Century.



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