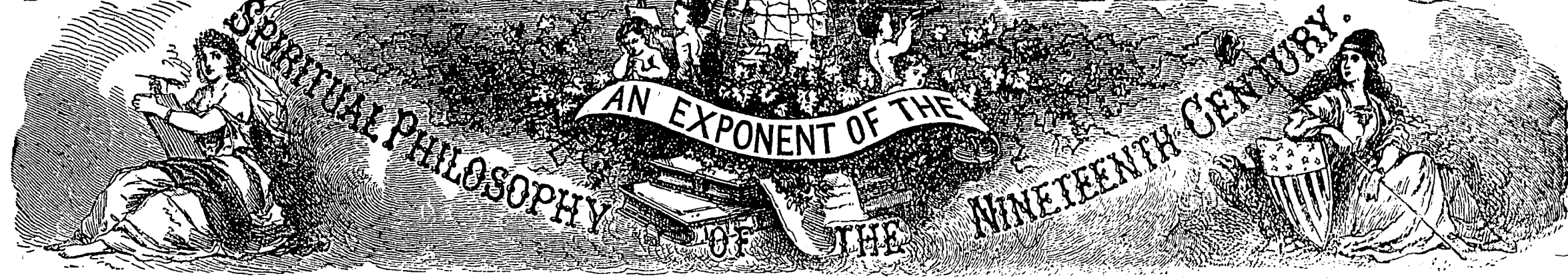


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Spiritual Phenomena.

ORTHODOX SEANCES.

BY H. N. PORTER, M. D.

To the Editor of the Banner of Light:

We propose to show as the result of our recent investigations that Spiritualism is gaining ground in the churches and among religious people to an extent not at all realized by church-goers or the clergy.

Within a few months we have been repeatedly assured by several distinguished mediums that a very large majority of their patrons are identified with the various church organizations of the day. Not ready, or even meditating the idea of renouncing their allegiance to their church, they would seek added light. These patrons, we are further informed, are generally among those who are hungering, not for low, selfish, and unworthy ends, but for new and higher light, which many a devout Christian has sought in fervent, secret prayer, on bended knees. And right here we pause to ask, will these earnest inquirers after new truth find no answer to their petitions from the Great Father of us all? If you say prayer in this way can never be acceptably offered, beware, lest you encourage the doctrine of the folly and worthlessness of all prayer.

A distinguished spiritualizing medium has recently informed us that a company of eight or ten ladies, all members of the same church, have held select circles of their own with her, and found such proofs of the continued existence of departed friends as gives them new and added hopes of immortal life. By the same medium we were also informed that for several years she has quite often held select circles, made up wholly of scientific men and college professors. While the medium here referred to possessed of a fair degree of intelligence and common sense, no one who knows her can suppose her capable of imposing successfully for a period of years upon these learned men.

Another case comes to our mind of a cultivated lady who is a pillar in the evangelical church to which she belongs. She having seen and become familiar with some of the more common physical manifestations, determined to make further investigation. Accordingly at a recent family gathering, when she, a member of the family, and sisters were present, all in mature life, and so, and our friends and family reunions, the most sacred places in the whole world, may be thus invaded, pray tell whither we may flee for safety?

But let us refer more particularly to an exceedingly interesting work now going on under the leadership of a lady (whom we will call Mrs. A.) in one of the most prominent Orthodox churches in Massachusetts. She from early womanhood has been, and still is, a member of the exemplary Sunday school in the church is never questioned. She has been a medium for eight years or more, and possesses a wonderful combination of powers, and we feel sure she is destined at no distant day to occupy a very conspicuous position before the public as a teacher of the Spiritual Philosophy. So exclusively interested in her church and church work has she been, that not until within the last three years has she suspected that what was interesting her was anything in any way related to Modern Spiritualism.

Her first form of mediumship was inspirational writing, and was limited to that until about a year ago, when it assumed the form of musical composition. Her earlier experiences in this work consisted of a great number of poems of an elevated character. They were written under the shadow of the deepest affliction. No one can fail to see that she thought herself impressed with the holiest influences while writing; for certainly they breathe the spirit of the loftiest devotion and calm resignation. In her ignorance of Spiritualism, having never seen any of its books or periodicals, and in allegiance and heartiest devotion to the church, she would hasten to her Bible-class teacher, her pastor, to the surviving friends of the dear departed ones, from whom she professed and believed she had been able to write communications, and try to learn of them what it could all mean. But none could give her any light. Some were filled with gladness and delight with the communications received, but could not account for them. Others were bewildered, and felt unable to express any intelligent opinion of them; while a few thought they saw traces of Spiritualism in her writings. Still others thought they saw nothing very remarkable in them. But the minister to whom she first showed her early poems saw much in them to admire, and even suggested that they be published in a little volume entitled, "A Tribute to Mourners."

We have stated that her first form of mediumship was that of writing, and for the first few years it was mostly poetry. This is all the more remarkable as she probably never wrote a verse until after she was thirty years old. It showed itself most conspicuously in writing verses as

memorials of departed friends; more especially of members of her religious society, but not limited to this class. These verses are most deeply cherished in many households, and not a few of them have from time to time appeared in secular papers. The number of instances in which she has written verses of this character is more than eighty. And, what is very strange, during the last year or two, this gift seems to have almost entirely left her.

About two years ago it took the form of writing letters, which purported to come from persons then recently deceased in the community in which she lives, but sometimes from other persons whom she had never known. The names of such deceased persons would be signed to these letters, and the pertinence and fitness of their subject matter was such as to arrest the attention and awaken the astonishment of surviving relatives and friends. In some of these letters special prophecies were made, which have in numerous cases since been fulfilled, while in others the time for fulfillment has not yet arrived. These letters are carefully preserved, with the exact date at which they were written. The number of these letters, signed with the names of the deceased members of her religious society, is more than forty, and a still larger number from others.

Another prominent feature of her writing has been that of prayers. In them she consecrates herself in the most exalted strains of aspiration to the work of preparation for future usefulness. When it is borne in mind that up to this time she had never felt called upon to lead in prayer at religious meetings, it is not a little surprising that she should now write prayers so full of beauty and pathos.

But by far the most extensive part of her writings are of a character so personal to herself, that we do not yet feel quite at liberty to dwell at any considerable length upon them. They are, to some extent, prophecies of her future work in the world. These prophecies appear more or less distinct in most of her writings, but have been more marked during the last few years; and some of them have already been fulfilled, while others are awaiting the developing process of time. If these writings are to be taken as a guide to her future career she cannot long remain in her present seclusion. Some of these predictions of her future course are so strange, and wholly unexpected to herself, that she shrinks from showing them even to her nearest friends, so much like dreams and vain-glory will it seem to them. The aggregate of her writings is very large, and if they are ever published, as we fully believe they will, they will comprise a series of works that will make a marked impression upon society—more especially upon the church-going part of the community. Here will be found a blameless life filled with the spirit of devotion, earnestly hungering to give the bread of life alike to the lofty and the lowly. The proof will be incontestable that she has held communion with the departed. With true missionary zeal she has heartily proclaimed the doctrine of communion with the departed before the church, and in her own church the leavening process has gone to an extent little dreamed of, and was never spreading so rapidly as now, as we shall presently show.

Over a year ago, and in accordance with the predictions of her previous writings, she began to compose music. Let it be frankly stated that Mrs. A., both by native talent and culture, is a good musician, and that for twelve years she was a successful teacher of piano-forte music. Let it also be stated that eighteen months ago she had never composed a piece of music, or even thought herself capable of doing so. During the first six months of the past year she composed sixty pieces of music and set them to notes. It is nearly or quite all music for the piano, and includes quite a number of songs, the verses of which she also wrote. She composes freely with all about her music, and delights her musical and other friends with her execution of it; and we think the music-publishers who may give it to the world will be a fortunate man. During the last ten months she has not written a single piece of music; but, if the prophecies of her pen shall prove true, she will very soon return to the business of musical composition.

During the last autumn she spent some time in visiting among friends in New Hampshire, where she had formerly spent several years of her mature life. She was everywhere most cordially welcomed. But her condition in life had been so suddenly changed since she resided among them. She was now a widow and childless. No wonder that all hearts were deeply moved toward her. Of course she could not stay away from the prayer and conference meetings. It was at these meetings, when an invitation had been extended to all who might be so inclined to speak, that she felt called upon to utter her earnest words of exhortation and thankfulness. This was a surprise both to herself and her friends. This was the first time she had ever spoken at a public meeting, and it was inferred from the fact that the minister and others were hearty in their congratulations and urged her to cultivate the gift which, up to this time, had lain nearly dormant. During her visit she was a most welcome visitor in all their homes, and everywhere the account of her experiences was listened to with the most intense interest.

Coming down to a very late date, at her own home and church she felt impressed to offer her word of encouragement and exhortation, which is always listened to with interest. This growing readiness to speak is in strict accordance with what has been repeatedly alluded to in her writings from the first, but with especial emphasis during the last few years. What will be the final outcome of all this does not yet fully appear—certainly not to those who are imperfectly acquainted with her experiences.

With this brief history of Mrs. A.'s mediumship we proceed to give the reader some account of the seances or circles, or, if these terms convey an idea of unpleasant associations, call them simply gatherings, usually in small numbers of two or three to twenty or more, for the sole purpose of inquiring concerning spirit communion. These were commenced little more than a year ago. During the first part of the time they were seldom attended by any but ladies, composed of equally of Orthodox and Unitarians, nearly or quite all of them members and active supporters, and constant attendants on Sunday worship. What possible motive could these ladies have for seeking or believing anything but truth as it might present itself to their minds? Certainly no honor or profit, according to the general estimate of the world, could come of it; but, on the contrary, a loss of social position in their respective churches. The results of these gatherings were in the highest degree interesting to the investigators, for they found what was to them a simple proof of spirit communion. When once this doctrine has found complete lodgment in the mind of a person, it is very doubtful if such an one were ever known to renounce that faith.

At this time Mrs. A. was having a large patronage as a teacher of music, but it is easy to see that another subject was of vastly deeper concern to her. It could not be set aside, nor

did she so desire. With the strange prophecies coming through her pen, before referred to, how could she desert from her investigations?

About two years ago she was invited to take up her residence for several months in another town in a most worthy family. The unexpected hospitality thus extended to her, together with the prophetic character of her writings about that time, was such as to induce her to relinquish wholly her music classes. Since that time it would seem that she has devoted herself wholly to her preparation for the remaining work of life. With what faithfulness and persistence this work of preparation has been carried forward by her, in the midst of many discouragements from relatives and friends, with not more than one or two persons in the world who fully sympathized with her, or at all appreciated the magnitude of the work she believed she was destined to do, her future career must determine.

We have had the good fortune to be present at several of these gatherings at her home, and we shall ever cherish the memory of these meetings with great satisfaction. On these occasions there have very rarely been any physical manifestations. They have invariably been held in the light. We state this not because we wish in any way to disparage the value of physical manifestations, or the genuineness of what occurs at probably a large majority of dark circles. All we assert is that inspiration is the highest order of manifestation. But all orders and types of mediumship are desirable and useful in their place.

The number usually present has been small—from four to ten. Full three-fourths of the persons present are members of churches or sympathize with church views. Conspicuous among these investigators are Sabbath school teachers and members of the Bible-class. It is not too much to state that all these inquirers have become exceedingly interested in this investigation, while several members of the church have actually been developed into entranced mediumship. It is also true that as Mrs. A.'s powers and aims become more known the number of these anxious investigators is rapidly increasing. For is she to be won over, at when the character of these meetings is understood? Sometimes the company sit as they please about the room, but oftener in a circle. This latter mode of sitting is understood to be more conducive to the best results of magnetic influence. The singing of some of the most popular hymns and tunes, so common in all our churches, constitutes an important part of the service, and is always the opening exercise. This has been followed by a prayer. Nor are these prayers filled with vain repetitions, but rather the outflowing of the soul in the spirit of devotion. We need not here inquire whether there be entrancement during these prayers, but if there be, so much the better. If Peter prayed entranced, ("I was in the city of Joppa, praying and in a trance," &c.—Acts. x. 10) why may not devout persons since his day be entranced?

Then follows the utterance of such words that all are filled with the deepest interest. Mrs. A. to mind a fact which came from Mrs. A. to herself, detailing with much minuteness an incident, unimportant in itself, that occurred months ago, which it is not possible she should have had any knowledge of, which incident was not then and had not been for weeks in our mind. She mentioned the name of the departed spirit from whom she claimed to have received this information, a person whom she had never known in earth-life.

Ready, we mean, every Christian reader, is there any other possible way of explaining such a test as this, than that she actually received the information from the source she claims for it? Do you say testimony of so extraordinary a character cannot be admitted on the declaration of any one person? Then we will offer the testimony of half-a-dozen witnesses, the word of either of whom would be taken in any court or in a church. But test-mediumship, as commonly understood, is an entirely new thing with her. Yet we think the prophecies written by her hand years ago, which have again and again become accomplished facts, are really the most wonderful and incontestable tests.

The main object of these gatherings has been to establish the doctrine of spirit-intercourse—a momentous truth, and so denied by the large majority that the mind refuses to receive it except on the fullest proof. Then any new inquiry known to these meetings, is new fact, and a leading idea is to first establish this doctrine in their minds. When those only are present whose minds are fully convinced on this subject, the time is occupied in aspiring to new and higher truths. The fact is, that those who have once become thoroughly interested in their researches in this new field of inquiry never tire of spirit-communion. Its influence upon inquirers depends almost wholly upon the spirit in which they enter upon and pursue their investigations, and it is only when the spirit-communion which is implied in this article can have any other than the most salutary influence on mortals?

We recall to mind a recent gathering of this company of investigators, held at the residence of a church-member whose purity of life and piety are above suspicion. It was held on the twenty-first anniversary of the birth of their first-born, who, a few years ago, had been taken from their earthly home, and whose death they thought their only surviving child, and desolation reigned within their once happy home. The company assembled was larger than usual, there being present about twenty. A very large proportion of those present were members of churches, and the same deep religious feeling pervaded it as at former gatherings. No one present seemed to be aware that he or she would be required to perform any special duty.

All expected the meeting would be wholly informal. No one had previously made the slightest preparation for anything like a formal address for the occasion. Judge, then, of the pleasant surprise to all when, soon after the usual opening exercises, Mrs. B., a lady of mature years, cultured, and a very prominent member of the church, became entranced, and in this condition led the host and hostess, who were seated apart, to a central place in the room, and there delivered a most touching and fitting memorial address to their childless parents. Let it be further stated that Mrs. B. never dreamed that she could make an address, even before so small a company as was now assembled. While her purity and eminent Christian piety are acknowledged by all who know her, and by none more heartily than by the members of her church, yet it is doubtful if she has ever felt equal to making an address or leading in prayer at the religious meetings of her church. How, then, shall her beautiful and touching address on this occasion be accounted for? Do not presume to even suggest that on this occasion she descended in the smallest degree from her habitually elevated Christian course. On the contrary her words inspired all hearts with the certainty of a life to come and of the happiness of the dear departed to an extent never equalled even in the prayer-meeting or house of worship. Perhaps some one will say she was temporarily insane! Truer would

it be to assert that she was never before so enlightened by wisdom from on high.

Another lady under entrancement delivered a fine impromptu poem pertinent to the occasion. Another circumstance characteristic of this memorable gathering was the impromptu preparation of a short poem suited to the occasion, by a lady whose interest in this subject is measured by weeks rather than by months. She had but a few months ago been bereft of her children. Though not a church-member, she still recognizes her duties toward the church and sympathizes with it. Up to within two days of this time she had never written a verse, and yet here was a production which all present thought possessed real poetic merit. How shall all this be accounted for except that an influence was upon her which she had never before recognized?

Here is no jugglery, no sleight-of-hand performance, all is open to the light! Here is a company of Christian men and women, and in their very midst, they themselves being apparently the only actors, and yet these strange events take place! How are they to be explained except on the basis of spirit communion? We are fully aware that the very term "seance" is repulsive in the extreme to most church-members, and that it is generally thought to be anything but a gathering of persons in the spirit of true devotion. Nor is this to be wondered at when the public press, with few exceptions, rarely or never alludes to a seance but with a sneer. The pulpit almost everywhere holds out, directly or indirectly, the same view. It requires no small amount of moral courage to stand up and be counted an avowed believer in this unpopular doctrine; and it is more than probable that the number of secret believers is larger than that of its openly avowed followers. There were Nicodemuses in olden time, and the number seems to have greatly increased in modern times. And so we suppose it will always continue to be. Eighteen hundred years ago, and ever since, the truth has been a stumbling block, notwithstanding the many obstacles it has had to contend with, and we need not fear that it will cease to make new triumphs. How true it is now as it was of old, that the weak things of this world have been chosen to confound the wise, and that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God has ordained praise.

But really, wherein is the essential difference between the gatherings as here described, and the ordinary prayer meeting? At the latter do you not import the presence and blessing of God in your midst? Do you not look forward with devout aspiration to the reunion of loving hearts in the world to come? Do you not import direction and aid in the daily duties of life? All these things are most earnestly sought after at the gatherings here described. But you have always been taught to believe we can know nothing of the departed until we ourselves go hence. With this belief so wrought into your innermost being from youth upward, it is not strange that you cannot readily accept the new doctrine, or rather the primitive Christian doctrine, which is new to you, and cannot believe until you have proofs; nor is it desirable that you should. Nor will you ever have the proofs that will convince you until you put yourself in the attitude of an honest inquirer. And as you do not rest satisfied with attending a single prayer meeting, but rather seek repeatedly the guidance and direction of the Heavenly Father, so now he will give you a single trial, for proof of spirit-communion, but seek it with the same earnest spirit that you would exercise at a prayer meeting; and we are sure you will have as much and even more proof of spirit communion than you now have that your prayers are heard in heaven.

Would it be an unpleasant thought to you to believe that those whom we call dead are about us, and taking cognizance of us, and are anxious to aid us by all the instrumentalities in their power? Would you not love us with a new love, and care for us with maternal devotion? Would not the thought that you are now pursued by that same love and care, tend to make you a better man or woman? Why, then, should the thought be repulsive?

Would you know something of this beautiful truth? Put yourself in the attitude of a learner, willing to receive with an open mind whatever new light may come to you. At your firesides, at the company of cherished friends there can be no danger of your being led into harmful error.

As with the advancing years higher perceptions of religious truth are everywhere apparent, so let us of this day and generation not account ourselves to have fully attained, but search diligently for still higher perceptions of religious duty, and a still broader charity for all mankind.
Dorchester, Mass.

Curious Psychological Experiments.

To the Editor of the Banner of Light:

I have often been in social family gatherings, consisting of eight or ten persons, more or less, when we agreed to try the power of psychology, to find out who of our company were of the negative or mediumistic temperament. This was done by selecting one of the company and taking him or her into another room and completely isolating them. In the meeting room we would hide some article, in sight of all in the room we were occupying—say the key of the door—in the most obscure place, perhaps under the carpet. Then the blindfolded person is led into the room and left to himself. All the persons in the room unite in willing him or her to find the hidden article, keeping their minds on the place where it is hidden. We have seen many times the blindfolded person walk directly to the place and find the hidden article, which he could not have done in a long time had the room been vacated and he not been blindfolded.

Now we would inquire if something may not be learned by this? Is it not possible that some good honest mediums may be so psychologized by persons who are opposed to Spiritualism, as to be made to state that their mediumship was a deception, as was the case in Maine some time since, when an excellent medium, a respectable lady, was visited by three clergymen who were opposed to Spiritualism, and who so psychologized her or suggested her, that she told them that she was a deceiver, and that was what they wanted, and they went away rejoicing, having got what they brought with them?

We have read of other instances where circles were formed for spirit-manifestations, and a great part of the circle were skeptical and watching for fraud, which so operated upon the medium that she acknowledged fraud, when she was an honest and good medium. But we have seen other circles, where the mediums that are so developed and guarded by the spirit-world that they cannot be psychologized by any power on earth.

In holding a circle, where all are honestly desirous of communicating with the departed loved ones, and only partially developed mediums are in the circle, the sitters will soon find the key that will unlock the spirit-world to their satisfaction.
RICHARD WALKER.
Cambridgeport, Mass.

"THE ETHICS OF SPIRITUALISM."

A REVIEW.

Some years ago, in one of the so-called National Conventions of Spiritualists, a proposition was made to pass some fragmentary resolutions bearing upon practical morality, when a prominent speaker and Spiritualist created no small sensation by declaring that "Spiritualism had no morality." He was understood by many to mean that Spiritualists were destitute of morals, or were an immoral people. This meaning he disavowed. He doubtless intended to aver, either that Spiritualism had no peculiar scheme of morals, or that Spiritualists as a body had never recognized or adopted any system to which they could appeal as of obligation among themselves.

It is not necessary to say that in either of these positions he was quite correct. But while it is true that Spiritualism imposes no peculiar and authoritative system of ethics on its believers, it is also true that in so far as it throws any new or clearer light on the origin, nature, relations or destiny of human beings, it furnishes additional means for elucidating and establishing the true principles of morality.

That some competent hand should undertake the work of pointing out the ethical significance of this new light, together with that evolved by modern research in all other directions, has long seemed a great desideratum. For it is undeniable that converts to the new faith, to a large extent, have been at sea, without compass or chart, as regards many questions of practical duty. Having broken away from the ancient moorings, and lost confidence in the popular codes of morality—founded as these are in part on religious authority which has been proved fallible, or on legal enactments which ignore important facts in human nature, or more often, perhaps, on the arbitrary prescriptions of St. Custom and Mrs. Grundy—they have known no trustworthy standard of appeal. Each has therefore been compelled in some sort to frame his own rules of conduct, and, like the ancient Hebrews in periods of interregnum, each has in a measure done "that which was right in the sight of his own eyes."

And considering the varying capacities, or incapacities, of average men and women for constructing a comprehensive and just system of ethics, and the well-known influence of constitutional bias, previous education, personal proclivity, etc., in shaping moral judgments where self is concerned, it is not strange that somewhat diverse opinions and practices have prevailed even among well-meaning Spiritualists. Few persons, indeed, are well-qualified to explore the real foundations of moral obligation, to discover the true standard of morals, or to trace clearly the application of such standard in the complex relations of life. Hence it not unfrequently happens that individuals who set up for censurers of others' conduct have no other principles of judgment than their own idiosyncrasies or the prejudices which have happened to survive from their early education.

In the meantime Spiritualism has been often charged by unscrupulous opponents with tending to and fostering every species of immorality and crime, for which it is no more responsible than is Jeffersonian Democracy for the cypher telegrams of 1876, or the science of chemistry for the murder of Dr. Parkman by one of its honored professors.

There is great need, therefore, on the part of Spiritualists as well as other people, for a careful study of fundamental ethical principles, with the aid of all the light which both Modern Spiritualism and modern scientific research can throw upon the problems of human life and duty. And, too, in this study, it is desirable that ordinary minds should have the aid of those gifted ones who are capable not only of clear insight, but of presenting truth in the garb of self-evident authority.

The announcement, some time since, that Mr. Hudson Tuttle had undertaken the task of setting forth the Ethics of Spiritualism, awakened the hope that this great want of the time was about to be met, and in a satisfactory manner. The comprehensiveness, penetration and honesty of mind manifested by Mr. T. in previous productions gave promise of gratifying results in this important undertaking. And now that the work is before the public, it is proper that Spiritualists, after a careful study and analysis of its teachings, should state how far it gives them satisfaction, and whether it shall be accepted as an authentic exposition of the moral bearings of the great spiritual movement of our day.

Indeed, the fact that Mr. Tuttle has chosen to entitle his treatise "The Ethics of Spiritualism," rather than simply, A System of Ethics or of Moral Philosophy, etc., renders it in some sense the duty of all who rank themselves as Spiritualists to critically examine the work and determine whether it shall stand before the world as a correct exponent of their views. At the same time the intrinsic importance of the general subject discussed, not only to Spiritualists but to humanity at large, demands a thorough examination.

Mr. Tuttle is understood to be a medium, and to write under impressions received from disembodied spirits. In this book no claim of that kind is made; but elsewhere, referring to this work, he has told us, "Personally, I take little honor from what I write. . . . I wrote the impressions I received, honestly and without fear, and as completely and perfectly as possible for me to do." This implies that Mr. T. considers himself merely an amanuensis for some invisible author. Among intelligent Spiritualists this claim gives the work no exemption

"THE ETHICS OF SPIRITUALISM: A SYSTEM OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY, Founded on Evolution and the Continuity of Man's Existence Beyond the Grave, BY HUDSON TUTTLE.

