SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH

DEVOTED TO THE ILLUSTRATION OF SPIRITUAL INTERCOURSE.

"THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."

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The Principles of Nature.

THE INTERIOR OR SPIRITUALISTIC VIEW,

AS APPLIED TO SACRIFICES AND SACRIFICIAL ATONEMENT.

1. The state of mind which is properly denominated sinful, necessarily makes God objective or outward. The realization of God as existing within the soul, and as the true life of the soul, while at the same time it is deliberately sinning against God, is an impossibility, because it is of the nature of a direct contradiction. Sin against God at the center, by which we mean not a mere mistake or "sin of ignorance," as it is termed in the Bible, but deliberate and voluntary sin, is necessarily exclusion. Or perhaps we might reverse the statement, and say that the exclusion of God and the acceptance of something else in his stead is that which constitutes the sin. The sinner, therefore, by the very terms of his position, and just so long as he remains a sinner, must have God outside of himself, and generally afar off.

2. And being a sinner, and knowing that God is just, he not only sees him outside of himself and afar off, but, what is more, he realizes the fact of opposition as well as of separation, and sees God as an enemy. He beholds God as a distinct and mighty Personality, clothed with antagonistic and indignant frowns, and holding in his hand, as it is sometimes figuratively expressed, the sword of justice. If he is aroused from his stupidity, and has become conscious of his sins, and at the same time is unrepentant of them, it is impossible for him to take any other view, and in the mental position which he sustains, the view which he takes is a true one.

3. Nor does it appear to be wrong for those who sustain the position of public ministers and teachers, to present God before sinners in that way; to represent him as in a state of separation from them, and as opposed to them and angry with them while they remain in their sins. It is not wrong, because it is only the presentation of that which actually exists. It is the strict truth, so far as they are concerned, and, under the circumstances of the case, not only the Biblical truth, the statement which the Scriptures are generally understood to give, but the philosophical truth, and the more distinctly and powerfully the intense opposition between the sin of the sinner and the attribute of God's unsullied justice is presented by the preacher, the nearer the truth it is, and the better it is for the sinner. It is false to suppose that there is too much of severity, too much of lightning and thunder in that direction. Whether preached by those who hold the position of religious teachers or not, it is something which exists, and must exist. It is a thunder whose voice never ceases—a lightning which burns forever.

4. Now, it is obvious in this state of things that there is no reconciliation between God and the sinner; nor is it possible that there should be while they remain relatively in that situation. But the preacher or minister who asserts the intensity of the opposition existing between the sin of the sinner and the righteousness of God, goes on farther to assert, under the guidance, we will suppose, of a true inward teaching, that God will freely forgive the sinner and receive him at once into the fullness of his favor, if he will only repent of his sins and turn away from them. But the difficulty here is, that the sinner does not, and probably can not, in his present state of mind, receive such a declaration in its true and full import. The center of the deliberate sinner is himself. Of pure, unselfish love, of the doing good to others merely for the sake of good, and because it is a part of his nature, he has no idea. The truth of his own nature, namely, his selfishness, is the measurement of his idea of God; in other words, his God is like himself. He knows, in relation to himself, that he is evil, and that he has done evil; and he is entirely destitute of any adequate conception of that divine benevolence which returns good for evil. His feeling, therefore, is, that God can not be approached; that the sword of his anger, figurative in its form, but real in its nature, can not be laid aside, except in connection with, and by means of, a propitiation—a sacrifice. His idea of God is so low (although it is as high as his existing state of selfishness can carry it) that he thinks God must be *bought off*, and that a payment of some kind must be made before there can be any settlement of the differences between them, and seeing for a time no way in which this can be done, he stands doubting, trembling, fearing, remaining still in his wickedness, without courage or hope to try to escape from it.

5. Now all this is a great trouble to him. Unless a sacrifice can be found, he feels that there is no hope. God in his love approaches the sinner on the only side and in the only way in which it is possible for him, in his present state of mind, to be approached. Redemption is found in God's own Son. Christ, therefore, is to be preached to the transgressor as the great and adequate ransom; as the price which Infinite Love has allowed to be paid for him; as the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." It is a ransom for the sinner paid by another who is not a sinner, so that he is redeemed "without money or price" paid by himself, and preachers who are but partially elevated above their sinning auditors, by being but partially holy, may truly and conscientiously preach the doctrine of sinners ransomed by the blood of Christ. In their existing state of mind, when God's nature and purposes can not be fully understood by them, the view which is commonly taken by them is essentially a true one, and the more faithfully they preach such views, the better both for themselves and others; because this is acting up to the light which they have; and faithfulness in what is given is the only way to further advancement.

6. And now we are prepared to say farther, that Christ is indeed a Lamb sacrificed, and a ransom paid for sin, in a higher and truer sense than the sinner now supposes, whether the sinner be the preacher, or the one who is preached to. But at this point, and in order that we may understand how it is that Christ is a true sacrifice for sinners, we may perhaps properly refer a moment to the sacrifices and other religious offerings of the Old Testament. The question naturally arises, On what principles is it that a God of goodness and truth has required, or even permitted such sacrifices? And in answer to this question, we are ever to keep in mind (and without this no answer is satisfactory), that God, in constituting man in his own image, has formed him on the principle of a true and essential moral freedom. This is a truth, which is not so well understood as it ought to be; and so, in the experience and progress of knowledge, it will be likely to be at some future time. It may be said farther (and the assertion is sustained equally by the Bible and by common observation), that God made man the culmination or head of the world's forms of existence, and placed all things in the world under him. In separating himself from God, or at least in refusing to unite himself with God, as he obviously has refused to do, and as in the exercise of the great and necessary fact of his freedom he was enabled to do, man has taken every thing into his own control. The world is under his feet, and all things in it—its natural products, and its living existences—and it is very obvious that he has become, to a lamentable extent, a hard and selfish master. He not only takes to himself every living thing which he can obtain; he not only claims it as a possession, and calls it his own, but, in the abuse of the freedom which has been given him, he cruelly destroys every thing—sheep, oxen, doves, goats—no matter what it is, or where it is—by the destruction of which he thinks he can add any thing to his own wealth and enjoyment.

7. The next inquiry is, What is the relation of God to this state of things? What does God, who has given man this position of freedom and power, but who is still a God of unchangeable love—what does God do under these circumstances? It is this: He requires of man that he should set apart a portion of his fruits and cattle which it is certain he would otherwise consume upon his lusts, in recognition of a being separate from himself and higher than himself, who has a regard to the equal rights and happiness of all, and therefore is opposed to man's demoralizing selfishness, so that the requisition of offerings and sacrifices which God is understood to make, is really and truly a requisition in opposition to the inordinate action of the self-life; it is the beginning of a series of important and practical teachings, the object of which is to show man the imperfection and the wrong of his position. It was no part of God's plan, in the institution of sacrifices, to take away unnecessarily the life of innocent and unoffending animals. Never, under any circumstances, does a sparrow fall to the ground without his notice. He felt, and always will feel, the sorrows of the slaughtered lamb or dove as truly as he feels man's sorrows. But man, in the wrong exercise of his power, had already doomed them; selfishness and cruelty had written their death sentence, and God, in demanding that man should set apart sacrificially a portion of these innocent and suffering victims, designedly aimed a blow against that cruel selfishness. It was through these bloody victims which they slew, but which they could not sell nor eat, that their own self-life, which grasped at every thing and consumed every thing, was wounded and partially slain, although they themselves did not at that time fully understand it. God was pleased with the smoke of man's sacrifices, just so far, and so far only, as they were the consumption and sacrifice of himself in the inordinate action of his self-life. And hence it was, as we learn

INDEX TO VOLUME VII.

A.

Abolitionism 509
Accident, singular, telegraphic 290
Accident, railroad, in Boston 470
Across the Atlantic intwenty hours 456
Adventure, frightful 449
Adventures of a belgian sailor 420
Affairs at Saratoga Ed 97
Affairs in Utah 119
Africa, opening of 99
Africa, its antiquity and civilization 290
African races, the different 370
Age of our planet 370
Age, religious aspect of the 167
Alexandria and its ruins 380
Allen, death of John 237
Almost a spiritualist 40
Always forward 330
Ambler, R P, at Dodworth's 356, 367
American tract society 39
American homœopathic review 187
Amulet, an 40
An axe to grind, origin of the term 360
Anacalypsis, Higgins' 57, 77, 79, 117, 127, 130, 187 188, 246, 417, 436
Anecdote, North Carolina 400
Anecdote, Paris 130
Anecdote, revolutionary 110, 410
Anecdote, yankee 170
Anecdotes of revolutionary times 199
Angelique Cotton, another Ed 26
Angelic visitation, a remarkable 23
Angel movement, the 236
Angel movement Robert B Whitney 228
Angels among men J F C 187
Angels, the I Van Deusen 93, 170, 208, 492
Angels' care of mortals 295
Angels, the, have come Ed 157
Angels, do they visit the earth? 455
Angels, fallen Epsilon 463
Animals, do they have spirits? Geo W Davenport and W F 385
Annexing England to the French crown 79
Anniversary week 27
Anniversary meetings, the Ed 37
Announcement of a distant death P S Fitch 458
Antiquity of the race, mode of deciding the 190
Anti-spiritualists, to 140
Apocryphal gospels 390
Apparition of a child 21
Apparition two hundred years ago 82, 232
Apparition in the olden time 275
Appeal of a convict Ira Stout 39
Apple pie melon L Norris 489
Archæological discoveries in Athens 490
Arctic explorations, Dr. Hays on 350
Arguments for materialists W Fishbough 276
Aristocratic adventures 350
Articles lost in the fire 337
Articles, short 286
Atlantic cable laid 159
Atlantic telegraph, curious coincidence 189
Atlantic telegraph triumphant, president's and queen's messages 170, 178
Asylum, juvenile Ed 17
Audible speaking of spirits C H Knowlton 405
Australian beef 380
Australia, exploration of 80
Authority, sphere and limits of W Fishbough 56
Awkward mistake 119

B.

Baby, extempore 320
Baggage master, a logical 290
Balloon fatalities 280
Ballou, A A (spirit), through Mrs Hatch 148
Baptism in hoops 20
Baptist clergyman, from a M R J B 145
Barrett, B F, on spirits C Partridge 366
Barrett's criticisms on Harris 436
Bashful men 179
Bear hunting in northern Michigan 369
Beauty, moral 168
Be courteous, or the railroad conductor caught 329
Beecher's church Ed 17
Beecher on baptism 39
Beecher and the Indians J Beeson 64, 84
Beecher family, bad members of society C Partridge 357
Beecher's discourse, abstract of 372
Beecher on burdens of society 400
Beecher's, Edward, spiritualism is devlish C Partridge 417
Beecher's, Henry Ward, ideas of orthodoxy 429
Beecher on the sun 430
Beechers, reunion of 478
Beeson's plea for the Indians 7
Beeson's criticism on Beecher 34
Bell-ringing, mysterious 396
Bolzoni, Madame Dr Weisse 237
Benning's, T C, lecture at Dodworth's 437
Bequests of Anson J Phelps 63
Berlin free-love redivivus 99
Bigot, a 379
Bird's-eye view of spiritualism Dr A Johnson 101
Bishop of London, views of the 196
Bogus mediums detected J F Coles 334
Bogus mediums 337
Bone dust 380
Bone to its bone Ed 37, 57
Bones, the falling J R Orton 318
Bones, about those Thomas Middleton 325
Bones, Ethan Allan's 66
Boots and shoes 469
Brain and nerve people, a 429
Brain feels no wound 69
Bridal inventory of charms 440
Brigham Young's mixed family 320
Brittan's lecturing programme 176
Brittan's lecturing tour 307
Brittan's movements 217
Buckwheat as food 319
Buddhists' faith 60
Buddhist priests, king of Burmah against 70
Bud picked 176
Bullion bank, substitute for 260
Bulls and bears 9
Burdens of society, the 447
Burdens of society, one of the S M M 474
Burglars, protection against 216
Burglary, audacious case of 439
Burning mountain 49
Burning of our printing office 337

C.

Cable, news by the 187
Cairo after the flood 129
Calamity, heart-rending, (burning of the Austria) 239
California in 1848 and 1858 60
California raisins 400
Camels, American 259
Camels, strength of 440
Capital punishment, influence of 297
Capital sermon 337
Capron, E W, esq 197
Card, a I Van Deusen 315
Cathedral, splendid new 117
Cathedral, corner-stone of the new 167
Catholic church in congress 360
Catholicism in the United States 480
Cat race, a 259
Cause, the, in St. Louis A Miltenberger 58, 376
Cause, the, in Minnesota A D Brown 65
Cause, the, in Franklin, N H, (a test) Thos Ryan 78
Cause, the, in Springfield, Ill B A R 75
Cause, the, in Amboy, Ill 117
Cause, the, in Canada J M Fadyen 131
Cause, the, in Kentucky 178
Cause, the, in Rensselaer, Ia T A Knox 203
Cause, the, in Waukesha co, Wis W D Holbrook 348
Cause and cure of evil C Partridge 216
Cause and cure of evil, a shaker's view Wm Offord 281, 291
Cave, a singular 3
Cawnpore massacre, the 450
Chancellor's egg 310
Change is written upon all things E W 131
Chapin, discourse of Rev Dr 197
Chapin on shameful phases in human life C Partridge 466
Chess matters (Morphy) 300
Child bitten by a cat H S Woodward 238
Children, dull 390
China, treaty with 209
Chinese, literature of the 140
Christ in heaven and Christ on earth T L Harris 371
Christ and Moses J M R 118
Christianity and the praying priests W L L 304
Christian Advocate and Journal 386
Christianity, shall it be abandoned? 358
Chinese food 509
Census, taking the 510
Christian charity 163
Christian, whya m I not a? 165
Christian spiritualist, the 256
Christian suggestion 369
Christians union, young men's C. Partridge 256
Church chimes to human improvement A J P 148
Churches, a hit at fashionable 440
Churning, philosophy of 380
Circle, spiritual, its rationale and uses Dr J F Gray 386
Circulate the Telegraph 257
City government and city press R T Hallock 278
City in the air (Mirage) 240
City, rapid growth of a western 250
Civilization under water, Agassiz on 295, 340
Clairvoyance at the bar Ed 483
Clairvoyance, singular case of 40
Clairvoyant panic in Paris 87
Clairvoyant prediction fulfilled 6
Clayton's appeal to his unbelieving friends 54
Clerical bombast C Partridge 256
Clock, great 100
Clouds and sunshine 264
Coal as fuel, first employment of 275
Cobra da Capella, fight with a rat 480
Cock Lane ghost 51
Coffee, how it came to be used 179
Colds, break up 390
Coles in self-defense 322
Coles, W L L on 343
Coles, Mr, to the Telegraph readers 413
Coles, Mr, in his own behalf 426
Coles, Mr, and spiritualism 477
College, People's, at Havana, N Y 257
Combe, George, death of 196
Comet, the D T 212
Comet, Donati's 239
Comet, have you seen the? 250
Coming to life at his own funeral 489
Commentary, Ballou's C Partridge 146
Common tators 285
Communication, spirit 88
Communication, spirit H Clay 284
Communication from Napoleon 88
Conclusive test fact 87
Condition of communications 192
Conference, N Y, spiritual lyceum and 3, 13, 23, 33, 43, 53, 63, 73, 83, 93, 103, 114, 123, 133, 143, 153, 163, 173, 183, 193, 203, 213, 226, 233, 243, 253, 267, 273, 287, 298, 303, 313, 323, 337, 347, 353, 363, 373, 387, 397, 407, 413, 423, 437, 443, 453, 467, 477, 487, 493
Conference paper on education David Bruce 105
Confession, a singular 359
Confession concerning spiritualism 63
Confirmations, increase of 319
Conservatism and progress W Fishbough 86
Contradictions, what to believe W L L 321
Contradictory communications E Hance 375
Convention of prophets at Avignon 18, 203
Convention, free C Partridge 96, 106
Convention at Rutland Ed 97
Convention at Rutland J Beeson 125
Convention, another A J Davis 147
Convention, philanthrophic, at Utica 157, 206, 213, 221 234, 244, 251, 261, 271
Convention, the proposed 167
Convention in Illinois B Hopkins 152
Convention, Kiantone, and Spear movement C Partridge 297
Conventions, are they useful? H 125
Conversation of men of genius 420
Conversion of a spiritualist, alleged J W Pitts 69
Conversion, alleged, from spiritualism Almanzor Clarke 114
Convert, new, to new church C Partridge 67
Cooper's, Peter, address, remarks on, by Dr Weisse 86
Corpse, another living 340
Correspondence J 174
Correspondence, interesting, Gov Talmadge and Dr Gregory 91
Correspondence, purported spiritual T J Carter 8
Council of Nice, the, again W Fishbough 326
Courtship of the late Dr R 480
Crash, tremendous 309
Creation of the world 192
Crevasse at New Orleans 20
Crime, miraculous discovery of 379
Crinoline dangers 160
Crisis, the 216
Critical, a little 87
Cruelty toward Indians 8
Crystal Palace, burning of the 249
Cure for the bite of a mad dog 20
Cures, spirit Harriet M. Vincent 162, 352
Cure, another remarkable N. Peckenpaugh 358
Cure by laying on of hands Felix Thomas 212
Cure by Dr Scott Thomas Hays 419
Cure, remarkable, by clairvoyant treatment 275
Cure, spirit, tests J N Gale 328
Cures, spirit H Steele 342
Cures, spirit, and mediums W Hyde 351
Curiosity, moral 99
Curiosity of earth 390
Curious case 263
Curious growth 109
Curious phenomenon 125
Combe, George, death of 196

D.

Daguerreotype, spiritual 167
Daily duties 163
Dangerous illness from excessive joy 399
Dannecker's statue of Christ 380
Davenport boys 368
Dark circles 67
Davis, Mr, at Dodworth's academy 26, 47
Davis's, Mr, movements 236
Davis's, Mr, late pamphlet Ed 276
Davis, Mr and Mrs, movements of 390
Davis, A J, case of La Roy Sunderland 434
Day's shooting, a Ed 236
D C R to Alonzo Lewis 484
Deacon and the Irishman 389
Dead recalled to life 214
Dead, the, alive 370
Death not painful 70
Death, singular and horrible 489
Death of the tutor 499
Decadence of Lawrence, Mass 2
Deceived, how may we be? S 471
Deceptions, extraordinary 238
Deformity, remarkable transmission of physical 70
Demoniac possession, extraordinary 311
Demoniacs of Morzine 287
Demonstrations, convincing 245
Demonstrations, the living J S 279
Demonstrations, tremendous 142
Departed, the 5
De Sauty 310
Destiny, man's future 159
Destructive war engine 50
Development, human D A Gorton 44
Development, what is it? E W 315
Devil's money 59
Dickens scandal 129
Diocesan convention, New York 249
Discovery of 30,000 Christians on an Indian island 220
Discovery, new, in light 350
Discoveries, interesting, in Athens 359
Discussion of spiritualism Brittan and Hanson 7
Disease, singular 90
Disease charms, mad stones 299
Disease, detection of 379
Divine objects of spiritualism W Fishbough 76
Dods, Miss, at Clinton hall C M 357, 373, 393, 403
Douglas Jerrold's wit 299
Dreaming, rapidity of thought in 20
Dream, curative advice in a Gideon Lincecum 254
Dream, murder detected by a 417
Dream, the admiral's 230
Dream, saved by a M J Pound 395
Dreams, curious, and fulfillment 285
Dreams J W D Moodie 191
Dreams, on O J P 95
Dreams, study your W Fishbough 66
Drop of water imprisoned at creation 149
Dying, I am, Mrs Rosa Shute C Partridge 426
Dying, luxury of 300
Dream of a reality, the doctor blistered 510

E.

Early rising 303
Earthquake at sea 70
Earthquake, Connecticut 109
Earthquake, recent, in Mexico 150
Easter, when it comes 449
Eccentricities of authors 300
Echo, insulting 117
Editor in hot water 67
Editor of the Clarion has the floor 258
Editors with spirits C Partridge 287

Edmonds, Judge, discourse 436
Edmonds, Judge, on spiritualism Letter to Tribune 491
Education 389
Effect, combined, in St Louis 447
Eight children at a birth 500
Eloquence, fact in 318
End of all things Ward Knickerbocker 206
England and America in 1813 106
Encouragement to benevolence 238
Epitaphs 120
Equanimity, spiritual, disturbed C Partridge 346
Establishment, a comfortable 290
Evening thoughts J Wilde 453
Event, fourth great, of the nineteenth century (ocean telegraph) C Partridge 166
Evidences that spirits communicate C Partridge 206
Evil, cause and cure of C 342, 378
Evil, cure of W L L 264
Evil comes from imperfection W F P 418
Evil, nature and use of J T C 94
Evil, origin of 358
Evil, origin of J W P 368
Evil, origin of 385
Evil, philosophy of G T 462
Evil, remedy of W L L 358
Evil, uses of K W 304
Evil, whence originates it? Epsilon 418
Evil or mischievous spirits, are there? 197, 212
Evil spirits M V Hy 108
Evil spirits J T Calkin 124
Evil spirits, reply to Dr Hallock J T Calkin 174
Evil spirits Francis North 183
Evil spirits I Sheen 231
Evil spirits K 363
Evil spirits C Partridge 406
Evil spirits communicate, but not good ones C Partridge 428
Evil spirits or evil powers J H 264
Exciting encounter 159
Experience of a medium 411
Experiences, spirit, in New Orleans J F Taylor 228
Explanation, an J F Coles 157
Expose in Bridgeport Dr Stiles and Coles 208
Exposures, alleged, in Boston Ed 376
Exposures and exposers Theo Glancy 385
Exorcism, case of 438

F.

Fable, a 120
Fabricio of Aquependente Duncan Weisse 185
Face, the human 240
Facetiæ from Punch 400
Fact, a significant 15
Fact, a queer Ed 16
Fact in natural history 20
Fact, an important 468, 490
Facts in Waukegan, Ill W L Loveday 32
Facts in Toronto A W B 75
Facts J H Dixon 161
Facts in Montreal H Lecroix 178
Facts from various sources 263
Facts and experiences C Levy 328
Facts, curious 430
Facts systematically viewed J W D Moodie 451
Faith, what is it? J Chrest 358
Fallacy, the sources of 324
Familiar phrases, origin of 360
Fanaticism, religious C Partridge 286
Fanrier and practicalities A G 325
Fears of becoming sectarian W Fishbough 136
Females, improvement in the condition of 269
Ferguson, J B 297
Ferrying, novel mode of 349
Fiction a 307
Fight between a hundred horses 370
Finite human organization E H H 68
Fish, rearing them for the market 263
Five cents and a kiss 220
Flower and bird clocks 475
Flowers, the three, a fable 79
Food for the hungry 263
Fools and their money 40
Foreign spiritualistic items 327
Forewarnal of his own death N Sorenson 157
Forewarning Death of Mrs Jones Ed 77
Fox, Margaretta, a Catholic Ed 166
Fox, Miss, conversion 197
Fox, about the Misses 357
Fragment A C Dean 408
Frankness 302
Freedom of speech F North 406
Free love and free lust Rill 142
Free love movement, a new 128
Funeral, a Magdalene 458
Funeral rites Dr Weisse 217
Furious drove of cattle loose 239

G.

Garrisonian abolitionists 39
Georgia scenes and spiritualism 188
Giddings, Hon J R 440
Ghosts are they institutions? Ed 238
Ghost, body disinterred on evidence of a 430
Ghost stories 179
Glass, malleable 60
Glass of Venice 479
Glanville on angels and spirits 98
Gleanings from the French journals Ed 98
Gleon's falls institute 247
God and devil, good and evil 288
God of the Jews and Christians W L 164
God isn't a Christian C Partridge 367
Gold mines of California, free 19
Good and evil comparative Thos Seeley 325
Good counterbalances evil 40
Good time coming, boys W H H 268
Gorilla, the, a natural curiosity 490
Gospel of Jesus (recently published) Dr Weisse's remarks upon 47
Gossipers are murderers C Partridge 56
Government, what is it? 446
Grapes in a cold region 439
Grasshoppers drowned 229
Grave of Franklin 220
Grave thoughts (and other aphorisms) 162
Gray, Dr, at the conference 457
Gray, Dr, on fanaticisms 403
Great end of society 140
Great ideas and small duties 268
Greatness of little things 478
Gregory, Dr, death of Ed 57
Grove meeting at Kiantone 197

H.

Hallock, Dr, on E H H E H H 78
Hallock's, Dr, reply to the Tribune 217
Hallock's, Dr, remarks 316
Hamilton's and Calkins, Drs, medical institute 58
Happiness on small farms 489
Harbors, filling up of 479
Hard witness, a 140
Hardinge, Miss Emma, as a lecturer 316
Hardinge, Miss Emma, at Dodsworth's 496
Hare, Dr, decease of W F 46
Hare, Robert, in the spirit-world, to Robert Owen 203
Harris, T L, called to England 357
Harris, Rev T L 377
Harris's, Mr, late book 388
Harp, the 29
Hasheish eating at Princeton 320
Hatch, separation of Mr and Mrs 217
Hatch, Cora, as a school girl C S Millington, M D 443
Hatch, Dr, the Herald and spiritualism 456
Hatch's, Mrs, lectures 467, 473
Healing, spirit, in Michigan 3
Healing, spirit, orthodox failings, etc E W Lewis 141
Healing medium at Saratoga 122
Healing medium at Saratoga J W Crossman 152
Healing through spirit agency, case of B McFarland 176
Healing, really a miracle of L S Beck 388
Healing, another miracle of D 418
Healing, spirit, wonders of J W D Moodie 444
Healing, spirit, in Wisconsin Walter Hyde 463
Herald, New York, vs spiritualism 117
Hero, a little 290
Higginson, Mr, at Dodsworth's 326
Historical 360
Holland, F G, on antagonisms 376
Homœopathic 97
Home, the happy 470
Hopedale property 247
How did he know it? 508
Humanity at the jumping-off place 350
Hume, D D, in France 6
Hume in Russia 246
Hume, D D 473
Hume, the medium 360
Hume, singular story of 27
Hume's marriage 30
Hydrophobia, death by 167
Hydrophobia, Russian cure for 330

I.

Ice houses, improvement in S L Penny 283
Ice in red hot metal 100
Icebergs, something about 490
Identity, problem of H 248
Illuminating powers of gas coals 30
Immensity of space 360
Immortal, am I? J S 143
Immortal, are all men? W L L 274
Immortality K W 158
Immortality, random thoughts on 81
Immortality of the soul, Cicero on the 490
Implement, patent 239
Impostors, beware of 186
Impressions concerning letters 192
Impressions, spiritual 252
Imprisonment, case of false 67
Improvisatore's prediction 259
Incident of Mississippi flood 109
Incident at Saratoga P Thompson 172
Incident, a pleasing H 228
Indian aid association 47, 63, 88, 107, 415
Indian lover 120
Indian troubles in Oregon 169
Indian summer of life 220
Indians, cause of the J R Orton 489
Indians, appeal for the J R Orton 300
Indians, sympathy for the Ed 247
India rubbers, when to wear 349
Infidel conversions 123
Infidels, to Nassau 404
Infinity and eternity Abner French 456
Ingenuity of love 410
Inner life, the Undine 82
Insane attempt to deter a minister from preaching 90
Instruments of manifestation A W Kelly 74
Interposition, interesting spirit L Bush 178
Intuition H T Child, M D 268
Intuition and acquisition Dr Gregory 436
Inverted spirit writing Ed 27
Investigation, record of spiritual J W D Moodie 8, 11 21, 62, 71, 171
Investigations in the unseen world C D Griswold, M D 31
Invisible and supersensual, on the 108
Iodine cure 359
Irish drollery 89
Is there any host? 123
Italians singing English 299
Items, spiritual, from the French 96
Items, foreign spiritual 306
Items, various spiritual B 181
Items by the way L J Pardee 204

J.

Jamestown institute Payton Spence 506
Jesus Christ, is he the Messiah? J I C Mead 58
Jewesses, why are they beautiful? 132
Jewish Passover Nassau 142
Jews, conversion of the 20
John Bull searching our ships 48
Joke of the first water 90
Joke, good, on Twomba 420
Joking, practical 310
Journey, a long 289
Judge not E D 232
Juror, an obstinate, brought to his senses 90

K.

Kansas decision 20
Kansas, description of southern A P Wilson 162
Kansas, proposed settlement in W B Adams 205
Kidnapping children 20
Kindness, influence of 20
Kingdom of God B 144, 184
Kingdom, singular religions in Africa 232
Kiss, story of a first Fredericka Bremer 370
Knockings with intelligence 6
Knowledge and faith Wm Fishbough 116

L.

Lady's opinion of a ladies' man 70
Lake robbers 350
Lakes, mystery of the American 378
Lamartine hall, meetings at 17
Lamartine hall, lectures D 76, 87
Land monopoly, evils of Theodore Glancey 504
Lapland reindeer travel Bayard Taylor 450
Large income in England 239
Last bell, the 300
Laughable story 340
Law, the perfective David Bliss 148
Leaf worth preserving 39
Learning through emblems 130
Lecture against spiritualism Signor Monti 417
Lecture at Dodsworth's Higginson 446
Lecture by Lola Montez 239
Lectures in Wisconsin J D P 28
Lectures, public 158
Lectures at Pulneyville J B Stebbins 274
Lectures on science 353
Lectures last Sunday Ed 406
Lectures in Painesville, O Augt Pepoon 448
Lectures at Whitewater, Wis M E Cougar 463
Lecturing on both sides Ed 36
Letter from a spirit 501
Letter from N P Tallmadge 5
Letter from Mr Pardee 58
Letter from a Virginia clergyman J L 48
Letter from Dr Wellington 68, 308
Letter from Judge Edmonds 121
Letter from M L Bloom 268
Letter from Mr Sterling 307
Letter from J B Stebbins 318, 374, 408
Letter from L Hakes 322
Letter from Hon C W Catheart 403
Letter from Dr Hatch 408
Letter from Fanny Green 458
Letter, another, from Wisconsin S Miner 18
Letter from Texas J B Taft 78
Letter from Texas J W Maulding 142
Letter from Kansas John O Whitlee 279
Letter from Boston L J Pardee 345
Letter from California 498
Letter to Prof Gregory J W D Moodie 8
Letter to Mr Sunderland L Kimball 498
Lies and errors, their nature 254
Life after death J C 414
Life and death, philosophy of Wm Markham 488
Life, death, and immortality J W Everts 462
Life saved by disappointment in love 260
Libraries, public, in the United States 120
Light, watch for the 490
Lights, spirit and relic C W Cathcart 152
Lion hunt, fatal 93
Literary men, usefulness of 379
Literary review, art. in New Englander R T Hallock 61
Little things 93
London, by Rev T L Cuyler 400
Long faces 40
Longfellow, Rev Mr, at Dodsworth's 466
Look before you kick 110
Loss of three thousand lives 510
Lost papers discovered by a spirit Mrs J K Cowee 411
Lost and ruined race G, 138; W F, 146 G and F 157
Lunatic, remarkable cure of 190
Lunus naturæ 269
Lyceum, spiritual, opening of—Propositions by Dr Gray 17
Lyceum, spiritual Ed 47

M.

Machine, an illustrative C Partridge 126
Machine teacher, the A J Davis 137
Mad stones, disease charms 290
Magical practices of the orient, 370
Magical practices in India 440
Magnet and cold, the 300
Magnetic and spirit healing in hospitals Ed 300
Mahan, Professor A prophecy B C Murray 306
Mammoth cave, fearful adventure 340
Mammoth remains 340
Mammoth remains at Ellenville 370
Manifestation, an unexpected 37
Manifestations by means of a key L I Whittier 46
Manifestations at Munson's E G Hoyt 345
Manifestations in Louisville, Ky Rebecca P Timmons 234
Manifestations, physical G 300
Manifestations, conditions of Dr Gould 310
Manifestations, some Azariah Freeman 318
Manifestations, interesting H P Tripp 340
Manifestations, the physical 357
Manifestations, physical and impressional F North 388
Manifestations, genuineness of the N P Tallmadge 373
Manifestations, real and deceptive W L L 393
Manifestations, physical, in Texas P 430
Manifestations and their mode H P Tripp 460
Manifestations at Painesville, O Augt Pepoon 471
Manifestations in Texas R Jones 485
Manifestations, physical, use of 488
Man never dies J S 414
Manners, corruption of 480
Mansfield, Mr, in question Ed 30
Marriage question, the C Partridge 330
Mars, is the planet inhabited? 470
Marvelous 220
Marriage question, the W Fishbough 300
Massachusetts boy in the India war 46
Material, the, and spiritual W Fishbough 230
Mathematical phenomenon, another 32
Matter, adaptability of 460
Matter, divisibility of 460
Matters in Fitchburg, Mass 370
Matters in Illinois Miss H M Cutting 180
Mattison, Rev Hiram, on spiritual recognition C Partridge 476
Measures of length 300
Mediums demanding fees H Betts 160
Mediums demanding fees A medium 300
Mediums, defense of Reformed clergyman 440
Medium, a princely 480
Mediumship of Mrs Beck Thomas Fuller 340
Mediumship, Mrs Dean's 420
Meeting at Lamartine hall 67
Memorial, remarkable 500 priests 300
Memory By a spirit Mrs Waters, medium 302
Mental matters E D Moses 138
Mental labor 470
Mental states, origination and transmission of J H H 384
Meteor, extraordinary effect of a 420
Methodism and spiritualism C Partridge 180
Mill, a spirit, invented T T H 130
Mill, the largest in the world 70
Miracles, are they possible? 90
Miracles in France 220
Miracles, spiritual 230
Mirror, how one consoled a widow 350
Mirror, the moral 400
Miser's prayer 120
Misquotation corrected 40
Mitchell, Prof, on astronomy 390
Mitchell, Prof, and spiritualism 417
Monomaniac, religious 9
Monroe monument 440
Moral evil, is there? J T Calkin 204
Mormon war probably a farce 9
Mosaic spiritualism and law D Frazer 434
Mountebanks, spiritual C Partridge 277
Mouse, a singing 430
Movement in Auburn J H Allen 463
Movement in Louisville, Ky George C Steelman 60
Mozart, the dying 460
Murder, another, Ira Stout C Partridge 286
Murder, thou shalt do no Bob Short 435
Muscular control, singular Parker Lewis 178
Museum, Dr Abbot's 370

N.

Names of days, their origin 220
Native, A rosal 170
Naturals on a tour 280
Nautical spirits A M Pignowitz 220
Negro turning white 120
Nervous effects of the weather M W Hammond 422
Net weaving revealed from heaven C Partridge 346
Newspaper, the 340
Nineteenth century, is this the? W Fishbough 478
Noble sentiments 20
Note from Dr Wellington 7
Note from Mr Paine 300
Nothing new under the sun 110
No two ways about it 186
Nude materialism Dr Gregory 398, 401, 436, 442, 464 478, 482
Nude materialism (strictures) W Fishbough 463
"Nude materialism" strictures on J R T 503

O.

Objects carried by spirits S Chamberlin 341
Ocean steamships 340
Ocean trip in a balloon 160
Odic light Rev J Pierrepont Ed 316
Offer, a fair 407
Oil, use of 140
Oldest mill in America 190
Ole Bull in Norway 300
Olympic games 350
Omens, fairies, spiritual Edw Beers 85
Opinion of Congress 290
Owen Robert Dale, a spiritualist 503

Ireland difficulty 228
Orthodox failings; spirit healing, etc E W Lewis 141
Orthodoxy and prisons, again 345
Orthodoxy, philosophy of the success of D 242
Owen, death of Robert W Fishbough 326
Ought preachers preach what they know is true? C Partridge 116
Our Josephine 140
Oysters, something about 210

P.

Paddy assaulted by an echo 179
Panama road 380
Paris music saloon 489
Parker, Theodore—Ed 417
Passages from old authors 75, 153
Patrons and friends 167
Pearl, artificial 425
Perilous trip 99
Persecution and prosecution 43
Pertinent to the times 20
Phenomena at Belleville, C W J W D Moodie 135
Phenomena of the brain 42
Phenomena, singular 86, 99, 310
Philosopher, a Turkish 330
Physical education (skating) 429
Physiological discoveries 150
Physiological theory by a spirit K 108
Piccolomini kissed by mistake 470
Picnic, another spiritual 173
Picnic romance 129
Picnic spiritualistic 203
Picnic, spiritual, at Pleasant Valley C Partridge 166
Pierrepont, Rev J, on spiritualism 247
Pierrepont, Rev J 266
Pierrepont, Mr, at Dodworth's 277, 286
Pisciculture in France 159
Plagiarism, charge of 310
Planting, summer and autumnal W R Prince 200
Plum pudding in April 500
Pocket piece, Hon Stephen Allen's 110
Polygamy and the missionaries 238
Ponderable bodies, preternatural movement of 6
Ponderous bodies, intelligent movement of S 452
Poor soil 290
Pope's, the, opinion of the Protestants 360
Population, singular decrease of 230
Populousness of Japan 475
Portraits, spiritual Orris Barnes 85
Possession, suggestions as to spirit L R Sunderland 238
Potatoe, to keep them from sprouting 510
Potato rot, method to prevent 70
Powder magazine, visit to a 330
Powers of ill-balanced minds 155
Practical man, the 29
Prayer meeting, origin of the business men's 30
Prayer, sable 50
Praying machine 409
Preaching like old hundred 469
Precious metals in the world 110
Predictions of modern spiritualism W F 486
Premonition 503
Premonition, remarkable, by a southern man 449
Presentiment realized Ed 357
Presentiment, story of 400
President Monroe, remains of 106
Pride 230
Prince's horticultural catalogues 438
Principle, the 276
Prison association, woman's 276
Problems La Roy Sunderland 321, 355, 364, 376, 392, 412, 424, 473
Prodigies in science, late 380
Progress E D 242
Progress, comparative, of centuries 247
Progress and reform D H F 243, 354
Progress and anti-progress (spiritual com) S C Waters, Med 343
Progress, to the friends of O H Wellington 485
Progressive friends C Partridge 136
Prophetic dreams 263
Providence, beautiful 263
Propositions, philosophical A E Beers 468
Prospectus of Telegraph 7, 19
Prospectus of Telegraph, vol viii 506
Psychology and spiritualism J G Stearns 488
Psychometry Emma Hardinge 2
Pulpit, strange declaration from a A C Robinson 23
Punishment, future, Dr. Adams on Ed 16

Q.

Quackery, medical and religious W Fishbough 196
Quaker apothecary 100
Quarantine buildings 198
Question, a fearful Democratic Age 226
Question, is it a proper? 247
Question, the vexed 228
Questions for the conference 187

R.

Railroad conductor, daring act of 470
Railroads, United States 20
Randolph, P B, in the ministry M Morgan 284
Randolph's, P B, reply and position C Partridge 296
Randolph's lectures 307, 318, 325
Rappings, mysterious H Starks 284
Rarey, the horse tamer 90, 209, 238
Roaring calves 508
Reform, social, suggestion for H S Brown 415
Reform in unity D J Mandell 94
Reform, true principles of 127
Religion, what is true? J W 34
Religion, what is it? E W 162
Religion, popular, gone to seed C Partridge 246
Religion, should it be an institution? J Allyn 414
Religious convicts 40
Religious aspects of the age 247
Remarkable cure of a lunatic 180
Reply to an alleged attack Alonzo Lewis 358
Rest, is there any? E D 158
Result, the great moral Atlantic cable W Fishbough 176
Retort, an exquisite 480
Retort, pretty sharp 310
Retribution, remarkable 470
Reverend and irreverend W D F 308
Revival and revelation from the dead Ed 46
Revival being revived 216
Revival, the great 168
Revolution in New Orleans 69
Revolution impending in Mexico 189
Rhymes, curious 50
Riches, use of 79
Rivers, great, in the world 308
Rings around the earth 69
Romance, a 190
Romance in real life 79, 160
Russia sheet iron 339
Ruth, book of 250
Rutland convention, call 50

S.

Salut, another 503
Selfish conceptions of individual rights 507
Sift the chaff from the wheat C Partridge 350
Sight without eyes 483, 494
Sign of the times W F 306
Sinful habits 163
Singing conducive to health 340
Singular recovery of speech 27
Skating, physical education 429
Slave church members 345
Slave question in England 109
Slave trade, revival of the 239
Snake expelled from stomach by spirits 391
Something to think of 400
Somnambulic preacher Ed 407
Somnambulism 359
Somnambulism, curious case of 327
Somnambulism, interesting fact of 333
South side view T 108
Soul, the, when does it begin to exist? T J Kelley 484
Speaking medium, new 307
Spell, a smart 479
Spear movement and Kiantone convention C P and J S 297
Spence, Mr and Mrs, in Chicago W C R 408
Spence, Mrs, lecture at Clinton Hall (April 8) 508
Spence, Mrs, at Boonville 486
Spence's, Mrs, lecture on prayer 496
Spence's, Mrs, lectures 486
Spheres of physical bodies La Roy Sunderland 275
Spiders, habits of 389
Spirit prompting H C Emery 508
Spirit identified and aided 1
Spirit communings J T Close 32
Spirit cure of a Methodist 116
Spirit forms, thoughts concerning S 38
Spirit, is it material? 178
Spirit intercourse S 341, 351, 404, 434, 441, 452, 464, 471
Spirit manifestations, modus operandi of C Partridge 426
Spirit manifestations, what are the evidences of C Partridge 436
Spirit speaking, audible and music D Sizer 448
Spirit communication 472
Spirit rooms at the west Thos White 478
Spirit pictures G B Stebbins 498
Spirits writing Chinese Ed 17
Spirits, do they communicate? W T H 164, 194
Spirits move ponderable bodies, rap, write and speak with Methodists Alvin Sturtevant 2
Spirits in revival meetings 7
Spirits, embodied and disembodied M V Bly 155
Spirits, Chinese ideas respecting 255
Spirits, guardian W M F 295
Spirits and mediums E W S 339
Spirits make men speak better than they know V M Saterlee, M D 364
Spirits, low, to be instructed 411
Spirits, can there be? Densmore and Partridge 416, 481
Spirits, was it done by? I G Atwood 428
Spiritual Telegraph, vol vii C Partridge 6
Spiritual manifestations providential J W 44
Spiritual and social reformers 375
Spiritual interest, great, in Chicago A Ogg 408
Spiritual existence, is it possible? R T Hallock 427
Spiritualism, modern, does it inculcate evil? C Partridge 506
Spiritualism in Europe Ed 6
Spiritualism in Port Huron, Mich B 98
Spiritualism in Nebraska Q 33
Spiritualism in Augusta, Me 33
Spiritualism in Macon, Ga 38
Spiritualism in Illinois Theod Glancey 125
Spiritualism in Manchester, O L P Harris 152
Spiritualism in the Western Reserve B 152
Spiritualism in a horn 212
Spiritualism in Europe 257
Spiritualism in Grand Rapids, Mich J W Everts 303
Spiritualism in France 307
Spiritualism in New Haven, Conn 407
Spiritualism in Cold Water, Mich 497
Spiritualism in Owego, N Y 255
Spiritualism practically considered R T Hallock 4, 14
Spiritualism and Unitarianism C Partridge 95
Spiritualism versus infidelity C Partridge 56
Spiritualism and Universalism 48
Spiritualism and the written word J W 84, 94, 104, 128
Spiritualism and religious conversion J D Cook 138
Spiritualism, will it reform the world? C Partridge 186
Spiritualism, influences of W L L 218
Spiritualism, how is it to fulfill its mission? C Partridge 226
Spiritualism of the church Rev Mr Jackson's discourse 301
Spiritualism, what of it? C Partridge 306
Spiritualism and Christianity 307
Spiritualism and its opposers J W P 333
Spiritualism surprised 378
Spiritualism and its teachings J W D Moodie 394
Spiritualism, state of, exposers O J Phelps and C Partridge 406
Spiritualism as demonstrated by ancient and modern history J W Edmonds 431
Spiritualism, $1500 worth of Ed 446
Spiritualism, Philadelphia Ledger on Eb Hance 488
Spiritualist Register 7
Spiritualist settlement in Kansas W B Adams 88
Spiritualist, a, at the polls 236
Spiritualist and "Christian" 403
Spiritualist papers, new 423
Spiritualists, how are they made? Orris Barnes 177
Spiritualists and conventions Theo Glancey 161, 248
Spiritualists and conventions H 208
Spiritualists in the Roman church 212
Spiritualistic council proposed, in France 327
Sports, wild, of the west 150
Spurgeon, Mr, on gothic architecture 370
Starch company, Glen Cove J F Coles 177
Startling facts of poisoned liquor 49
Sabbath observances 49
Saleratus and soda 67
Salt mines in Cracow 210
Salutations among different nations 289
Sands, shifting of the Mediterranean 419
Saratoga, matters in 238
School notices Ed 117
School, Dr Wellington's 137
Science, present teaching of, compared with the Bible K 24, 74, 124, 151, 195, 224
Science and the Bible 140
Science answering simple questions 49
Sciences, natural, their antiquity Dr J A Weisse 157
Scientific paradoxes 255
Scott, Dr John A F Bartlett 257
Scene in a police office 350
Scriptures, the, spiritual communication 422
Second sight 265
Second sight and impressions H Graves 314
Sectarian's God impotent, the devil almighty C Partridge 427
Seeress, the, and the spirit 198, 201, 211
Self-made men 130
Senses, infallibility of the I H H 38
Sepoys, English account of 229
Sermons, preparing 100
Servant girls, Australian 479
Shad, interesting history of 90
Shakspeare, Bill 370
Shaking hands, various modes of 500
Shaving by getting shaved 220
Shower bath in Auburn prison 422
Siamese, opinions of 140
Statistics, interesting 319
Statistics of Mormons 20
Statistics of foreign countries 359
Statistics of spiritualism W F 406
Steamboat, American, on Red river 459
Steamboat, winged 239
Sterling's, J M, defense 324, 352
Sterling, reply to J M C Partridge 336, 346
Stop grumbling 139
Storm at sea, young lady's description of 260
Story, a curious 69
Story, exquisite, by Lamartine 359
Stowe, Mrs C M, as a lecturer W D Holbrook 395
Strange and revolting custom 119
Strange story 129
Strange occurrences at Newry, Ireland 361
Strange but true story 240
Strange affair in England 462
Strichnine in whisky 489
Strictures on Z H H R T Hallock 54
Studies 163
Stump speech 509
Suicide of Herbert 84
Substitution 90
Sun and moon that stood still W R Prince 368, 385
Sunbeam, the 276
Superstition, a horrid 370
Sunday Times man and higher Christianity C Partridge 497
Sunderland, Mr, letter to L M Kindall 498
Sunderland, La Roy, on mediums 402
Sunderland, Mr, reply to H Steele 421, 454, 462, 484
Sunderland's problem's D C R 404
Sunderland's problems Francis North 448
Swedenborgianism, stampede toward 152
Swedenborgianism in the English church 247
Swedish grace before meat 380
Swill milk war 48
Sympathy of the Nerves 342

T.

Table moving in Worcester H S 157
Tallest men, where they grow 20
Tallow, to harden 53
Tea plant, the 284
Teeth, scoping them clean 109
Teeth, extracting without pain 119
Telegraph, underground to Utah 9
Telegraph, submarine 139
Telegraph, transatlantic W F 146
Telegraph cable celebrations 178
Telegraph, making in England, farther 230
Telegraph, a writing 300
Telegraph to Cuba 322
Telegraph pocket 460
Telegraphic from America (Punch) 259
Telegraphing, spirit, case of J W Maulding 152
Test, a Ed 16
Test, a good 72
Test cause in Franklin, N H Thomas Ryan 78
Test facts Ed 165
Test interviews with spirits H Lecroix 62
Test, what is a? B L Y 15
Tests in California 7
Tests in Newark J M Mayhew 108
Tests in New London John Danforth 122
Tests, a couple of Miss H M Vincent 122
Tests, physical and mental I H Luther 295
Tests through Mr. Mansfield F H G 304
Tests of spirit seeing T T Hunt 339
Tests, a spirit cure J N Gale 328
Testimony, leave your, with the world C Partridge 306
Theologian, a promising 40
Theology, medium writings on R D Wing 455
Thoughts, a few free L Kendall 225
Thoughts about spiritualism J F 175
Thoughts on style L Judd Pardee 58
Thought, body and soul of Payton Spence, M D 504
Thoughts 504
Throne of divine grace C Partridge 246
Thunder and lightning 5
Tiffany on spirit influences Augt Pepoon 211
Tiger, a young girl hurt by a 480
Tobacco, effects of, on students 310
Toleration, duty of W L L 98
To-morrow 163
Tornado in New York 99
Touching incident, a 269
Trage dy at Washington (Sickles and Key) W F 456
Tracts, spiritual 67
Trade, a, a fortune 160
Trance, a young lady in a Ed 367
Trance, a protracted E F B 135
Trance, experiences of a clergyman N 132
Trance linguist 470
Trance medium, a former Mrs A C Brown 185
Transmutation of metals by spirits S A Peters 1
Transportation of scions W R Prince 359
Traveling in Turkey 169
Treasure, a 310
Treasures of the vasty deep 129
Tribune, the, challenged B F Hatch 7
Truth, infinite value of 245
Tunnel or tube, acoustic 269
Typographical errors (amusing) 350

U.

Underground telegraph to California 269
Under the rose, what it means 139
Unitarian bigotry C Partridge 186, 246
Unitarianism, decay of, in England 470
United in death 449
Universe, origin of the Dr J A Weisse 418
Unreliability of spirit communications W F 316
Unreliability of spirit intercourse G 352
Uses and abuses of spiritualism Mary F Davis 381
Usefulness, help us to extend our Ed 357
Utah, geographical wonders of 430

V.

Velvet, to raise the pile on 160
Vermin riddance 340
Vespers in a Protestant church 399
Vestiges of creation 133
Vesuvius, a New Yorker's visit to 109
Vesuvius, Mt, late eruption of 465
Virgil reviewed J C 295
Vision, a Polly Whitford 284
Vision, a H R 135
Vision, a duplicate 375
Vision of a future event J F Sikes 358
Vision of the night Dr Doddridge 220
Vitality, transference of 294
Voice from the Old Dominion N S Boynton 125
Voice from the past 250
Voice from Assyria 329
Volcano in Canada

W.

Walhalla Banner 247
Walsh, death of Mike 478
War with the churches J M Romine 64
War upon the churches 268
Warned of his own death S 285
Warning of a distant death G A Shufeldt, Jr 118
Warning by breaking glass 196
Washing his own sheep 40
Washington's tomb and homestead 178
Watches, American 179
Water in the sea 359
Waters, the father of 410
Waterspout at sea 130
Watts, Dr, a spiritualist Edw Beers 63
Waves, action of 480
Wellington, Dr, in St Louis 15
Wellington's, Dr. new plan of education 95
Wellington's, Dr, school 407
Wesley family, noises in the 317

What a pin can do 235
What shall redeem the world? E W 164
What shall we do? J W Evarts 305
What little white hands can do 240
What's the good of it? C Partridge 237
White's philosophy W L Loveday 442
White, N F, speaking medium E 243
Whitewash, a good 90
Whooping cough (recipe) 60
Wife's influence 310
Wilbour's, Mrs, lecture on faith 77
Will, power of the 92
Witchcraft, ancient and modern spiritualism C Partridge 15
Woman and her work 9
Women in France 130
Women of America, to the, Indians J Beeson 305
Wonderful growth of Kansas cities 9
Wonderful occurrences 393
Wonderful works of Morphy 209
Wonders of the world, the seven ancient 109
Wonders of the created universe 410
Word of God, the Wm Fishbough 107
Word of God abideth forever 420
Worker and his work, the R T Hallock 111
Works and wonders 259
Worship, ancient method of 243
Writing without hands 26, 445
Writings, medium, on theology 455
Wrongs and wants of men 384

Y.

Young America on a sliding scale 360
Young lady that carries a pistol 509

Z.

Z H H's acknowledgement of H P Gates 45

LITERARY NOTICES.

Anacalypsis Dr. Weisse 57
Road to spiritualism Ed 66
Discourse on modern spiritualism, by H Elkins 77
Judah and Semion (Fernald's pamphlet) 77
Rights of woman, by George W Curtis 87
Science of common things Dr Weisse 107
The Para papers Dr Weisse 126
Arcana of Christianity, by T L Harris 127
The farm; a pocket manuel, etc 157
Solar paradise of God 197
How and why I became a spiritualist 197
Proceedings of the Rutland convention 197
Shamah in pursuit of freedom 217
Democratic age Dr Weisse 226
Hoyt's poems 233
Principles and rules of millennial church (Hyren) 297
Handbook of standard phonography 363
Rationale of spiritualism Higginson 393
Pamphlet on education Richard Warren 403
Charity green, or the varieties of love 436
Lectures on the laws of spiritual intercourse 438
The house; a pocket manuel of architecture 447
Appendix to arcana of Christianity 456
Place and mission of woman Emma Hardinge 457
Marriage; an inspirational discourse Emma Hardinge 457
First book of the Christian religion T L Harris 466
Results of Spiritualism Higginson 473, 497
History of prostitution 476
Twelve messages from the spirit of J Q Adams 497
Compendi of origin and history of shakerism, etc by F W Evans 507
The crescent and the French crusaders, by G L Dixon J A Weisse 507

POETRY.

Nelly's birthday in heaven A W Bostwick 2
In the bright spirit-land E Jones 15
The voyagers to the better land Mary E Mudge 33
Grief for the dead 39
Aldebaran Ebenezer Allan 48
Invocation to truth 49
They are with us still Hattie 59
Mountain and valley C T Brooks 69
Song over a shirt 79
Bread 80
Trodden flowers Tennyson 89
Dogmatism dogged by doggerel Rustic 82
Unbelief 98
Angels, the two Longfellow 99
Beautiful watcher W A Desbrisay 110
Drawing water Phœbe Carey 113
Live bravely 119
Broder's fleet in Clontarf bay J W D Moodie 122
Chieftain's grave A W Bostwick 125
Spirit invocation Jennie M Hull 138
Song of nature Mrs Hattie Hubbard Lines 145
The future life W C Bryant 149
Immortal fragrance 152
We believe Virginia 155
Seaside walk Mrs Browning 160
At twilight in the evening J D Older 165
Sandalphon, the angel of prayer H W Longfellow 169
Light and shadow Virginia 173
Religion, a fragment J W D Moodie 185
Live to some purpose M Cecelia Sherman 185
Song of the submarine cable W R Wallace 189
O let me sleep J W D Moodie 192
The child's angel 192
Influences Mrs Jane L Weisse 217
To the one I love 198
The atlantic telegraph 198
When the baby died 200
A vision G H T 208
Course of empire Berkley 209
Trust Virginia 232
Sue, a tale of lasting love Rev R Hoyt 233
Children Longfellow 240
Fear Unknown Bard 253
My own sweet flower Mrs J L Weisse 258
Spirit-life 263
To a star Unknown Bard 272
Last song of summer W R Wallace 280
God's angels Unknown Bard 288
Gem from the Persian 288
Angel listeners 289
Angels, the two Longfellow 293
Stick together 305
Hope Unknown Bard 308
Autumn evening scene Thompson 320
Our mission to earth M W Hammond 325
God knows it all 352
Close of the year Mrs M Remick 359
Physiological poetry 360
Spiritual poetry W A Luddon 369
Dreams 376
Lines on the starry heavens M Larkin 376
Life 384
Charity to the fallen 384
David's lament over Saul and Jonathan 396
It may be Virginia 401
A spirit poem Walter Hyde Ella Clark 414
Apostrophe to Niagara H Dresser 424
The poor old man J F Coles 424
The vision of the stream 424
Land ahead Virginia 432
The Red river voyager 440
The bruised flower M Cecelia Sherman 448
Never mind David Barker 448
A poor man's song 472
A true brother 472
Spirit poetry Owen Bancroft 480
Past and present D C Ripley 480
Night H W Longfellow 484
A voice from the red man M W Hammond 504
Spirit prompting 504

BORN INTO THE SPIRIT WORLD.

Dr Peter Clarke 71
Rachel Wentworth 81
Victoria Hoyt 121
Jane Dodge 121
Walter Buttle 169
Dr James Hart Allen 171
Helen Redman 191
Ida May Whitman 215
Maria Noble 247
Mary Bartlett 304
Oliver W Richardson 225
Francis Holdridge 296
Mrs C J Washburn 313
Joseph Listor 320
Rachael Jones 344
Sarah Ariminta Witty 376
Roser Shute 426
Isabella M Coates 432
Margaret Ballard 440
Sarah B Pierson 440
Helena M Wells 440
Mrs Elijah Filley 440
Mary M Bennett Barron 440

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