

A
CORRECT STATEMENT
OF THE
CIRCUMSTANCES
THAT ATTENDED
THE LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH
OF
MRS. SOUTHCOTT,
WITH
AN ACCOUNT
OF THE
Appearances exhibited on Dissection :
AND
THE ARTIFICES THAT WERE EMPLOYED
TO DECEIVE HER MEDICAL ATTENDANTS.

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PREFACE.

THE object in publishing this Pamphlet is not altogether to state the part the Author has been compelled to take, as a Professional Character, in the late illness of Joanna Southcott, but to satisfy public curiosity, and exhibit the lengths to which fanaticism will go.

Medicine it is to be regretted, is still in its infancy, and at best too much a science of conjecture.—In forming his judgment in this case, the Author was governed by the predominant symptoms so far as he was *allowed* to trace them,

and without suspicion of any *imposition* being practised. His attention to Domestic Medicine, and his zeal in extending it for public benefit by the publication of his *Medical Guide*, and other Works, he is sensible has raised him many professional enemies, who have made the Newspapers on this occasion the engine to vent their illiberality and abuse, some even connecting his attendance on an infatuated woman, with a belief in her ridiculous doctrines. Others have ranked him with the most ignorant characters that disgrace the Profession, from his having given an erroneous opinion in an instance where at least seven more of the profession, of high respectability, did the same.—To this he can only observe, that he has had opportunities of learning every branch of his Profession which falls to the lot of few. For many years he held the

respectable appointment of Domestic Surgeon and Apothecary to the Hereford Infirmary, to which some of the first Medical characters belonged. On leaving it, he studied at the first Hospitals in the Metropolis, and attended the principal Lectures, and he may be allowed, *since* he has been so unjustly attacked, without incurring the imputation of vanity, to add, that he has prosecuted his studies with a degree of ardor and assiduity equal to any of his cotemporaries; and having built such a solid foundation, it is certainly no presumption in him to think that he is as capable of a successful exercise of his Profession as any whose names appear in the list of the two Colleges. Every man that attempts to be conspicuous and useful in public Life, is liable to the jealousy and illiberality of his equals; but those who are his enemies,

he has the satisfaction to state are the enemies of science—who wish to make a trade of their Profession instead of cultivating it on liberal and disinterested principles.

In answer to the ridiculous charge of his being a disciple of this infatuated impostor, he begs to state, that he is the son of a beneficed clergyman of the established Church, (the late Rev. W. Reece, Rector of Colwall, in the Diocese of Hereford), a man of profound erudition as an antiquarian, and of general learning, who early instilled in his mind the firm principles of religion, and those tenets of the Church of England, which he hopes have taken too deep a root to be shaken by the reveries of Fanaticism. Experience and intercourse with the world, have confirmed in his mind his father's instructions,

and fully satisfied him of their truth.— Every convert to Mrs. S.'s doctrines will do him the justice to declare, that he has embraced every opportunity to combat their delusions, and point out the folly of her tenets. Had he conceived that this woman could have excited such public attention, he certainly would not have made any communication on the subject of her pregnancy. The result, he hopes, will be satisfactory to the Public, as it has given him an opportunity of exposing her deceptions, as a warning to the weak, ignorant, and deluded; and it will serve also as a guard to every professional character, in trusting to no appearances of candor or veracity, in circumstances where he has an opportunity of forming a correct judgment.

Bolton Row,
Jan. 6th, 1815.

A STATEMENT
OF THE
Circumstances attending the last Illness
OF
JOANNA SOUTHCOTT.

THE short period of a few years has brought forward events unparalleled in former times in their importance, variety, and character. The causes of such events have interested thoughtful and reflecting minds, and they have naturally looked for an explanation of them, in that record which is given us as our rule of life and conduct. There is considered to be pre-

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dicted the future destinies of the world, and the circumstances which are to precede and attend its dissolution. Such investigations lead a contemplative individual often beyond its bounds ; the spirit of enthusiasm touches the imagination in the pursuit, and such is the mental delusion apt to take place in these studies, that the idea of inspiration animates the votary of Bibliographic learning, and he considers himself actuated by the same spirit which first penned the dictates of sacred writ. To these observations I am led by the peculiar situation in which I am placed by my professional attendance on the late Mrs. Southcott, and the public, I am persuaded, will be anxious to learn the circumstances which preceded and attended the death of this singular woman.

In entering upon this task I lay aside entirely the idea of her prophetic functions. These must rest with those who are able to judge of their truth or otherwise. At the same time I cannot but do justice, as an impartial person, to her character and

demeanor. I must admit that I was very much struck with the mildness and simplicity of her manners, the motherly kindness that distinguished her behaviour, and the artless and unaffected detail of many circumstances of her life. Such a woman, I naturally said, does not carry with her the stamps of imposture. There seemed to be no bias to self interest in her conduct. Her apartment was paltry and mean, and she did not appear to be loaded with the delicacies of life, or to press upon her followers for more than the bare necessities of existence. Her tenets correspond also to this general feeling. There is no threat or persecution connected with her doctrines, and her proselytes preserve the same regularity and mildness of conduct which seems to flow from their founder. Thus favourably impressed with her at first sight, after my curiosity had subsided, which no doubt impelled me in the first to agree to visit her, I was induced from public duty, as a professional character, to continue my attendance, and to give her all that aid which her peculiar situation required, and

which common feeling as a man to a female, suffering by disease, had a right to claim. I was first introduced to her as a medical man by an old patient of my own, (Mr. Carder, of Leicester-place), a gentleman of great moral worth, of inflexible integrity, and of a most pious turn of mind. This took place on the 7th of August, 1814, and his object in soliciting me to visit her was to ascertain the probability of her being in a state of pregnancy, as then given out. In consequence of the interest excited in a part of the public mind, and especially of her followers by this circumstance, several other medical gentlemen were appointed to see her. I attended at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and the others were all punctual in their attendance.

My introduction into the place of her residence gave me no high opinion of the wealth and consequence of her followers, as falsely given out. In the front apartment several of her proselytes were engaged in folding up her pamphlets. I was accosted by her

principal attendant, Mrs. Townley, who, after some common-place talk, on the state of the weather, came to the subject of my visit. She introduced it by stating the divine inspiration of Mrs. Southcott, and her pregnancy by supernatural influence. She then descanted on her extreme illness, ascribing her preservation to the peculiar kindness of the Almighty, and her being a favoured object in his sight. She had no idea, she added, that her life was in danger, and she expressed her astonishment that the bishops had not come forward to examine into the truth of her mission.

She continued this discourse till it was announced that Mrs. Southcott was ready to receive my visit, when I was ushered into a small front room, where she sat, and on my entering rose, and politely received me, with that air of unaffected simplicity, which forcibly struck me at the moment. On my being seated she commenced the history of her sufferings from the period of her pregnancy—stating, that from the time of her quickening (which was in May) she had been subject to the usual complaints

of the stomach incident to that situation, as nausea, sickness, and a disordered state of digestion. I allowed her to proceed in the whole of her statement without interruption, and after noticing her internal complaints, she came to mention the changes that had taken place on her breasts, which from being flat and sunk, had expanded and become considerably enlarged and plump; that the same alteration had occurred in her belly, which had grown to a prodigious size, and that she had become thin about her loins; that her regular monthly appearance had left her for at least fifteen years. Having stated these circumstances, she then put to me the following pointed question, "Sir," says she, "were I a young woman, and had been married seven or eight months, would you suppose, from the symptoms I have related, I was in the family way?" I immediately replied, from her statement, "I could have no doubt of it." But at the same time, from the appearance of age in her face, such a circumstance seemed highly improbable. This

1 These symptoms should have appeared previous to her quickening & subsequent to others should have taken place

remark seemed not to please her, and assuming an elevated tone of voice, and a fierceness of aspect, she observed, "This will not satisfy the public; I expect to be abused as an impostor, and all manner of ill-natured things will be said of me, nay, the public may blame you for giving an opinion on my own statement, so that whatever proofs you require you shall have." There was a candour in this proceeding entirely above deception, and prepossessed me still more in favour of the correct moral principles of this singular woman. In every examination she acquiesced, except one, which the delicacy of her feelings as a virgin rejected, observing, that had she been a married woman, even to this she would have readily agreed. This examination had been proposed to her by Dr. Walshman, the bare idea of which had shocked her, and made her very ill, and her warning spirit had desired her not to submit to such a proceeding, for the Lord would not impose on her more than she could bear. After this explanation Mrs. Underwood, her attendant, who was pre-

sent arose, and assisted her to remove the coverings from her breasts. The appearance of her breasts on inspection astonished me. They exhibited the picture of a young woman in the seventh month of pregnancy, being equally full, plump, and expanded. This fulness, on a close examination; consisted also of a real enlargement of the mammary glands, that part peculiarly destined for the secretion of milk. There was no appearance of disease or tendency to irregular enlargement, morbid hardness, or schirrosity. All was apparently healthy. The nipples also were elongated, but the skin round the areola or disk was not so red or so clearly marked as in common cases of pregnancy, circumstances which I considered as connected with her age, and with that scaly surface which is apt to cover it at an advanced period of life. The left breast appeared somewhat larger than the right one, a fact noticed by herself.

Having thus satisfied myself of the change in her breasts, I was next permitted to

examine her belly. Here I discovered an alteration equally conspicuous and striking. In that part occupied by the womb, where its expansion equals what takes place in the seventh month of pregnancy, I felt a hard circumscribed tumor, not less than the size of a man's head, bearing the shape of the womb, and on tracing its edges round, I had no doubt of its being really the enlargement of that organ. It was peculiarly hard to the feel, and, she declared, acutely painful on the slightest pressure. This circumstance I attributed to the rigidity of fibre necessarily attendant on age. Having finished my examination, she then asked me if I thought she was pregnant. My reply to her was in these words, "That the fulness of the belly appeared to be produced by an enlargement of the womb; but whether it was the effect of pregnancy could only be established by the motion of the child." On this statement I was allowed to keep my right hand over the belly for the space of ten minutes, but in this time I felt no motion of a child, upon which she ob-

served that it was always very quiet in the presence of a stranger in the room, but particularly troublesome and active when she took food. The experiment was accordingly tried, and on Mrs. Underwood putting a piece of a peach into her mouth, which she began to masticate, I felt something move under my hand, possessing a kind of undulating motion, and appearing and disappearing in the same manner as a foetus. The integuments or coverings of the belly I had occasion to observe were very flaccid; but this I considered as the natural effect of age.

After a full inspection of what I deemed necessary to fix my opinion, she was anxious to know my real sentiments; and in requesting it she coupled her question with this observation, that I should put her time of life entirely out of mind, and form my judgment on the apparent symptoms, the same as if she were a female of only thirty years of age. My reply was, "That the symptoms favoured pregnancy, but her

period of life opposed the supposition; that the enlargement both of the breasts and womb were doubtful symptoms, as the same might take place from disease, and the former were often sympathetically affected in morbid states of the latter organ; but when these symptoms were accompanied with a sensible motion in the womb, I never could hesitate in pronouncing it a case of pregnancy, and that this *actually* was my opinion of her situation: that though it would have been more satisfactory to me to have formed my judgment from internal examination also, yet it was never my practice to urge such a proceeding where the feelings of the patient opposed it." I then prescribed for her some stomachic medicines, suited to the pregnant state, after which I took my leave of her, accompanied by Mr. Carder, at whose desire, as already stated, my visit was made.

The conversation between us in leaving Mrs. Southcott turned on the subject of her

supposed inspiration, which he and the other twelve of her elect, he observed, had no doubt of, and did not consider any report necessary to confirm their faith. That their opinion of her integrity was above being shaken, that she was incapable of imposture, and her pregnancy could accordingly only be by supernatural agency, a happy circumstance for the world at large, since the child to be born was actually the Holy Ghost personified, who would tie down the Devil, to use his own expression, and establish the Millennium so devoutly to be wished by all kindreds and people. The appearance of the mammary glands I considered the leading point in her favor, and when I contrasted all the appearances with the mildness of her deportment, as well as the behaviour of her attendants, I saw no reason for supposing the smallest deception. There seemed no wish or desire to make this an engine for procuring wealth, on the contrary, policy would have taught her to adopt a different plan; for had there been no pregnancy brought forward, the sect might have gone on successfully for an unlimited period;

which this circumstance, if not true, would infallibly terminate. She had established her prophetic mission in the minds of her people, and the system she had broached might have continued its influence long after her death.—Her sect might in fact be said to have been established.

A few days after I had delivered my opinion of Mrs. Southcott's case, I was waited on by Mr. Philips, an apothecary, in the habit of visiting her professionally, with the request, that I would permit a visit from several of her followers, who wished to have my opinion of her real situation from my own lips. To this I readily acquiesced, and appointed their attendance at two o'clock in the afternoon, when I was waited on by eight or nine of her friends, of different descriptions. They were headed by the Rev. Mr. Foley, a respectable clergyman of the established church, who resides in Worcestershire, who addressed me as to the object of their visit, and requested my sentiments.—This I clearly stated to be in favor of her pregnancy, on which Mr. Foley

observed, that he had known Mrs. Southcott for many years, that he had full conviction of her being in every respect a real good woman, and had no doubt of her inspiration. This was confirmed by another person who had the appearance of a Quaker, declaring that to his knowledge she had not been in the presence of a man for the last twelve months, till visited professionally, and her conception therefore could only be by the Holy Ghost!!! Another, who had the appearance of a Jew, casting up his eyes, declared, with much fervor, it was a miraculous conception!!! My attention was afterwards engaged in a conversation with Mr. Foley on her divine mission. This gentleman is a near relation of Lord Foley. He condemned the conduct of the bishops for their supineness, and want of curiosity in not coming forward to investigate the business, and lamented much the death of the late Dr. Herde, Bishop of Worcester, who thought favorably of Mrs. Southcott's doctrines. He had himself applied to the present bishop, who had declined to in-

terfere. In this visit Mr. Foley behaved with all the politeness of the gentleman, and expressed his wish to see me at his rectory. He is a man of superior understanding, great benevolence, and one who does honor to the clerical character.

Some time after this, on the 25th of August, the following Letter appeared in the Times newspaper, calling on any of the professional characters, who had visited Mrs. Southcott, to state their opinion of her situation, and satisfy the public curiosity.

To the Editor of the Times.

" SIR,

" Will any of your readers have the goodness to inform me, whether any of the bishops, to whom *Joanna Southcott* sent her book and portrait, have done any thing to expose her imposture. You consider her, and that very justly, as only capable of deceiving the most ignorant; of whom, it is clear, she has deceived a great number. She says, 'the number of those who have signed since 1808, when the sealing was stopped, and have had no seals given them yet, amounts to six thousand four hundred and upwards.' What was the

cause of this stopping? *Who are the medical gentlemen that are said to concur in her statements respecting herself.*

"A few more facts would give grounds for any application to procure her confinement.

"W."

"August 23, 1814."

This letter I was induced to answer, from a regard to truth, as well as public duty; a duty incumbent on every man of integrity to exercise. My answer was accordingly couched in the following words, and inserted in the Sunday Monitor.

To the Editor of the Sunday Monitor.

"SIR,

"An anonymous writer in the *Times* paper of this day, for the avowed purpose of collecting facts, that may afford 'sufficient grounds for an application to procure the confinement of Joanna Southcott,' inquires, 'who are the medical gentlemen that are said to concur in her statements respecting herself?' Supposing that the correspondent alludes to the report of the pregnancy of Joanna Southcott, I shall briefly state the facts which I ascertained on a visit I paid to her on Wednesday, the 18th instant, by the desire of one

of her friends:—I was admitted into her apartment about eleven o'clock in the forenoon; and after hearing the statement of her complaints, she allowed me to make such examination as I might consider necessary, for the purpose of ascertaining whether she was pregnant or not. On examining the breasts, I found them much enlarged, particularly the mammary glands. The abdomen was much distended; and, on minute examination, appeared to be from enlargement of the womb. These facts not being sufficient evidence of the pregnancy, I expressed a wish to be permitted to keep my right hand over the womb, for the purpose of discovering the motion of the fœtus, on which she observed, that it generally moved when she took nourishment; a piece of ripe fruit was then handed to her by her female attendant, on masticating which I discovered a motion resembling that of a fœtus.

“ In the early period of pregnancy, it is often very difficult to ascertain whether the uterus be impregnated or not; but, in an advanced stage, when the peculiar undulatory motion of the child is evident on external examination, there can be no doubt of the fact of pregnancy, particularly when accompanied with enlargement of the mammary glands, or the presence of milk in the breasts.

“ Having thus satisfied my mind of the pregnancy of Joanna Southcott, I applied for a certificate of her age, which I received this morning; and of which the following is a copy:—

C

*‘ Joanna, the daughter of William and Hannah
 ‘ Southcott, baptized the 6th day of June
 ‘ 1750, as appears by the Register of Baptism
 ‘ of Ottery St. Mary’s Parish, Devon.*

*‘ (Signed) RICHARD SEAWARD,
 ‘ Parish Clerk.’*

“ I regard the pregnancy of Joanna Southcott extraordinary only in a professional point of view. Of her Prophecies I am ignorant, and I beg to assure the writer in the Times, that I shall be happy to lend my aid for the purpose of detecting and exposing a species of imposture, which, of all others, I consider the most infamous. If this be the real object of the gentleman, I should suppose that he can have no objection to put his name to the letters he may think proper to address to the public on this subject, as I consider anonymous charges and insinuations unworthy of notice.—I am, Sir,

“ Your obedient Servant,

“ (Signed) RICHARD REECE.”
Piccadilly, August 26, 1814.

After this letter appeared, I was informed Mrs. Southcott had been also visited by Dr. Adams, Mr. Wetherell, and Mr. Phillips; and that they had all declared her in a state of pregnancy, after making a full and satisfactory examination. In-

deed the two last gentlemen left with Mrs. Underwood the following testimony, declaratory of their sentiments.

“ After having examined the breasts and abdomen of Mrs. Southcott, I am decidedly of opinion that she is pregnant.”

Signed by MR. WETHERELL.

One to the same purport was signed by Mr. Phillips. Mr. Foster, an experienced accoucheur, and a Mrs. Lock, had also stated their opinions to the same purport. Dr. Adams had likewise certified the same, in the presence of Mr. Wetherell and Mr. Phillips; but his certificate Mrs. Underwood did not possess.

The public attention was now fully awakened to the medical opinions on this mysterious conception; and accordingly the following letters appeared in the public Journals on the subject:—

To the Editor of the Morning Advertiser.

“ SIR,

“ It is stated in the Morning Chronicle of Saturday last, that two respectable Accoucheurs have given it as

their opinion, that Joanna Southcott is with child, without their names or any reference.

" I consider that I should not be doing my duty to those poor deluded people who are in her belief, and the public at large, were I not, after having had an opportunity of seeing her, to state the result of such a visit. I was informed, before I was introduced, that she was to express her own feelings, and I was to be allowed to judge accordingly ; and I feel confident that no one will notice the mode of inquiry, but will see the imposition that was tried to be practised on me, or rather the trap in which I had like to have been caught. She desired that I would lose all idea of her being Joanna Southcott, and consider her a young woman about four or five and twenty years of age, and that she had been married about twelve months. She then described as her own feelings, the symptoms of pregnancy from first to last, and then again reminded me of the age she wished to be considered, and desired me to state what I should say of a person labouring under such symptoms. Had I answered the question in this shape, I certainly must have said such a person is pregnant ; but the purport of my visit being to judge of her under all her circumstances, I told her she most decidedly was not in the situation she wished to impress upon the minds of those who follow her.

" I am, Sir, with respect, your's,

" J. C. H.

" *August 26, 1814.*

130, Ratcliffe-Highway."

To the Editor of the Times.

"SIR,

"Permit me to remonstrate with you on the impropriety into which you have fallen; as well as the rest of our journalists, on the subject of the scandalous delusion now passing upon the public, in the person and pretensions of Joanna Southcott. The more this imposture is brought forward, particularly in respectable papers, like yours, the greater attention does it excite, till at length many weak persons, whose hearts are better than their understandings, begin to wonder and to become credulous. I wish that the parish officers, or the magistrates, would put a stop to the mischief at once, by taking up this deceiver as a common cheat, and placing her in a situation, where the silly fools, who now come from all parts of the kingdom on purpose to pay her homage, may be prevented from having any access to her without proper authority. It is a fact, that in consequence of what the newspapers have for some time been relating about this woman, shoals of enthusiasts, with more money in their pockets than brains in their skulls, are now pouring into London and its vicinity, to behold this chosen vessel! It is therefore full time for the conservators of the peace and good manners of the kingdom to interfere; not indeed to persecute any one, but to enforce what the laws have wisely provided as a salutary check against the influence of those knaves, who, by assuming a claim to supernatural power, would, if suffered to practise

their arts of deception, counteract all the labours of reason and piety. Before I have done, a word seems to be due to Mr. Richard Reece, who has very officiously obtruded himself upon the public notice, in this silly concern, without having had any warrant or call to meddle in the matter. Unfortunately, in the present instance, his testimony is of such a nature, as to convey an idea to the minds of most readers, that, at least, something marvellous is in embryo; and those of your readers who are acquainted with the history of impostures, will recollect, that Mary Tofts, the rabbit-breeder, of Godalming, would not have gone on so long as she did, had it not been for the ridiculous part which some medical men took on that occasion.

“J. W.”

“*Pancras, August 30, 1814.*”

To the preceding letters I made a reply, addressed to the Editor of the Sunday Monitor, of which the following is a copy :

To the Editor of the Sunday Monitor.

“SIR,

“In a morning paper of the 30th ult. a medical gentleman, under the signature of J. C. H. observes, that ‘He should not be doing his duty to those poor deluded people who are in the belief of Joanna Southcott, and the public at large, were he not, after having an opportunity of seeing her, to state the result of such a

visit.' He then proceeds to assert, that 'an imposition was tried to be practised on him, or rather a trap, in which he had like to be caught.' This trap he explains to be a request made by Joanna Southcott, that, in giving his opinion of her situation, he would divest his mind of all prejudice of her inspiration and age, and consider her a married woman of about twenty-four years. One would suppose, Mr. Editor, that a medical man, employed on such an occasion, would not pay the least attention to the statement of a woman who was represented as an impostor of the worst description in all our public journals. His duty was to notice such symptoms only, the existence of which he had an opportunity to ascertain. Mr. J. C. H. who, I understand, is Mr. Hoggay, of Ratcliffe-Highway, was allowed to make the same examinations as was afforded to the other medical gentlemen who attended her, on which he has thought proper to be silent. Joanna Southcott, I find, was examined by nine medical practitioners, of some eminence in London, six of whom pronounced her to be pregnant, and the other three declined to give a decided opinion, principally on account of her age. The enlargement of the mammary glands and distention of the uterus, I allow are not unequivocal proofs of pregnancy; but if, with these signs, a motion resembling that of a foetus can be distinctly felt in the uterus, no medical man, I presume, would hesitate a moment in pronouncing the person to be pregnant. I beg leave to ask those gentlemen who declined to hazard an opinion respecting the pregnancy of Joanna Southcott, and I shall really be greatly obliged to them to answer my questions either anonymously or otherwise, whether the

symptoms noticed above were not evident to them on the examination they made? and whether a medical man on external examination, could possibly mistake any motion of the uterus, or the viscera, produced by the action of the abdominal muscles, or diaphragm, for that of a fœtus in the uterus? The peculiar undulatory motion of a fœtus, in my opinion, is very different to that occasioned by a sudden contraction of the abdominal muscles,

“ As the professional men who have attended Joanna Southcott will be apprised of her labour when it takes place, I hope they will all attend; indeed, so far from being her wish to have it conducted privately, I know that applications have been made to the Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a person to attend her as accoucheur, and to procure for her suitable apartments, which his Grace has, perhaps, very properly, refused to do, under the idea, that such a measure would tend to confirm her followers in the belief of her being inspired. The pregnancy of a woman in the 65th year of her age, is, in modern times, a novel occurrence, and deserves to be recorded. With respect to the operation of the law, I consider it worthy of notice; causes having been determined in the House of Lords against claimants born in foreign countries, on the presumption that their mothers were, at the time of their birth, too far advanced in life to bear children, although one (Lady Jane Gray) was about ten years younger than Joanna Southcott. If then, in this point of view, the case of Joanna be interesting, it is of great consequence that its authenticity should not be called in question at

any future period. For the purpose of avoiding deception, and any ground for suspicion or misrepresentation, might not the Lord Chancellor, with great propriety, take her under his protection, place her in a decent apartment, and appoint accoucheurs of experience and respectability to attend her? Such an interference could not possibly be considered by her followers as countenancing the marvellous part of the business, and for which, I understand, her followers, and I think I may say the public in general, would feel much indebted to his Lordship.

“ A writer in the *Times* paper of this day has thought proper to animadvert on my conduct in ‘ having very officiously obtruded myself on the public notice in this silly concern, without having had any warrant or call to meddle in the matter.’ The writer, I presume, is not aware that the letter I addressed to you is a reply to a question put by a correspondent in the *Times* paper, respecting the report of the medical men on the situation of Joanna Southcott. Supposing the object of that writer was to collect facts, I frankly stated what I knew of her situation, and, on this account, I did not conceal my name. If the anonymous writer in the *Times* paper will take the trouble to read the concluding part of the letter I addressed you, he will find that so far from countenancing the idea of the inspiration of Joanna Southcott, I offer my assistance to detect an imposition which, of all others, I consider most infamous. To make use of the sacred name of our Saviour, and pervert the meaning of the Gospel, for the diabolical purpose of imposing on the credulous and weak,

thought an examination was necessary, and as I had been acquainted with Mr. Wetherell, and himself and Mr. Phillips were strangers, he desired Mr. Wetherell would examine me, and they would quit the room. Mr. Wetherell examined me in the same manner you did, and laid it before Dr. Adams and Mr. Phillips, and Dr. Adams prescribed for me accordingly.

“ As the Bishops had refused to send in their physicians, I had liberty for the friends to send in theirs, from which Mr. Walker applied to Dr. Walchman, and Mr. Owen applied to a Mr. Horff. I then sent to Dr. Adams, to beg the favour of his meeting them; he called upon me and said he would attend; I asked him if he had ever such a case brought before him, of a woman at my age; he said, No never, neither had he ever heard of such a case, therefore they could only pass their judgment from the symptoms and appearance, was it in a young woman, but this was a cause could not be reasoned upon.

“ On the Wednesday following, he met the Gentlemen, as appointed, when Dr. Walchman came, he proposed an internal examination, and said the Medical Men should not come up all together, but one at a time, and give their opinions separately. Dr. Adams then came up, and, after external examination, said I had every symptom of a woman in a pregnant state, and wrote down his judgment thereon. He then told me of Dr. Walchman's proposal of examination, that it would be closer than he had done, as he himself examined me in the same manner you did. I asked Dr.

Adams what Dr. Walchman meant by a closer examination, he then explained what the other meant ; this filled me with such horror, that I immediately said I would not submit to that, for if they could not judge from my situation, and the examination he had made, then I said I would wait till the child made its appearance strong enough to be seen and felt, without any examination at all. Dr. Adams said he himself should not have made such a request, but Dr. Walchman refused seeing me, unless I would submit to such an examination ; this I said I never would submit to, but leave it to time, that would prove whether there was a child or not. Dr. Adams informed Dr. Walchman of my determination, and they left the house, and I neither saw Dr. Walchman or Dr. Horff.

“ This being talked of, that medical men were admitted, a Mr. Meallin, a surgeon, applied to have permission ; being a stranger, he was requested to leave his address, and Mr. Phillips waited upon him. He gave a reference to Drs. Heavyside, and Pearson, after that he came, with Mr. Phillips, and after hearing my statement, and examining me externally, he said he had no doubt of my being in a pregnant state, though he said it was a wonderful case. I told him the proposals Dr. Walchman had made of examination, at which he seemed surprised, and said he conceived he could be no judge from such an examination, of a woman at my age.

“ The Monday following, Mr. Forster came, and after laying the whole of my case before him, and he

examined me, he gave it as his opinion, if it was a young woman, there was no doubt of my being in a pregnant state. When I mentioned to him the proposals Dr. Walchman had made of an internal examination, he said like Mr. Meallin, he could be no judge from that, at my time of life, and the advanced time of the pregnancy; as those examinations took place at an early period, at Ladies' own desire, when they were not clear of being in the family way, and wished to know; or at a time, when they went beyond the time to bring on the pain, or to ascertain the cause, if not pregnant; he gave liberty for any one to call upon him, and he would give his opinion.

“ The next day Mrs. Forster came, and Mrs. Lock, a female midwife, and two others that have had families; after laying my case before them, and being strictly examined by the women, they all passed their judgment there was not a doubt of my being in a pregnant state; after the examination, as we sat conversing together, I felt the life working very strong within me. Mrs. Forster was sitting close by my side, and perceived it, she immediately laid her hand over me, and said she felt the life of the child as strong as she ever felt one of her own in her life; Mrs. Lock felt it likewise, the other two saw its movements. The following day, you, Sir, came yourself, your judgment I need not mention.

“ The next morning Dr. Sims came with Mr. Weatherell, he heard all the symptoms, and examined me, but gave it as his opinion I was not with child, though he would not say it was impossible, for all things were

possible with God, yet he himself should not pass his opinion I was in the family way, but said he would not take it upon him to say I was not, neither would he give any opinion of the cause that had produced the effects I had felt, or the increase of my size; when I asked him what he would prescribe for me to prevent my sickness and pain, or to bring me to an appetite, he mentioned the same as Dr. Adams had prescribed for me, but would not prescribe any thing further; he said he should suppose such an event as this, if it took place, would not be hid in a corner. I told him, no; there must be physicians and medical men present. He said he should be glad to be one, that he should be happy to be a witness for me against his own judgment.

“ When he went down stairs, Mr. Wetherell asked him what grounds he had to suppose I was not in the family way; he assigned but one reason, but said if I was deceived, I was not a deceiver, as I gave liberty for every examination that was necessary. After this some ladies came to see me; and upon mentioning Dr. Sims's reason for his opinion, one of the ladies said, I have had eleven children, and the objection he mentioned happened to me with every one of them; therefore I find there is no rule without an exception. This lady, in examining me, said, there was no doubt of my being in a pregnant state. The same judgment has been passed by all those whom I have seen that have been mothers of children, as I have had the advice and opinion of many.

“ After Dr. Sims had passed his judgment, I sent for a medical man, whom I knew was strong in unbelief, that it could not be possible, and therefore I said I sent for him, to know if he could prescribe any thing that would do me good, if I was not in the family way. He heard my statement from the beginning, he examined me, and said if I was a young married woman, he should say, I was not in the family way. I asked him what disorder he would judge I had to cause all the pains, sickness, and the increase of my body : he said he looked upon it I had been long in a debilitated state, and the severe pain I had felt in my back was from a hurt in the kidnies, which was the cause of all my other complaints; that my sickness proceeded from a lodgment of bile in my stomach, which prevented me from having an appetite; but remove the cause and the effects would cease. He said he should not proceed with violent medicines, neither should he give me milk and water. I told him I would not take any thing that I thought would be hurtful to a woman in the family way : he sent me two draughts, but Mr. Phillips advised me not to take them, and I was ordered not, and I sent to him to send me no more.

“ Soon after he was gone, Mr. Hopgay came, he heard the statement, and examined my breasts, and outside my clothes, said there was no occasion for any further examination. I asked him what would be his judgment if I was a young married woman : he said that was an unfair question, and he would not answer it ; he was then desired to answer in his own way : he

said he did not think I was with child, but his judgment might not be worth twopence. I then inquired what he thought my disorder was: he said I had no disease, no disorder, but was in perfect health. He wished he might be deceived in his judgment; and, if so, should be glad to come forward against his own judgment. After he was gone, I thought his judgment could not be worth a penny, to say I had no disease, no disorder, and was in perfect health, when I had suffered from pain, sickness, loss of appetite, and had gone through more than I ever experienced in my life, from the 17th of March to that time; and, at that time, could keep nothing upon my stomach but fruit, vegetables, and liquids, nothing solid could I take. How he could call this good health I know not.

“ Here I have given a clear statement of the different judgments of the medical gentlemen that I was examined by; so, if any other statement is brought by men, it is from those who have not seen me. Nine I have seen; *six out of the nine passed their opinion, I was in a state of pregnancy*, the other three said I was not; therefore I was ordered that no more examinations should take place. What had been already, was sufficient to shew the different judgments of men.

“ Since I saw you, I have found a considerable alteration in myself, by feeling the life much stronger, and moving in different ways to what it had before, and more particularly this last week since I had a journey in the coach, when I removed from my own house, I felt it much lower, and much greater weight.

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Mr. Carder will give you the particulars how I have been for this week past, that my appetite returned, and my pain and sickness left me, though in other respects the feeling of life within is greater than ever; but, should it prove not to be a child in the end, it must bring me to the grave; but as you have come forward with your judgment to the public, and will be attacked for so doing, I wish to put every weapon in your hand, that if there is a possibility of my being deceived, that the life within should bring death upon me, without making its appearance in the world, I now promise to give you liberty to open my body, that you may find out the cause which produced all these effects, what life was in me to cause all these pains and sickness, like travail pains, the increase of the size of my body, which have increased so much within a few months, so that either in death or life you will be enabled to judge of a cause, that never was brought before medical men, of a woman at my age.

I remain, Sir,

Yours,

With the greatest respect,

“JOANNA SOUTHCOTT.”

“The above taken from Joanna Southcott’s mouth by me,

“ANN UNDERWOOD.”

“P. S. Mr. Phillips, being in attendance upon Mrs. Southcott on the 12th of August, said, on putting his hand on that part of the abdomen, which a distended womb would occupy, he distinctly felt a strong motion, similar to such that might be expected in a female about seven months expired in pregnancy.”

The interest thus so strongly excited, induced Dr. Sims, whose practices, I believe, are chiefly confined to midwifery, to pay a visit officially to this singular character, and in consequence of that visit and an examination he then made, he addressed the following letter, dated Sept. 3d, 1814, to the public, through the medium of the *Morning Chronicle*, declaratory of his opinion on the subject.

To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle.

“SIR,

“Several persons having expressed a wish that I would visit Joanna Southcott, that they might be better satisfied what foundation there was for a report that she was pregnant, I consented to accompany one of her friends, a surgeon and accoucheur of experience, for that purpose, on the 18th of August. He informed me, on my way thither, that the most satisfactory examination would not be permitted, but that this was not at all necessary, as no professional man could have a doubt of her situation, upon seeing the state of her breasts, and feeling the outside of her abdomen.

“Her appearance gave no reason to doubt the truth of her statement, that she was in her sixty-fifth year, and that she had ceased to menstruate since she was forty-eight; circumstances under which her pregnancy

was naturally incredible, and, were it real, might well enough have induced a belief that it was supernatural.

"I endeavoured, however, not to prejudge the case, but to form my opinion of her situation from the symptoms alone, as I should have done had she been only forty-five years of age, and therefore within the period of probable pregnancy.

"It is quite unnecessary here to relate her conversation, in which she asserted, that she had been commanded to keep her apartment, and to admit no male to visit her for a period of some months; suffice it to say, that, during this term, she stated herself to have conceived of a son, who would be born before the harvest was over. She shewed me her breasts, which she said had been before flabby and shrivelled, with the nipple drawn in: they were now plump, the veins large and visible, the nipple red and protruded: they had not, however, the elasticity natural to the breast of a pregnant woman, and the areola was pale, partly covered with a little whitish scurf, and the outer circle not at all defined, but growing very gradually fainter. They gave me, upon the whole, more the idea of the breasts of an old woman grown corpulent than those of a pregnant woman. She stated, however, that she was in general grown thinner, especially about the back.

"The feel of the abdomen through her linen was not unlike that of a woman in the eighth month of her pregnancy, but, as it seemed to me, less hard, except

at the lower part, where there appeared to be a solid tumour, reaching not far above the pubes. I proposed to put my finger upon the navel, without any covering, which was permitted. This part I found sunk in, not at all protruded as in pregnancy. In making this examination I was not sensible of any motion, which she insisted upon being so strong, that she could not only feel it herself, but that it had been seen by others who were sitting near her.

“ In enumerating the symptoms, she mentioned sickness at stomach, violent pain about the period of quickening, and great increase of the sickness, with bilious vomitings at that time; nor did she omit a sort of longing or extraordinary craving for asparagus, when she had otherwise a total loss of appetite; but the order of these symptoms was not according to their usual occurrence, the sickness, instead of ceasing at the quickening, becoming at that time much more excessive.

“ Considering all the above appearances, I did not hesitate to declare it to be my opinion, that Joanna Southcott was not pregnant: but was told I was the first medical man that had seen her that was not perfectly satisfied of the contrary.

“ I believe that her uterine organs are diseased, and that the breasts, as is usual, sympathizing with those parts, have an increased quantity of blood determined to them. Had I thought the external appearances such as ought to lead to a belief in her pregnancy, I should have urged the propriety of her submitting to a more

satisfactory examination, but feeling, as I did, a perfect conviction that she was not with child, it seemed to me unnecessary to insist upon any further inquiry.

“ Having observed, in the newspapers, that assertions are repeatedly made, that eminent accoucheurs have declared this woman to be pregnant, I am desirous not to be reckoned of that number. Yet, before I conclude, I feel it right to say, that I am convinced that this poor woman is no impostor, but that she labours under a strong mental delusion.

“ JOHN SIMS.”

“ September 3d, 1814.

This letter called on me, who had given an opposite statement, to make a reply, which I did in the following manner.

To the Editor of the Sunday Monitor,

SIR,

“ No doubt existing in my own mind of the pregnancy of Joanna Southcott, I was very desirous to be acquainted with the reasons that induced three of the gentlemen who examined her, to give a contrary opinion. In *The Morning Chronicle* of Monday last, Dr. Sims details the appearances which led him to suppose that Joanna Southcott was not in the family way.

“ Firstly.—‘ The breasts,’ he says, ‘ exhibited the appearance of an old woman grown corpulent.’ Now,

the fulness of Joanna's breasts arises from an enlargement of the mammary glands, and not from an accumulation of fat in the surrounding cellular substance. In cases of corpulency, the nipples are shortened, whereas, in the case of Joanna Southcott, they are elongated.

"Secondly.—'There was not that elasticity of breasts as in the eighth month of pregnancy.' In a woman of only forty years, the breasts very rarely exhibit this appearance in the last month of pregnancy, and in a woman of sixty-five, such is not to be expected; the changes being confined to the glands, and the plumpness depending on the state of the cellular membrane and skin.

"Thirdly.—'The appearance of the navel does not favour pregnancy.' The protrusion of this part entirely depends on the degree of elasticity of the integuments of the abdomen; in a woman of forty-five, this appearance is very rarely attendant on pregnancy; and in a woman of sixty-five, where the integuments are in a very flaccid state, such an appearance would be very extraordinary indeed; but, as the doctor asserts, that the *uterus* had only risen above the *pubes*, it was not even to be expected, had she been only of twenty years of age, instead of sixty-five.

"Fourthly.—'The areola of the nipple did not indicate pregnancy.' This appearance in an old woman with her first child, is never so well marked as in a young subject, or an aged woman who has had chil-

dren, on account of the skin of the part being covered with scurf.

“ Fifthly.—‘ She did not experience sickness till the time she felt the sensation of quickening.’ It is not uncommon for the sickness to commence at this period, and even diarrhœa, from the pressure of the enlarged *uterus* and motion of the *fœtus*.

“ The symptoms which have been taken for those of breeding, Dr. Sims considers to arise from disease of the *uterus*, to which he has not thought proper to give a name. Now, I contend that the sympathetic affection of the breast attendant on a diseased *uterus* is very different from that which attends gestation; in one, the action is healthy, and in the other, it is disease.

“ The *fundus uteri*, Dr. Sims asserts, did not reach far above the *pubes*, and that he did not discover any motion in it. When I made the examination, she was sitting in a chair, and in that state, I traced the *fundus uteri* above the navel, and very plainly felt a motion resembling that of a *fœtus*, which, of all other symptoms, I consider the most unequivocal of pregnancy; and, had Dr. Sims discovered it, his opinion, I have no doubt, would have accorded with my own. In a woman aged sixty-five, we cannot expect the indications of pregnancy, particularly those of the breasts, to be as strongly marked as in a young subject.

“ I have this morning been assured by one of the friends of Joanna Southcott, that I shall be apprised of the time of labour, and that it is her wish that all

the medical gentlemen who have attended her, should be present. *The result I will communicate to the public through the medium of YOUR PAPER.*

"I agree with Dr. Sims, that Joanna Southcott is not an impostor, but is probably labouring under mental delusion. The report in the public journals, that she has sold many thousand seals, I am credibly informed, is false. She has distributed seals among her friends, who defy any person to produce an instance of Joanna Southcott, or any of her followers, having sold one. I find also, that she does not receive presents, except a few trifles from a few particular friends—she is chiefly supported by Mrs. Townley, who appears to be a very good sort of woman.

"I take this opportunity to thank those medical gentlemen who have thought proper to address me anonymously, on the opinion I have given respecting Joanna Southcott's situation, for their friendly wishes. The abuse of the ignorant and sordid part of the profession, I regard as complimentary, but I must confess it would be more acceptable to me if it were conveyed without the expense of postage. Instead of wasting their time thus fruitlessly, I would advise them to cultivate their art for the benefit of their patients, and not to practise it solely for their own advantage. Illiberality ill becomes the members of a *liberal* profession.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"RICHARD REECE."

* 171, Piccadilly, Sept. 10, 1814."

The consequence of this continued correspondence rivetted strongly the attention of all ranks to know the actual state of this business, and accordingly I was beset with letters from all quarters, many from respectable characters of the Church of England, whose motives deserved every attention and regard. Others from literary characters stimulated by the singular nature of the supposed occurrence, and others for the purpose of abuse, sent anonymously to shew the wit and illiberality of the writers, as a specimen of these, the following may be submitted to the reader.

“SIR,

“As I read a very sensible well-written letter, *signed by you*, in the Sunday’s Review, relative to Joanna’s *pregnancy*, I am induced to trouble you with a few lines on that *mysterious* subject! My love of TRUTH, and of course, my hatred to all kinds of *impositions*, have determined me to *investigate* the matter as I find there are many thousands of her followers (*as well as believers in the millennium*) are in full expectation that she is to *bring forth* the MESSIAH !!

“If she *really be with child*, I can no longer *doubt* it,

as it must be FROM THE LORD, if a woman of *her age* brings forth a child (even supposing she had been a *married* woman,) it then, would have been a *miracle* similar to that in Holy Writ! I have enclosed you a copy of my letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, which will prove to you how very anxious I am to *investigate* this matter, and which is certainly the *duty* of His Grace, and *all* the Bishops, as it is a terrible BLASPHEMY and a *mockery* of the true gospel of Christ, if his divine and holy name be made use of to *impose* on the world! but I confess, I am of opinion, that no *human* creature would have *dared* to have done it! Therefore, I am inclined to conclude, that it is a VISITATION from the Lord!! As I flatter myself I have a small degree of penetration, I got permission to see her last week, when I was forcibly struck with her appearance and manner; nothing that had the least appearance of *imposture*, a benign look, modest in speech, and apparel, a good looking motherly woman; she did not appear to be *large* with child, whereas an *impostor* would have made a great *shew* of her *pretended* condition! Being it seems a little flustered last week by some insults from some of her *genteel* neighbours, she was comforted by the SPIRIT in the following manner: the lines are beautiful, and well adapted to comfort us all, if we make use of them to our own advantage.

‘ On the Lord rely
 So safe shalt thou go on,
 Fix on his word thy stedfast eye!
 So shall thy work be done,

What profit can't thee gain
 By self-consuming care,
 Trust in the Lord Jehovah
 Trust,
 And know, thy God is near.'

"Your honoring me with a line (when you return the enclosed letter to His Grace) will be highly gratifying to your most obedient Servant,

"ANN THICKNESSE."

"70, *Edgware Road, Paddington,*
August 31, 1814."

P. S. "Excuse all errors, and inaccuracies from the pen of a woman on the verge of eighty!"

This letter was followed by a short reply from me, referring to my second communication to the public.

On this part of the subject, I am sorry it is not in my power to present here a copy of the letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury.—Never indeed was shewn more strongly than in this case of Mrs. Southcott, the power of fanaticism over the mind in the firm belief of her own suppositions, which had impressed and blinded this enthusiastic woman, who certainly

acted under the influence of the most powerful mental delusion that has occurred in modern times. Those who were disposed to believe in her mission were not, however, altogether settled or easy under the opinion I had given, in respect to her situation ; for on the 13th of December, I received from Mrs. Thicknesse, the following letter :

“ SIR,

“ I take the liberty of once more troubling you on the very mysterious and important subject of *Joanna's pregnancy*, which you (in the letter you honored me with) seemed to look upon as a *mystery* only, in a *professional* view ; do not imagine, sir, I intrude upon you any questions from mere impertinent *female curiosity*, for be assured, I am actuated upon, by *religious principles only* ; and of course, an anxious desire to *know the truth*, and thereby, relieve my mind from every shadow of doubt ! I will repeat what I had written to the Archbishop, viz ; ‘ that no *human* being could have had the audacity to have written such things as it is pretended the SPIRIT uttered, and with *that* boldness too, as only truth could inspire !! ’

“ I have taken great pains to compare *her* writings with Sacred Writ, and am more and more *convinced*, that the time of the MILLENNIUM is *approaching* ! and if she be *really* pregnant, there seems but little doubt

of its being *supernatural*, for this case hath already baffled the wisdom and skill of the most eminent of the faculty, whom with yourself, imagined her accouchment, could not be protracted beyond the 12th of last November—as they reckoned from the time *she felt life*! Now I think that it is very probable, that the delivery will not be till the 12th of January, which will end the year *old style*! Because the SPIRIT said, ‘this year thou shalt have a son.’—If that proves *true*, and that her visitation *is* from the Lord, the words *must* prove true! But as to her being pregnant of a living child (and not, as was the opinion of Dr. Sims a *disease*) I should think in my humble opinion, one thing alone would have put it beyond doubt, which is, *Is there milk in her breasts?* that is the question, sir, I wished to ask you; your goodness in answering this will greatly relieve my mind, for with *me* all *doubt* would cease, and moreover, that it will produce a SUPERNATURAL BIRTH.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ Sir,

“ Your most obliged, humble Servant,

“ ANN THICKNESSE.”

“ 70, Edgware Road, Paddington,
Dec. 13, 1814.”

P. S. “ The rumour *to-day* is, she was taken in labour last night! Pray write one line to inform me if it be *true*! Mrs. Drew promised to let me know, but I have heard not from her.”

To the above I replied, that the circumstance on which she dwelt most strongly herself, the appearance of milk in the breasts, was by no means an unequivocal sign of pregnancy, and that it was often an attendant on a diseased womb, as well as gestation.

The anonymous correspondence was now continued upon me, a specimen of which may be offered in the following :

“HON. SIR,

“This epistle I now write unto you, in which I stir up your mind by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and apostles ; knowing that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts. But there were false prophets even in their days among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who shall bring in such heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of, and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you, whose judgment now for a long time lingereth not, and their punishment slumbereth not ; the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judg-

ment to be punished. But Joanna Southcott, and her followers, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not. I was pleased to see in a public paper, that you was not disposed to believe that infamous impostor's being inspired, and hope you will always resist every thing contrary to the Holy Scriptures. Forasmuch as ye know, that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot; therefore as ye know our souls have been purchased with so costly a sacrifice, that no other atonement would purchase fallen man's redemption, than the precious blood of the Son of God. Shall it be passed over only by making remarks of this false prophetess in a public newspaper. If one man rob another of his worldly property, is he not brought to trial, to receive his sentence from the judge? and shall this Antichrist rob God of the honor due to him, by deluding such a number of ignorant souls to walk after her infamous proceedings, as if the souls of mankind were of no more worth than a brute beast. Did he not say to old Elithe Priest, 'Them that honor me, I will honor, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed; all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men; and whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.' And is not this blasphemy, for Joanna Southcott to say she is pregnant

by the Spirit of God, and that she is going to bring the Son of God into the world. Our Saviour tells us to search the Scriptures, and it is they which testify of him, and I have been in the practice of reading the Scriptures all my life, but I never read that Christ was to be an infant twice. Our Saviour saith, "my mother and my brethren, are these which hear the word of God and do it, for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, my sister, and my mother."

"From a sincere worshipper of the true Messiah, to whom be glory and honor, Amen."

"*Ludlow, Nov. 29, 1814.*"

And as an example of the abuse, which many of them contained, the following will serve as a sufficient specimen. "My friend," says one of them, "was offered 20 pounds but you took 15."—In answer to this, I can only say, that my attendance on Mrs. Southcott, was entirely gratuitous, and I do not believe, to the honor of the profession, that any one of them who had the smallest claim to respectability would be capable of being actuated by such

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unworthy, and in this case, I may add, criminal motives.

Some letters bore the address of friendship, and interest for my welfare, expressing their great regard and esteem, and regretting the unfortunate part I had taken in the business. To these letters I thought it my duty to reply by stating, I considered my situation as a public professional character, to administer aid when required, to the meanest individual, and that no medical man in any case has a right of refusal. That if this is so in every instance, it is surely more especially, in the circumstances in which Mrs. Southcott was placed, as a female in which humanity, as well as duty, were blended. That having seen her, and given my opinion from every mode of examination I was permitted to make, I could have no hesitation in declaring that opinion, particularly when publicly called upon so to do. That the man who is really directed by principle, will not

shrink from the truth, from any despicable and sordid motives which prudence or self-interest may hold out. Mrs. Southcott's business was made a public one; the public had therefore a right to be satisfied, so far as could be done, and not trust to inuendoes.

In this stage of the proceedings, I was, on the 12th of November, waited on by Mr. Tozer, with a Mr. Wood, from whose conversation I soon learned his firm belief in the inspiration of the prophetess, descending on his acquaintance with her for many years, and paying a warm tribute to her worth and regard to truth, and that he would pay more deference to her own declaration than the opinion of any medical man alive. The circumstances of his acquaintance with Mrs. Southcott, he said, were singular. He had suffered much persecution in life, which had rendered him very nervous. One very restless night he cried out in his sleep, that he had no friend. A voice immediately answered,

"I am your friend." This answer greatly surprized him. He rose to see if the doors of the apartment had been fastened ; of this he soon convinced himself, and when turning round in bed, was instantly struck by the lightness of the room, and the appearance of a figure standing against the wall. The skin of its face and hands was of a beautiful white color, so transparent, that the blood-vessels could be seen through it. The dress was no less extraordinary, being a dark coat and a white handkerchief loosely tied. Conceiving he had nothing to fear from this strange appearance, he asked it, "Who it was?" when a voice uttered these words, ***"I am the God of heaven ;"*** after which it passed through the stone wall, and the apartment became gradually darkened. This figure, he added, he is certain he shall see before he dies. Soon after this, when in London, another vision appeared to him in a dream, and ordered him to purchase from a certain Stationer's a quantity of paper, and to take

it to Mrs. Southcott, where he should write the instructions she would give him, and this manuscript he now has, and would not part with on any account.—He quoted with great facility the passages of Scripture, which announce the coming of the Child, foretold by the prophetess. So firm was his conviction, that nothing could shake his belief, and I declined attempting it.—He declared, that London would be visited by a plague, which would destroy all those who were unbelievers in Mrs. S's. doctrines.

He gave me a singular account of a Mr. Major, of Ireland, to whom a vision had appeared in his sleep three successive nights, commanding him to go to London in order to be saved. This circumstance he communicated to his brother, wishing him to draw £300. out of the Bank, in order to enable him to make his journey. His brother considered him as insane, and refused to comply; but not deterred by this, he set out and came to London.—In Mr. Tozer's house

he accidentally saw the picture of the prophetess, when he immediately declared she was the warning spirit he had seen in his vision. This confirmed him in the belief of her pregnancy, and he determined to continue in London till her delivery was accomplished, which he has accordingly done to the present time.

Mr. Tozer is a good-looking man, rather tall and lusty. He seemed to possess good natural abilities, little cultivated, and on the subject of the prophetess, his conversation was so outré, as to border on insanity; nay, so far did he and Mr. Wood carry their conviction of the predicted event, that Mr. Wood declared *God would announce it* from pole to pole, or as he expressed, from the poles.

But the period of the expected delivery being now as foretold, elapsed for many days, I took the liberty of applying for an opportunity of again examining Mrs.

Southcott, which happened to be about the beginning of November. I found her in bed, and evidently in a more debilitated state than on my last visit in August. She expressed the satisfaction my visit gave her, and related her sufferings from the time she had left Western Place. The belly I found on examination much enlarged, but the tumor which had occupied the lower part, had, to my astonishment, disappeared. There seemed great irritability of the muscles of the abdomen on the slightest pressure, accompanied with great nausea. I could not discover on the examination any thing like the motion of a child, but she was however, extremely tender, and could hardly bear to be touched. From this examination I could not perceive any striking change to induce me to alter the opinion I had given, although I confess I was not so much satisfied as I had been with the former one.

On this occasion I met at Mrs. South-

cott's with a very sensible man, named Howe. I found him an intelligent person, and on interrogating me respecting her pregnancy, I informed him, much depended on her own veracity; and if confidence could be placed in her account of herself, there could be no doubt. He pledged himself on this point, for he had been acquainted with her many years, and knew her to be a woman incapable of deception. He entered warmly into the subject of her mission, and expressed himself as firm a believer as Mr. Tozer, pointing out to me a variety of passages of Scripture, which applied to her. He considered her as a person particularly favored by Heaven, in possessing the spirit of prophecy, of which he was perfectly convinced by several predictions she had made, which it would be improper in him, for political reasons, to disclose.

Soon after this visit of Mr. Tozer, I was waited on by Monsieur Assalini, Professor of Midwifery in Paris, and Accoucheur to

the Empress of France, requesting an introduction to Mrs. Southcott, as a professional character, which I readily agreed to give him. I accordingly called on him the following Sunday with Mr. Maccloud, a respectable surgeon in the navy, and accompanied him to Mrs. Southcott's residence. On our arrival there we met on the steps in the act of ringing the bell, two foreign gentlemen. The professor immediately recollected one of them to be General Orloff, aid-de-camp to the Emperor of Russia, and did me the honor of introducing me to him. The General expressed his strong curiosity to see the English prophetess, which I told him I was sorry could not be complied with, from his not being a professional character; but that I should request the favor of Mrs. S. to admit him, The Professor and I then entered her apartment, where he took a seat very near her, and interrogated her by many questions respecting her general health. He then examined her belly, observing to her, that her stomach

complaints arose from the pressure of the womb, and that they would go off as soon as she was delivered. The distension of the abdomen he particularly noticed, and remarked the fluctuating resistance that the tumor gave. On leaving the room he was addressed by Mrs. Underwood, who wished to know his opinion, when he urged his desire to have the satisfaction of a proper and internal examination.

His desire being explained to Mrs. Underwood, she informed him Mrs. S. would by no means submit to it, and had resisted every solicitation of her medical attendants on this head. One advantage he expressed would attend it, in ascertaining whether labor was near at hand. He expressed his astonishment that a person in her situation should oppose the wish of a medical man. I then introduced General Orloff, who treated her with much respect, and made a low bow on his entrance. He expressed his satisfaction at the opportunity afforded him of seeing a

woman, respecting whom so much had been said. She then expatiated as well as she was able on her sufferings, for the benefit of the whole human race, which he interrupted by a desire she should not fatigue herself, and took his leave in the same respectful manner he entered. His friend was silent. His visit seemed to give great satisfaction to the prophetess, and the General on departing, politely wished to know if it was customary to give any thing to the servants, which he wished much to do, when he was told it was by no means permitted. I then left the house with Prof. Assalini, whom I accompanied to his own residence, in order to inspect his ingenious surgical instruments, which I found much superior to the English ones. When there, he was addressed by a lady of the house, to know if Joanna was not an impostor, as stated in the papers. "Pshaw," says he, "don't you know that the English papers are *only* a *black paint*," intending to signify they were entitled to no credit, for what they say one day they unsay the next.

After this visit with this intelligent foreigner, I received from Mrs. Underwood on the 19th of November, the following letter:

"SIR,

"Mrs. Southcott has had a very restless night. She desires me to say, that she has something on her mind which she wishes to communicate to you. I hope therefore you will call this evening or to-morrow morning.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

"ANN UNDERWOOD."

"Manchester Street,

"Nov. 19, 1814."

On the receipt of the above, I made no delay in attending to Mrs. Underwood's request, and called in an hour after. The account then given me was, that since my last interview, Mrs. S. had been extremely ill, having, after a severe fit of vomiting, been seized with stupor, succeeded by great debility, the room seeming at the time as if going round with her, and she had every feeling of approaching dissolu-

tion.—Under this impression, she had expressed great uneasiness at having given me authority to open her body, and had sent for me purposely to give fresh instructions on this point.

She appeared much exhausted, low and dejected, and unable to speak her mind. Finding herself, she said, *gradually dying*, she could not but consider her inspiration and prophecies as *delusion*. As my opinion of her situation had been *publicly expressed* and *stated*, she thought it her duty that the task of opening her body should be also confided to me. This examination, she observed, would clear me in the eyes of the public, and that consideration *alone* induced her to give her consent, for against it she had otherwise extreme horror. It was her particular injunction she should be kept warm for four days, and that no steps should be taken to open the body till the expiration of that time, or till some evidence of putrefaction had actually taken place. It was her request also, that all the

medical men who had seen her should be present, and that the operation should be conducted with due decency. She had many friends, she added, some very respectable, to whom she wished a statement of her case should be sent. You will, she again strongly repeated, as sure as you sit there, find *something alive* in me, and which will prove to my friends that I am not that impostor I am represented to be. If labor came on, it was her desire Mr. Wetherell should attend her, and in case of any difficulty, that he should give her up to me, for no one else she repeated should touch her. I then observed to her, if she should be affected in the same manner as the preceding day, and apoplexy should supervene, whether I should not make an effort to save the life of the child; to this she replied in the negative, using these words: If it is the work of the Lord, he will deliver me, and if it is not, it is fit it should die with me. She then turned her face to Mrs. Underwood, and after shedding tears, she requested her to see her last in-

structions attended to, and that a proper statement of the appearances discovered on opening her should be sent to her friends. She then expressed her desire to see such of them as were in the next room, being to the number of five or six ; on which I asked her if I should withdraw : No ! Sir, replied she, I *particularly* wish you to be present. Her friends were then admitted to her, on which she made an effort to sit up in bed, but not being able to effect it, I assisted Mrs. Underwood to prop her up with pillows. She desired them to be seated round her bed, when spending a few minutes in adjusting the bed-clothes with seeming attention, and placing before her a white handkerchief, she thus addressed them as nearly as I can recollect, in the following words : “ My friends, some of you have known me nearly twenty-five years, and all of you not less than twenty. When you have heard me speak of my prophecies, you have sometimes heard me say that I *doubted* my inspiration. But at the same time you would never let

me despair. When I have been alone, it has often appeared *delusion*, but when the communications were made to me, I did not in the least doubt. Feeling as I now do feel, that my dissolution is drawing near, and that a day or two may terminate my life, it all appears *delusion*." She was by this exertion quite exhausted, and wept bitterly. On reviving in a little time, she observed, that it was very extraordinary, that after spending all her life in investigating the Bible, it should please the Lord to inflict that heavy burden on her. —She concluded this discourse by requesting, that every thing on this occasion might be conducted with decency. —She then wept, and all her followers present appeared deeply affected, and some of them shed tears.—“ Mother,” said one, I believe Mr. Howe, “ we will commit your instructions to paper, and rest assured they shall be conscientiously followed.” They were accordingly written down with much solemnity, and signed by herself, with her hand placed on the Bible in the bed. Of

this document, the following is a copy, as written by Mrs. Underwood.

Joanna sent for Dr. Reece, and gave him directions what he is to do. In case she should die, she wishes him to examine (open) her body to ascertain the cause of her feelings for these last nine months. On the other hand, she puts her life into the hands of Mr. Wetherell to deliver her; if he wish for any assistance, it is her will, no one should be permitted to try a pain but Dr. Reece; and in case she should appear as dead for three or four days, that no force should be used to extricate the child, but to leave her according to the directions given by the Spirit to be kept as warm as possible till there is a visible change take place either in life, or that actual death has taken place to the full satisfaction of her friends.

(Signed)

JOANNA SOUTHCOTT.

Signed by Joanna Southcott in the presence of myself and four of her friends.

Saturday Evening, Nov. 19, 1814.

This being finished, Mr. Howe again observed to her, "Mother, your feelings are *human*. We know that you are a favoured woman of God, and that you will produce the promised Child; and, whatever you may

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say to the contrary, will not diminish our faith." This assurance revived her; and the scene of crying was changed with her to laughter.

This I much lamented; for at this moment she was certainly strongly disposed to have made a confession, and which I have no doubt she would have done to me, had not her disciples been unfortunately called in. Being thus disappointed by their presence, I took my leave, after writing a prescription for some medicine to allay the irritation and uneasiness of her stomach.

On the following day I received a visit from Mr. Tozer, to whom I candidly communicated the conversation that had passed, and the disposition manifested by her to confess her error. "Poor woman," he replied, "how can she despair? She reasoned as a *human* being; but God will soon give her comfort." He had strong reasons, he added, to believe, that the

Child was to be cut out of her side, as woman was taken out of the side of man. His conversation ended by the relation of what he termed a remarkable circumstance, that, when on a journey into Devonshire, he accidentally met with a copy of Moore's Almanack for the year in which Joanna was born; and the frontispiece of it was a representation of Angels rejoicing for the birth of the Prophetess. On understanding that I was now not so positive of her pregnancy, he declared, that if all the medical men in London were to give an opinion against it, he would not consider one of them entitled to belief; for the event was so strongly pointed out in the Bible, that it wanted no other evidence; and he was in possession of facts which would convert the most blind and prejudiced, did not political reasons prevent their being disclosed. He said that he had just received a manuscript from Hull, written many years ago, in which the birth of the Child was foretold, as to take place in November 1814, O. S.

From this period Mrs. Southcott continued to sink ; and being very anxious to ascertain if the supposition of her being pregnant was correct, I addressed the following letter to Mrs. Underwood.

“ MADAM,

“ Having been much abused in the public papers for the opinion I have given of Mrs. Southcott’s pregnancy, I am very anxious to ascertain the fact by an *internal* examination. It certainly would be a great satisfaction to her believers, to have this point completely established ; and from the confidence which she appears to place in me, and the conversation I had with her on the 19th instant, I think that if *you* were to intimate to her the propriety of the examination, she would not object to it. It is painful to me to urge her compliance with an examination that is unpleasant to her feelings ; but after the public opinion I have given, it is certainly her duty to submit to it.

“ I am, Madam,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ RICHARD REEVE.”

“ Nov. 24, 1814.”

“ To Mrs. Underwood.”

This letter was followed by the subjoined reply :

“ SIR,

“ At the time your servant was here yesterday, Mrs. Southcott was a little composed from one of the violent fits of retching and sickness which now comes on more

frequently, of course I could not introduce Mr. Sheldon to see her—in the evening I mentioned your request to her—her answer was, from the present state of her health, a very short time must determine her situation one way or the other; therefore she could not think of any further examination, unless her pains came on the same as they did this day week, and if they returned again, she would immediately send for you to try her pains, but without that, she cannot think of its being done, therefore hope you will decline mentioning it; she is certainly much worse, very low and weak, which must rapidly increase, from her not being able to take any nourishment, neither the laudanum or kali seem to have any effect in preventing the constant retching and sickness.

“I am fully aware of the anxiety of your mind on this subject, but find it impossible for your wishes to be complied with, as only mentioning it to her, had a great effect upon her spirits, she could not see her friends that were here to speak to them as usual, had a very restless night, said it was no use for her to see any more medical men, as they could be no judge of her situation from outward examination, it must now be left for time to determine it, either in life, or death, which cannot be far distant, one or the other must soon take place.

“I remain, Sir,

“Your humble servant,

“ANN UNDERWOOD.”

“Nov. 24, 1814.”

“To Dr. Reece.”

About the fourth of December I was addressed by Mr. Want, a respectable surgeon, and editor of the Physical Journal, by the following letter ;

Mr. Want, presents his compliments to Dr. Reese, will be happy to be favoured with an interview with him, to communicate some particulars of a case which he conceives to be very similar to that of Mrs. Southcott, as far as he is capable of judging from public report. Mr. W. will feel much pleasure in taking Dr. R. to his patient, and is very desirous of comparing the two cases by an interview with Mrs. S. if it be attainable.

*Wednesday Evening,
1, North Crescent, Bedford Square.*

My reply was, I would attend him to his patient on Sunday evening, which I accordingly did. She was a lady who had borne many children. About fifteen months ago she had suffered from the symptoms of pregnancy, viz. nausea and sickness. About four months after this, she apparently quickened, and has continued to feel symptoms of foetal life. Her appearance externally bears evident marks of gestation. She appears very large, and her general health is good. This I consider

a dropsy of the ovarium. After this visit to his patient, Mr. Want was introduced by me to Mrs. Southcott ; and I left them together in order that he might be at liberty to question her as he pleased. He made no examination, and consequently could say nothing of her pregnancy from her not wishing to submit to an internal examination, which he considered the only decisive mode of ascertaining it.

It was about the 6th of December that I next saw the Prophetess, when she appeared considerably worse. The nausea continued, but in a less degree, in consequence of her taking my last prescription. She looked much dejected, and in the opinion that she could not live many days, she still declared, that she felt the child more strongly than ever, that she thought the burden had fallen, which gave her hopes that labor would soon come on. The matter vomited by her was very bitter and offensive. Her observation was, that death or life would soon end the strife ; and that if she was not the favoured woman to produce the Prince of Peace, she was at

least an instrument in the *hand of God* to produce *some good*. From her statement, that she felt the child stronger than ever, I again examined the belly, and was astonished to find it very much lessened in size. She was also now very much emaciated; and there was nothing to be felt, as formerly, like an impregnated womb. She however continued to declare it moved, and seemed astonished that I did not feel it.

I observed now there was a sudden action of the diaphragm or medriff and abdominal muscles, apparently produced by the act of the mind, or a voluntary impulse for the sake of deception. The laudanum prescribed to quiet the vomiting had affected her head; and I ordered — in the solid form, as a pill, supposing that its gradual solution would succeed better, and not act upon her in the same disagreeable manner as laudanum. Her stomach was now reduced to that state of weakness as to retain nothing but a little Malmsey Maderia wine; every thing else was rejected.

Her pulse now began for the first time to give way. On taking my leave, she expressed a strong wish to see me again, with the promise she would take every thing I recommended. In the outer room I met Col. Harwood, who requested my opinion of Mrs. Southcott. My answer was, she was evidently sinking, and I had now my doubts of her pregnancy; that the tumor discovered at the first examination had now subsided; that no emotion was to be felt resembling that of a foetus, but, in consequence of the tenderness and pain, I had not employed much pressure; that the truth of her pregnancy rested much on her own word, and there could be no doubt of it, provided full confidence could be placed in that. To this he gave me the strongest and most solemn assurance, requesting me not to retract, for, so sure as I was in existence she was pregnant; that the preceding day she had been examined by Mr. Wetherell and Mr. Phillips, experienced practitioners in midwifery, who declared they distinctly felt the child, as did Mr. Foster and Mrs. Lock, being ready to verify the same on oath, if required. On the following day

I was told the same fact of Mrs. Lock, by Mrs. Serres, a respectable lady, to whom she had declared her opinion also, and with the same solemn attestation. My answer to all this was, that I hoped it would prove so, though I could not but express my doubts; regretting that she would not submit to the internal examination. This vacillation, on my part, occasioned a visit from the Colonel the following day, who repeated his confidence in the word of Joanna; and that, in consequence, he had no doubt in the world of her pregnancy; her feelings being really such as she described. To this assurance I replied, that such was the flaccidity of the abdominal muscles, and general weakness of her frame, that I did believe she could produce a child, and that it was a duty she owed her peculiar friends to submit to an internal examination. This observation he put a stop to by saying, that he knew no friend that would request of her any thing unpleasant; that the business was now coming to a final crisis; and no advantage, he conceived, would result from it; that her disciples required

no such evidence. That the more doubtful and improbable it appeared to the medical men, the more miraculous it would be, and the more striking to the public mind; and that I would at the same time admit, that nothing was impossible with God. He then informed me, that Mrs. S. had expressed much uneasiness on discovering by my looks, that the last examination had not satisfied me; concluding her observation with these words—"Well, it is of no consequence, I shall shortly produce the child, and all I ask of him is to act as a man. If he were a believer, he would not be a proper witness; and the more improbable the event, the firmer will be his conviction, that it is the *work* of the *Lord*."

The day following this I was visited by Mr. Phillips, her apothecary. I then positively told him Mrs. S. was not pregnant, and that the bowels were in a very flaccid state. Though a believer, he was not a steady one, for he appeared from his observation to have his doubts, stating to me

that Mrs. S. had told him her *belly* was less.

On the 10th of December I received the following letter from Mrs. Underwood—

“SIR,

“I am sorry to inform you, that Mrs. Southcott still lingers on in the same distressing situation: her weakness seems rapidly to increase, from her not taking any thing to support her; and the sickness having returned, and continued since Monday, with very little intermission, has made a visible change in her.—The extreme faintness which succeeds the retching, is attended with a cold perspiration over her whole frame; she says she feels a sensation in every nerve, as if she should faint, and become insensible to her present sufferings, which she most earnestly prays may soon take place, in hope then that a few days may satisfy the minds of the public as to her real situation, and relieve her friends from their present persecution.

“I remain, Sir,

“Your humble Servant,

“ANN UNDERWOOD.”

“Saturday, Dec. 10, 1814.”

“To Dr. Reece.”

On the 15th she wrote to me as follows—

“ SIR,

“ I am sorry to inform you Mrs. Southcott has continued very ill since you saw her on Sunday last, evidently growing weaker; has continual sickness and faintness; experiences much pain at times, but not labour pains. I cannot describe her situation, but think a change must very soon take place, as to all appearance she cannot sustain life much longer. If you will have the goodness to call in Manchester Street, you will be a better judge from seeing her, and for your own satisfaction we much wish it.

“ I remain, Sir,

“ Your humble Servant,

“ ANN UNDERWOOD.”

“ Dec. 15, 1814.”

“ To Dr. Reece.”

And on the 17th, I received the following letter—

“ SIR,

“ Mrs. Southcott has had a very restless night; her mind was wandering, sometimes quite sensible of her present state; said she was going fast, and then wandered to something else; had very little sleep; complained of a coldness and pain in her stomach. I attended her with hot cloths, which gave her relief, but returned again this morning. I think she is nearly

in the same state she was yesterday: I cannot perceive any alteration.

"I remain, Sir,

"Your humble Servant,

"ANN UNDERWOOD."

"Saturday, Dec. 17, 1814."

"To Dr. Rees."

I paid her a visit soon after the receipt of this letter. I found her in a rambling state, her pulse extremely weak and intermitting, her countenance sallow and cadaverous, with coldness of the extremities, and every mark of approaching dissolution. On rousing her she seemed to recognize me, and said she was very ill. Colonel Harwood soon after entered the room, when she said to him, putting out her hand, "What does the Lord mean by this—I am *certainly dying*." "No, no:" replied he, smiling, "you will not die; or if you should, you will return again." This answer seemed to give her satisfaction. Her discourse was then addressed to me, observing, that her mind wandered much, that she had no intention of giving any one offence, and she hoped they would pay no attention to any thing she said in her

present state: that she felt extremely glad to see me, and would endeavour to keep herself collected while I was with her, placing at the same time her hand emphatically to her forehead, an effort I have never before observed to be made by a person in that convulsive condition. She, however, soon relapsed into her former state, and every appearance indicated she would not be alive more than two days.

On Saturday morning Colonel Harwood was deputed to me, with the opinion of Messrs. Wetherell and Phillips, who now considered her *mortally dying*, and not, as they expected her, to fall into a *trance*, or what may be termed *intermediate death*.

On my calling on Monday, I was much surprised to find she had somewhat rallied, her extremities being much warmer, and her mind having acquired some steadiness and recollection. She then declared she had had strong labour pains, and that the event would soon be over. She had at this time taken a little nourishment, which her

stomach retained, but her pulse was extremely languid. This appearance elevated the spirits of her disciples. They considered one prophecy now verified, that the medical men would be puzzled. My opinion, however, I told them was not altered, though this unexpected change had taken place, still she could not survive above a few days ; and such alterations towards the close were not uncommon in affections of the stomach. They smiled upon this, and observed, they had no doubt she would be in that state, which all her medical attendants would pronounce *dead*.

At this time I was visited by Mr. Sharpe, whom I found a plain honest man, of deep thought and great research. Our conversation turned on Mrs. S.'s inspiration. He was fully prepossessed that the child would establish the Millennium, and would not hear a word against her pregnancy, though apparently a real practical Christian.

My last visit to Joanna was at eight

o'clock on Monday evening, when I found her in a state of insensibility, with laborious breathing, the expression of countenance gone, the features shrivelled and sunk, and the pulsation of the wrist not to be felt. Still, however, the extremities were warm. I stated my opinion that her mortal race was run, and that she could not live many hours. The disciples, however, were not dismayed at the news. This they said she had foretold twenty years ago that she would take on the appearance of death, and they would not have been satisfied if this event so foretold had not occurred. Some went so far as to state that her soul would go to Heaven.

She appeared to be at intervals in great pain, and at four o'clock on Monday morning she breathed her last, which was communicated to her medical attendants, in the following letter:

CIRCULAR.

"SIR,

"As you desired to be present at Mrs. Southcott's Accouchement had it taken place, as was then expected,

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the friends consider it as their duty to inform you and all the medical gentlemen who had that intention, that to all appearance, she died this morning exactly as the clock struck four.

“Care is taken to preserve warmth in the body as she directed; and it is the wish of the friends that you will see her in her present state.

“ANN UNDERWOOD.”

“38, *Manchester-Street*,
Tuesday, December 27, 1814.”

To the last, this unfortunate woman made no confession of her error. On the contrary, in her intervals of reason she still persisted in her pregnancy. Two days before her dissolution, on awakening in great pain from one of her dying fits, she loudly exclaimed that the child was making its way through her side, when the nurse, who was standing by, put her hand to the part, declaring that she felt a tumor as large as a child's head, which suddenly disappeared with a motion or spring, giving the idea of a *kick*. A little before she also exclaimed, that the child was coming, and that the head was

in the world. On the same day I repeated my call, when my opinion was warmly pressed to know if I thought her actually dead, but I was not allowed to touch any other part of her body, but the *face* and *hands*. She was at this time lying in the same position in which she died, well wrapped up in flannels, and artificial heat was also conveyed by means of bottles filled with warm water. On entering the drawing-room, I saw Mrs. Townly, who, with a smiling expression of countenance, said, that she would return to life, for this, she added, has been foretold twenty years back. Mr. Sharpe, who was standing by, confirmed this, by saying, that the believers fully expected it, and would not have been satisfied had this event not happened.— Taking me to a corner of the room, he told me, that I had an arduous task to perform, but that the result would greatly redound to my honour and reputation, for the soul of Joanna would return, having only gone to Heaven to legitimate the child, which would be born. Fifteen years ago he had purchased flannel, in expectation

of this event, in order to keep the body warm. All of the twelve elect, who were present, were equally sanguine, and buoyed up in their expectations on the subject ; and shewed an elevation of spirit, and every appearance of satisfaction. So marvellous, it was their opinion, would be the result, that a kingdom would be born in a day, according to the words of Holy Writ ; and that the fulfilment of the prophecies was now clearly seen. Mr. Sharpe even pointedly asked, if she should be resuscitated, and produce a boy, would I then believe in the mission of Joanna? In that case I told him I must certainly admit it was the work of the Lord to answer some great purpose ; but in my present frame of mind it would to me appear as reasonable to expect the building of St. Paul's to ascend into the air. Ah ! Sir, replied he, you take only a *professional* view of it, but I take a *spiritual* one ! Pray, Sir, he continued, for your credit's sake, do not retract the opinion you have given, for *assuredly* there is a *child*. I was satisfied, I replied, she would not have died with a child in her.

I then asked one of the disciples what conduct he would adopt provided there was no child? He had never, he replied, given it a thought, so as to entertain a doubt; and that I might as well expect the sky to fall, for the one was as likely as the other. Mrs. Townly was questioned in a similar manner by a very sensible lady, who called on her for the purpose of being made acquainted with Joanna's tenets, when she informed her it was not possible that it should prove otherwise than was predicted; for all the communications came from the Lord, who was their support. But, Madam, said this lady, you must allow we are all liable to be deceived. Well, replied Mrs. Townly, if it should turn out so, I would burn my Bible, and declare the whole fabric to be nonsense!!!

On Thursday, I paid another visit to the remains of Joanna. The body was then beginning to be offensive, her lips and fingers had assumed a black appearance, but even this change did not shake the faith of her followers, and I was

obliged seriously to address Mr. Sharpe, stating to him that putrefaction had actually began to take place, that the warmth employed would accelerate the process, and if continued, it would be to no purpose to open the body. To this he replied, rather sharply, do not be uneasy, you will not suffer by it, for depend upon it she will return to the *body*. My answer was, that if they thought so, they should endeavour to keep it sweet for her reception, for should the ceremony of her marriage in Heaven continue two days longer, the tenement would not be habitable on her return. Well then said he, the greater will be the miracle. The God that raised up Lazarus, can raise her up, and that he would do so he had not the smallest doubt. The evil, I replied, will in this case find its own remedy, for in two or three days she will stink you all out of the house.—Colonel Harwood informed me, that several medical men had called and inspected the body, who agreed in opinion of her being dead, except Dr. Sims, who would not speak decisively

from her warmth, so that even on the question of death we could not agree.

On the day of her death, the news of peace with America, arrived from France. This event inspired her followers with fresh confidence. "Do you not think," said one of them, "it is a most curious circumstance, oh! if you do not see that God is about to do a great work, you must be blind indeed!!" In the course of Tuesday I called again, for the purpose of informing the attendants I would decline opening the body if they would not consent to it on the following day. I saw on this occasion Mr. Sharpe, and Colonel Harwood, who considered the time would not be expired till the following morning at four o'clock, according to her dying injunctions, making four days from her death, after that time I was at liberty they said to open the body. On this, I appointed two o'clock next day, when the Colonel informed me he would himself acquaint the medical gentlemen who were appointed to attend by

Mrs. Southcott. He requested to know the names of the medical gentlemen I intended to introduce, when I gave the names of Messrs. Clarke, Want, Caton, and Maccloud.—The disciples in attendance, were equally sanguine in the idea of her rising again. She is not dead, but sleepeth, seemed to be the opinion of the whole. In performing the dissection, it was requested by Mr. Tozer, that I would conduct it in the same manner as the Cesarian operation, that all hopes of resuscitation might not be destroyed!! To this request I replied, that certainly the same power that could raise a putrid body, could raise one that had been opened. His next request was, that I would take care of the child, for he and all the disciples were fully confident, if Joanna was not raised before opening the body, the child would be found on dissection. Colonel Harwood even told me, that Mr. Wetherell had examined the belly since her death, and that the impregnated womb which formerly occupied the *right* side, was now to be discovered on the *left*,

The following day, a quarter of an hour before the time appointed, I arrived at Mrs. S's. in order to prepare the body for the operation, but I was not permitted to touch it till the expiration of the hour, hanging as it were with a fond and eager hope to the last moment, in the cherished expectation of her rising again. At the appointed hour of two, the medical gentlemen were punctual in their attendance, viz. Dr. Adams, Dr. Sims; Messrs. Taunton, Clarke, Want, Caton, Mathias, Cooke, and several others whose names I was not acquainted with.—I then went with some of the disciples to the apartment where the body was lying, and I was surprised to find her exactly in the same situation as when she died, lying in bed, and covered with flannel, with her wearing-apparel, her rings, and every thing in the same unaltered state. The body was now in such a high degree of putrefaction, that we could not trust to the limbs to convey it, and it was accordingly moved to the table on a sheet. On every thing being in readiness,

the attendance of the medical men was requested, who all placed themselves round the table, and behind them stood the disciples smoking tobacco, a proof that they did not consider the prophetess to possess the most savoury odour !

On exposing the belly, it appeared much distended with air, which was evidently the consequence of putrefaction after death, for previous to that the abdomen, as has been already mentioned, was in a flaccid state. On dividing the teguments there was a considerable escape of putrid air, after which the contents of the cavity came into view. The first organ that immediately claimed attention was the womb, which contrary to all expectation was hid in the pelvis, and instead of being enlarged, appeared smaller than in the natural state. It was so small, I was obliged to introduce my hand into the pelvis, and to remove the whole contents, in order to bring it out for inspection. It was of the size of a small pear. It was considered by the

medical gentlemen present, as uncommonly small, but I thought not more so than what it ought to be in a virgin of sixty. On examining its substance, there appeared no mark of disease. An invidious report having been spread, that Mrs. S. had formerly had children, Mr. Want and I next examined the ovaria, but there appeared no traces to confirm this slander. During the examination of the womb, a most interesting scene was presented. The believers were all on tiptoe to see Shiloh appear, and those who could not have a view themselves, were most anxiously making inquiries of the others. No promised child, however, appeared, which so confounded the rest that they gradually left the room abashed and dismayed. The state of the stomach was next examined, to ascertain the cause of the constant nausea she had experienced, but the coats of this organ shewed no sign of disease. On moving the liver, the gall-bladder was found filled with calculi, or stones of a light color, a proof that they had been of long standing. The liver appeared

dark and rather soft in its texture, which I considered to be the consequence of the disorganizing process taking place after death; it was not enlarged. The mesentery was very much loaded with fat, and also the teguments of the belly.—The intestines were also distended with air, which induced some to consider the complaint an *intestinal* tympany, but as the abdomen, a few days before her dissolution, was in a flaccid state, this was clearly the effect of a disengagement of air which had taken place since her dissolution.—Dr. Sims having expressed a wish to examine the state of the breasts, to satisfy him on this point, I dissected one of them, which shewed the fulness to proceed from an enlargement of the mammary gland as I had stated, and not from accumulation of fat, according to his opinion.—

Thus on dissection of every part, no organic disease could be discovered to account for her death; for the calculi in the gall-bladder, though they might tend in some

degree to keep irritation in the stomach, could do no farther injury, as there was no obstruction to the passage of the bile through the biliary duct, as the fæces were sufficiently tinged by it, and much bile was also brought up by vomiting.

The body was in so highly a putrid state, that it was thought unnecessary to examine the brain, where it was probable all the mischief lay, and which would have been discovered had the dissection taken place the day after her death. She certainly suffered from determination of blood to the head ; and the sensations of giddiness and numbness of the extremities she experienced about a month before her dissolution, indicated compression of the brain from distension of blood vessels. When I saw her the day preceding her death, she was apoplectic, and in this state it may be said she died.

The state of the internal coat of the stomach was particularly inspected, in consequence of information having been

sent to the coroner that she had been poisoned ; but the appearance of it proved there was no foundation for such a supposition.

The disappointment of her disciples on opening of the body, may be better conceived than described. It was strongly depicted in every countenance. Mr. Sharpe was the only one that held out to the rest the balm of consolation. Life, he observed, was involved in mystery. His mind had been often turned to the investigation of the works of the Deity, to discover evidence for the existence of the soul ; that he was satisfied of the existence of a *God* and of a *soul* : that he was in hopes by this woman something would be revealed ; but now he felt greatly disappointed, and all he could say was that he was in the same state with respect to his knowledge of God as before he saw this woman. The two female attendants, Mrs. Townly and Mrs. Underwood, were inconsolable. They had all pictured to themselves many happy days, the enjoyment of a heaven on earth. This sad event, this unexpected change,

so suddenly coming upon them, was too much to bear. One of the disciples declared he should turn Unitarin. None condemned her as an impostor—One declared he would ever revere her memory, and once a month visit the spot where she was laid with pious and reverential awe!!!

CONCLUSION AND REMARKS.

SUCH is a plain narrative of all the circumstances which attended my intercourse with this singular character. In giving my opinion of her pregnancy, I was led to confide much in her own statement, and on the known veracity of her character. I had only two symptoms by which I could form my opinion, viz. the state of the breasts, and the tumor of the belly. Both of these might be equivocal, I confess, in a character bent on deception. That such was the case I have no hesitation in stating, and that both Dr. Sims and myself were made the dupes of imposture and artifice,

systematically laid and carried on by this apparently artless woman, who, one would suppose, must have been tutored for this purpose by medical instruction. From this imputation, however, I entirely exclude her followers, who were no less deceived than ourselves. Indeed her apparently artless behaviour, I consider now as the chief engine of her deception ; and whoever accurately examines her portrait, as delineated by Mr. Sharpe, will perceive a certain archness of look about the eye, which tends to confirm this opinion. I therefore with regret state, that it is my firm conviction that the tumor of the belly felt by Dr. Sims and myself, at our first examination, could be nothing else but the bladder distended by urine, retained for the purpose, for a certain number of hours, to answer the design. This is now clear from a variety of circumstances.

The 1st, the different size of the tumor at successive examinations, varying with the quantity of fluid in the bladder.

The 2d. was the complaint of pain on pressure, and general soreness of the abdominal muscles, to deter the medical men from making use of much pressure in their examination.

And the 3d. was her obstinate resistance to the internal examination, the only certain and unequivocal means of detecting pregnancy. Was it not ridiculous to suppose that delicacy could operate on the mind of a woman who freely exposed every other part without a blush, and refused compliance with a request less indelicate, and which alone would have discovered the imposition?

A fourth circumstance, and one no less conclusive of the long meditated deception in my mind, was her full acquaintance with the symptoms and progress of pregnancy. Her's was not the detail of an ignorant woman. So conversant was she on the subject, that Dr. Denman or Dr. Clarke, in their lecturing room, could not have given a more minute and circumstantial detail to their students, than this

apparently ignorant woman gave to me. Even the thinness of her loins, a circumstance which could never occur to a female in a first pregnancy, was introduced artfully as one of the marks of this state. By practice, therefore, I am convinced, she had brought herself to habitual retention of urine. Hence on the first visits, and while she was yet in firm health, she could retain it so long, that the distended bladder had the full and almost *unequivocal appearance* of an impregnated *womb*!! And any medical man, whose mind was above suspicion of the female, would have had no doubt on the subject. But as her strength declined, it would appear she was incapable of retaining her urine for the same length of time. Hence we may account for the motive in requiring punctuality in the attendance of the medical men at a *stated time*. In several after examinations, the tumor felt differently, was less in size, not so hard, shewed more of a fluctuation, and at last, on my final examination, was nearly gone. This variety has been shewn in the difference of the reports betwixt Dr. Sims and myself.

Dr. Sims states that the enlargement rose just above the os pubis, whereas I traced the margin to the navel. In the one case, therefore it was not so much distended as the other. Some may suppose that it was not possible for a woman to retain the urine till the bladder was so distended. This fact is controverted by what occurs in cases of suppression of urine, and every surgeon will admit that the bladder so distended, in its feel and appearance cannot be distinguished in the smallest degree from the womb. To this every medical man will assent; and the fact points out the difficulty the profession labour under where an opportunity is withheld in which they can only be enabled to form a correct judgment, and where it is asserted by the pretended veracity of the persons, backed by respectable, and it is to be supposed, disinterested characters; for some of her followers have certainly a good claim to this designation.—The *habitual* practice of such a method as here developed, certainly can be done.

The motion of a foetus, the next symptom,

is one which can also be imitated by a quick and instantaneous movement of the diaphragm, and certain of the abdominal muscles. Of this I was satisfied on one occasion, when the pains had nearly subsided; at one time she practised this deception to that degree, that it was felt in different parts like the appearance of twins. On that occasion, being extremely ill, she observed, that while there was life there was hope, and that she had so much life within her, that she conceived she should produce two instead of one!! I find that, by practice, the muscles of the diaphragm may be made so subservient to volition, as to enable a woman, by a sudden action of them, to produce a motion exactly resembling that of a foetus.

The fifth symptom, the state of the mammary glands, is equally easy to account for. No cause for their enlargement could be traced on dissection, and the gland itself is never enlarged except from disease, but where the womb is more or less affected on the principle of sympathetic irritation. Here then there

was no sympathetic irritation, and the enlargement was not an accumulation of fat as stated by Dr. Sims.—It is well known, however, that any thing that produces a determination of blood to the breast will occasion enlargement. To all cases of fulness of the breasts from *disease*, the nipples are shortened, but here on the contrary they were elongated in an uncommon degree, which struck me forcibly at the time of the first examination, and which I could not account for on the idea of there being no deception. There can be no doubt, corresponding with the other practice employed, the breasts had been enlarged by the irritation of suction, for the length of the nipple was exactly that which is found in a nurse suckling a child. Artificial means I have no doubt had been employed to produce this state of the breasts, which the profession well know was the easiest part of the whole, and by which I believe even the secretion of milk may be produced.

That she had confined herself to her room for many months, is a fact ascer-

tained. Was her motive for this to get habituated to the modes of deception now developed? Her object certainly was, to raise the importance of her mission in the most supernatural manner, by this miraculous pregnancy; and I think there can be but little doubt, that some plan was concerted for the smuggling of a child, to render the success complete. This is accounted for, by the various periods at which she gave out her delivery would take place; at each of which, it is probable, she was foiled in her projected design. It is well known, that various reports respecting the purchase of a child were afloat, and one of them in particular, at Creukherne, in Somersetshire, in which it is said the attempt was made, but rejected by the parents of the boy.

I may also here be permitted to state another fact, which has been communicated to me. At the time Mrs. Southcott said she quickened, the daughter of one of her confidential attendants, also quickened, and was brought to bed at the time of the harvest. Was the child a girl,

and were her disciples too vigilant? What then may be inferred from these circumstances? This is the suggestion to me of a person who had no means of collecting evidence of such intention.

Mrs. Townly and Mrs. Underwood appear to be honest characters; but that some such intention was in contemplation, I much fear, although, as Mr. Thicknesse justly observes, one could hardly suppose any human being would be guilty of so enormous a crime—a crime for which language cannot express detestation sufficiently strong. To introduce a *human* being as the SON of GOD, is a blasphemy which beggars description—the bare idea of which chills the blood!

Since the death of this miserable woman, I have endeavoured to learn, if she or her followers have acquired wealth by her imposture. Her books, it appears, have had a very extensive sale; but a great many, it is said, have been distributed gratis, in order to make proselytes. The Seals, it is positively asserted, were

never sold; and the followers persist that not *one* instance can be adduced of it. A person of the name of Carpenter, originally the priest and adviser of the prophetess, is said to have received money from this traffic; but they were not the *real Joanna's*. Mrs. Southcott herself was left an estate by one of the believers, amounting to about £250 *per annum*, which, with her other property, I am told, she has bequeathed jointly to Mrs. Townly and Mrs. Underwood, by a will, made some years ago. Wealth thus obtained can afford no comfort to a conscientious mind. Her disciples assert, that they expended property upon her. Is it not a suspicious circumstance, that no alteration was made in her will after she conceived herself to be pregnant?

Since writing the above account, I have seen a statement of some circumstances in the Papers, which it behoves me to correct. It is there stated, that Mr. Want, a respectable surgeon, was requested to visit Mrs. Southcott by me, and that he first convinced me she was not pregnant. Mr.

Want's letter (see p. 70) will disprove the fact, and shew that it was an object of curiosity on his part, that introduced him; by an application to me. As he made no examination, he could form no judgment of her pregnancy; neither did he open the body. The operation was performed by myself. He occasionally assisted in dividing the ovaria, holding back the dissected parts. This correction I think necessary to make as a matter due to my own character and feelings. In a Sunday newspaper it was also asserted, that she died of the disease prognosticated "by the *judicious and experienced* Dr. Sims, in opposition to the opinion delivered by Dr. Reece." The present narrative will shew, that the Doctor, however judicious, was equally wrong as myself as to the state of the womb, and totally so in respect to the state of the mammary glands.

After the events that have occurred, would it be believed that the blinded followers of this infatuated woman still cling to her opinions, and that their faith should

not be in the least abated? They have now found that the promise of the child was *conditional*; that if the people had treated her kindly she would have produced it; but in consequence of their hardness of heart and want of faith, like the Jews to the Messiah of old, the Lord had taken the child to heaven; and they assert, there never was before on earth a character so pure and free from sin as this woman, except our Saviour!!!! Some even suppose, that before the 12th of this Month she will rise again and produce the promised child!! Such is the influence of fanaticism over minds once accustomed to receive its impressions! They wish to continue them, and thereby prevent a resistance to that spirit of hope which seems to be their chief delight.

The report, that she exclaimed, just before she expired, "England! England! how have I deceived thee!" I believe is false. The account of her embassy to the Rev. Mr. Pommeray, to request that he would marry her previous to the birth of the child, is by some denied. It is how-

ever certain, one of her followers was deputed with a message of some kind to him ; and it was most probably of that nature, in imitation of Joseph and the Virgin Mary !

In conclusion, we may remark, that this woman seems to have conducted herself with more decorum than other fanatics that have lately appeared. The founder of Quietism in France, issued her visions like the ancient Sybils, under the influence of hysterics and contortions. The Buchanites were reprobated for their extravagance and immoral conduct. Joanna was apparently quiet, correct, and decorous. Her warning spirit was mild and gentle—spoke to her in a whisper, and communicated with the soft still voice of inspiration. But she is now gone to that tribunal which forms the true judgment of all human conduct.

FINIS.