

·N E C R O M A N C Y·;

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A RAP FOR THE RAPPERS.

BY

PARSONS COOKE.



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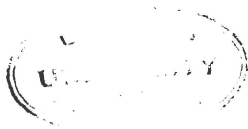
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NECROMANCY;

OR,

A RAP FOR THE RAPPERS.

THE pretence of drawing information from the spirit world, through the tattling of the spirits of the dead, is nothing new. And the experience of ancient times respecting it, may give some information how to estimate it now. Though the subject has important bearings on secular interests, it is at the root a question mainly affecting religion. And it is only with the sanctions of religion, that we can utter an effective testimony against the delusion that comes of it. The art of divination, of which this is but a branch, has been practised in the world from time immemorial.

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The pretence of an intercourse with the spirits of the dead is certainly as old as the time of Moses, whose law attached to it the penalty of death. Lev. 20 : 27. It was much in vogue in the days of Grecian and Roman Mythology. Then it was called, not spiritualism, but by its true name, necromancy, or divining by the dead. We have an instance of it in an age some hundreds of years after Moses, in the person of the Witch of Endor, as she is improperly called. Saul, when in straits and desperation, inquired of the Lord in vain. Then he sent two servants to find out a woman, who had a familiar spirit; though just before, he visited the penalties of the law of Moses, on other practitioners of the impious art. Now, like a drowning man catching at the last straw, he resorts to a professed servant of the devil, that through her means he might pry into the secrets of the future. This woman is called in the Hebrew a mistress of the spirit of Ob. Ob, in Hebrew, imports precisely the same as Pytho in Greek. What in the book of Samuel is called the spirit of Ob, is in the Acts of the Apostles called the spirit of Pytho. In both cases the word may be

properly rendered, spirit of divination. In Acts, is described a certain damsel, that had a spirit of divination — literally, the spirit of Pytho, or of the Pythian Apollo. This damsel was a female slave, that had practised as a conjurer, and that by her skill in false pretences, had become profitable to her owners. She, doubtless instigated by Satan, though in a vein which would be very natural to one of such a character, sought to bring Paul's doctrine into odium with the people, by constantly following him about as if she were his shade or satellite, and uttering her voice in recommending his doctrine. Seeing the evil that came of this, Paul addressed the foul spirit in her, and, in the name of Christ, commanded it to come out of her; and its coming out bereft her of her power as a conjurer, and destroyed her value to her masters. Here, it is said, there must have been a real satanic agency, because the casting out of the spirit deprived her masters of their gain. But we see not why her case might not have been parallel with that of the Witch of Endor. That her pretence of conversing with the dead was false, appears from the surprise and

terror which she felt, when by miracle, a real converse with the dead was effected. If she expected her raps or other means to bring her into communication with the spirit of Samuel, she would have had no fright when her expectation was answered. She was, then, a mere impostor, and God wrought a miracle in the case, both for her confusion and that of Saul. So in case of the Philippian conjurer; she, like the other professed diviners by the spirit of Pytho, was doubtless a mere pretender, yet used as the instrument of Satan's work, for he is intimately concerned in all impostures. Nor is it needful to suppose, that Satan exerted in her case any kind of power different from what he always exerts, when he seduces men, with, or without the intervention of human agents. A mere malicious suggestion of his, like that by which he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ, was all that was needful to instigate her to works, that were certainly less satanic than that of Judas. And if by the spirit of God attending the word uttered by Paul, she was converted to Christ, her master's gains by her would of course be gone. Or, attending

the word of Paul ejecting the evil spirit, there might have been a providential or miraculous power depriving her of the peculiar faculties, which she had used in her deception. In any case we have no necessity to suppose, that she revealed the secrets of the future, and of the world of spirits, by any aid of Satan, her familiar spirit, nor that such a thing was done by any that professed such an art.

There were countless forms of divination, and all of them equally impostures. An insatiable curiosity to come at the secret things that belong to the Lord our God, while we neglect the things that are revealed and that belong to us, is a part of the great rebellion of the race against its Maker, and has ever employed a combination of ignorance, superstition, and fraud, to make out systems of divination. Presages have been drawn from signs having no connection with the events, and this work of divining has run out in a multitude of branches, with countless practitioners in each branch. There was necromancy, or divining by the dead; aeromancy, or divining by the air; arithmomancy, divining by numbers; capnomancy, divining

by smoke; chiromancy, divining by the lines on the hands; hydromancy, divining by water; pyromancy, divining by fire. There was also a divining by the flight of birds, by the entrails of beasts, by the use of lots, by the changes in the clouds, and by other things too numerous to be named, and the diviners of these various classes, were usually priests or priestesses of idolatry.

But no branch of divination was more in vogue in ancient times, than necromancy, or giving responses from the spirits of the dead. This art was practised in a form like that of our spirit rappers, and also in a form different from this. The Hebrew term for one that has a familiar spirit, or the spirit of Ob, is rendered into the Septuagint by the Greek term *eggastrimuthos*, one who gives responses from his belly. The idea was, that he had in him the spirit of some dead man, always ready to be consulted; when there was a call for him to reveal the secrets of the future. But necromancers were not confined to this form of consultation. It is evident from the case of the Witch of Endor, that she practised the art just as the present rappers do, — holding

herself ready to come into communication with any spirit that might be named — just as though all spirits were as omniscient as the Papists make their virgin Mary to be — ready to know and obey every call made to her from every place. For Saul assumed this, when he named Samuel for her to call up, and she professed it, when she undertook to call him. Here is clear proof, that whatever other forms necromancy assumed, in the fertility of superstitious fancies, it was in the days of Saul practised in the same form, that now prevails.

There has been in this matter no proper borrowing from the ancient heathen. But there is at all times heathenism enough in ignorant and corrupt minds, to originate now, what heathenism originated then. Egypt, the cradle of ancient arts, had these arts of divination in vogue as early as the time of Joseph. Thence, doubtless, Moses derived that knowledge of them, which appears in his legislation against them. Diviners, also, abounded in all the heathen nations; that bordered upon and intermingled with the Jewish. Nor does it appear, that the stern prohibitions of the law of Moses were put in

force, till the days of the kings. In later days, the grand source of this delusion was in Chaldea, — where practitioners in the arts of divination, were in the highest class of society, and no important undertaking could be projected, without consulting them. From Chaldea there came at various periods swarms of impostors into Palestine, seducing the people with these arts, and bewitching them with idolatry. When the nation of Judah returned from the Babylonish captivity, though they had seen enough of idols, and were cured of idolatry in the form of the express worship of images, their minds were saturated with superstitions, of which a belief in these arts of divination formed a part.

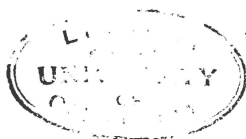
This form of imposture was made punishable with death, not because there was any reality in the responses pretended to be received from the spirits; but because of its mischievous nature, as a system of imposture. So idolatry was made a capital crime, not because an idol is any thing in the world, — not because idol gods have any reality, but because the belief and trust in such imaginary gods was the essence of rebellion against the

true God. The imposture of the diviners was mischievous on many accounts. It involved idolatry. The usual form of idolatry has been the worship of departed spirits of ancestors, friends, or heroes, or monarchs. Almost every heathen god that has figured in the mythologies—not excepting Jupiter, the ruler of the gods—was once a man living upon earth. They underwent an apotheosis after their death, and so became objects of worship, and oracles of prophecy. These were the demons, or spirits of the dead, to which necromancy ever made its appeal, and it was not needful that the pretended intercourse with them should be real, in order that it should be sinful. Necromancy was a sin, because it carried the minds of the people whom it seduced, away into idolatry; because it took the homage away from God, and gave it to demons that have no communication with us; because it fostered a desire for unlawful knowledge; because it put men in the place of God, whose sole prerogative it is to declare things to come; because by substituting false sources of revelation, it seduced the mind from the conviction of the supreme authority

of God's word ; and because it is so destructive to the sanity of mind. These are grave and sufficient reasons for prohibiting the practice, under heavy penalties. Under the Jewish theocracy, the introduction of other gods was not only a sin in a spiritual view, but it was also a crime against the State. It was treason against the head of the State, which was God himself, and as treason, the civil law punished it with death.

That the responses given from the spirits, that is, the false gods, were sheer impostures, appears from the representations of Scripture. Isaiah describes God, as the one "that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad." Here diviners and liars are put in the same category, on the assumption that their responses are lies. And here, too, is an intimation, that madness or mental derangement, then as now, was a very common result, and that resulting by a special visitation of God, who is wont to make diviners mad. So the prophet Jeremiah, speaking of these pretenders, says : "The prophets prophesy lies, — they prophesy unto you a false vision, a divination and a thing

of nought, and the deceit of their heart." Here it is assumed that a divination is a thing of nought. Indeed, it would be easy to multiply proof to any extent, that the spirit of inspiration has stamped the work of holding pretended intercourse with the spirits of the dead, as a work of falsehood and imposture, and a work which it is a crime to perform, or to patronize. This is enough, to settle every Christian mind against it.



I.

THE CAUSES AND MENTAL PROCESS IN NECROMANCY.

WHAT was falsehood and imposture in the days of the Hebrew commonwealth, has not become, by the mere lapse of time, a great and beneficent discovery, opening new fountains of knowledge. What infinite Wisdom and Goodness there prohibited, as a capital crime, is not now to be ranked among the grand improvements of the age. But when we say, that the consulting of spirits was then and is now a work of imposture and delusion, we do not say, that every believer and practitioner of the art, is consciously deceiving others. Many doubtless are self-deceived. For the delusion is not as shallow as it may at first glance appear. The causes

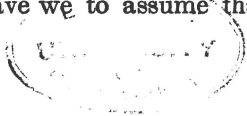
of a belief in it are twofold, external and internal.

To speak of the external causes, — there are facts and agencies in nature, that have not been brought within the scope and classifications of science. How much of fiction there may be in the reported marvels of table-tipping and jumping, we pretend not to say. A very narrow basis of truth would serve to build much fiction upon; and if there is such a basis, it is a wonder, if fiction has not been built largely upon it. That there is a grain of truth in the bushel of chaff, we have not a doubt. Long before we ever heard of table-tipping, we had ourselves performed experiments somewhat similar, and by causes as unaccountable, — causes that proceeded from the united action of the human body and mind on contiguous bodies. Once all the effects produced by electricity were as difficult to refer to their cause, as are some of these alleged phenomena. Then it would have been just as reasonable to have referred all effects of electrical action to the spirits of the dead, as it now is to refer the table-tipping to them. Probably it will not be long

before some other Franklin will come in, and by clear experiments interpret the laws of the unknown agent in nature, by which these marvellous effects take place. The fact that the human will, working through some unknown medium in the body, exerts such power on adjacent bodies, is no more unaccountable in itself, than the fact, that it moves and actuates the inert matter of our body itself. Nor should it stagger our belief, when we see what a powerful shock on our bodies may be given by what is called the electrical eel, or torpedo. That shock is supposed to be given by electricity. But whence has this insignificant creature such a gathering of electric power? Examine it and you will find no apparatus for generating, and no battery for containing electricity. There is no more reason for saying that its shocking power resides in its body than in its will. Call it electricity, then the wonder is, how such a little creature can charge and discharge an electrical battery of sufficient compass to prostrate a strong man. And who shall say, that the human will exerted through some invisible agent, has not a power as great as

that reptile ? Nothing which has been alleged in the form of table-turning, is more beyond the scope of science, than this well-known power of the electrical eel. And it would be just as absurd to ascribe that phenomenon to the spirits of the dead, as it would be to say that the spirits work through this reptile.

Thus while we do not deny that unaccountable effects are produced under the hands of the mediums, being of a peculiar structure and temperament, and while we assume that there are ten deceptions to one real marvel, we see no cause to refer either the true or the false to any agency of the dead. In this the delusion takes its first step, and it is the step of a giant. It says, "Here is an effect, whose cause I do not know, and, therefore, the cause must be the spirits of the dead." By what rule of reasoning, or what law of the human mind, we are warranted to give over all the domains of knowledge that we cannot occupy to the spirits of the dead, does not appear. Their operations in the universe of God must be vast, if they are the cause of all events that we cannot explain. What right have we to assume that our sci-



ence is so comprehensive of all the phenomena of this world, and that every event in nature that we cannot name and classify, is a voice of the spirits, seeking a converse with us? Such a rule would convert to truth all the fictions of the heathen mythology. For when that mythology was born, the causes of the natural events that supplied its machinery, were in a great measure unknown. Electricity had not been taken up as a science. Therefore (if such reasoning is correct) those heathen had a right to say, that all its results were the working of invisible spirits of the dead. They had a right to say, that the departed spirit of Jupiter, who especially dealt in thunder and lightning, when it thundered, was only giving the thumps and raps to indicate the secrets of the invisible world, and that they had only to take the alphabet and spell them out. If we must refer to the spirits of the dead every event whose cause is unknown, so must they. Then the fable of a thundering Jupiter was a reality. Then, too, as human science advances, does the language of the spirits die out and become obsolete. Then as soon as science shall be able to grasp

and define the impalpable agent that now makes the thumps, and makes the tables leap for joy, the spirits' occupation will have gone, and their oracles be silenced.

But here we are not as much concerned to show the fallacy as the fact of this pretence. It begins by assuming that because the fact has not been accounted for, it is a voice of the spirits. So much for the external causes of the delusion.

The main cause is in the mind itself. Curiosity is powerful in guiding and actuating all minds, but much more powerful in some than in others. Next, a love of contemplating what is marvellous, and beyond the sphere of common observation, is powerful within us, as is seen in all our dispositions for sight-seeing. This principle sometimes by cultivation and use becomes a strong and uncontrollable tendency of the mind. It exists in morbid and aggravated forms, in minds tinged with superstition and not balanced by the superior force of God's truth. Added to these, there is in all minds a desire to pry into the future. It is natural to us, but strengthened by exercise and vain attempts to satisfy itself, so as in

some instances to get the mastery of the reason. In these three appetites of the mind, indulged under peculiar circumstances, and to great excess, we have the internal causes of a belief in this branch of necromancy.

The process of the mind advancing to the belief is something like this,—curiosity impels it to see and contemplate the feats of the rappers. The things seen and not accounted for by natural causes seize upon the curiosity, and carry it up to a more intense action. Thus roused it holds the mind, with its habitual thoughts, dwelling on the new marvels. Here the love of the marvellous is called into full play, and luxuriates in seeing and thinking of such a strange phenomena. The imagination, one of the most delicate and yet most powerful faculties,—the one most difficult to control, and yet most needful to be properly regulated in order to our happiness,—the one most liable to interfere with the balance and well-going machinery of the mind, comes under a rare propelling force, when such seemingly supernatural phenomena are set before it,—when it is alleged that the spirit world has opened its mouth to reveal its

secrets. At this point the passion to know things to come is roused, and it stimulates the faculties to intense action on its chosen theme, and causes them to act under the bias of all the pressure it can bring to bear. It wants to know things to come, with a desire so strong, as to put a strain on the reason forming the conclusion, on the pretended report, and to force it to make the conclusion out of premises the most frail. All these passions together make out an overpowering predisposition on the slightest grounds to recognize in the rappings the footsteps of the messengers from the spirit world. The very thought of this reacts with unlimited power upon the imagination. Fancy kindles with delight, first at the visions presented by the necromancy, and then at its own visions, called up under the quickening which it has received. This faculty finds intense gratification in this exercise. It is a mental intoxication. The intoxication had through fancy revelling in its own delights, and dwelling on the new world of marvels open before it, is at first occasional, or had at intervals, on witnessing the performances, or reading or hear-

ing the wondrous tale. At length the mind held so much under a magnetic power, becomes itself a magnet. The gratification found in these occasional communings with the spirit world, has captivated the mind, and drawn it into a settled habit of dwelling on the elysium of its fancy. A settled and strong appetite is created for the indulgence of these intoxicating visions, much as a desire for intoxicating drinks is created by indulgence. The gratification had in the first use creates a demand for another, and leads along from one indulgence and one degree of intoxication to another, till the mind has made its dwelling in a constant scene of marvels and miracles of necromancy. This habit indulged, works the fancy up to a power beyond all proportion to the other faculties. Indeed, the main force of the mind now works through the fancy, and is spent in conceiving and contemplating its own marvellous images. These images are so much before the mind, and the gratifications which they minister exert such a spell upon it, that its orderly action in its other faculties is precluded; the reason is overmastered and carried captive, so far as its

- work on this subject is concerned. The mind in forming its conclusions here, is ruled not at all by reason, but by what most forcibly strikes the fancy, and to minds thus wrought into a rickety development of fancy, out of all proportion and control of the other faculties, and overriding them all, the question whether these marvels are true, is a foregone conclusion. They are to be received as true,
- of course, because they so powerfully strike the fancy,—because they so meet a controlling appetite of the mind,—because it is what the morbid fancy loves to entertain. Here are the elements of the power, which carries the mind so irresistibly to its conclusions, touching this subject. Reason being excluded or overborne, arguments addressing reason ever so conclusively, are unheard. Volumes of arguments perfectly conclusive to a well-balanced mind, might here be spent with as little effect as so much wind. For while the fancy so holds the mind on the beauty and grandeur of its own image, the reason is paralyzed and struck dumb, and the mind has at last a monomania, is deranged so far as this one subject is concerned.

Our view as presented thus far is, that the mental process in coming to the belief in necromancy is such, as sets the reason aside, in deference to the all-absorbing power of a morbid fancy and diseased mental appetites; and, therefore, as soon as one becomes a real believer in this delusion, he is a monomaniac; that is, he is incapable of forming right conclusions touching this subject. This, indeed, is analogous to the way in which derangement of mind more often comes in. The balance and regulator of the mind is destroyed, by dwelling on one class of subjects or working some one of the faculties or feelings out of proportion. In this way the mind's machinery is broken, or its regulator is destroyed. Its fancy flies at random, spurning the control of the judgment. So your believer in necromancy is so far forth a deranged man. He has come into that state of mind, in which it is no jest and no exaggeration to say of him, that the greater the absurdity of the idea presented to his mind, the quicker will be his belief in it. For the greater the absurdity, the greater the marvel, and so the greater is its power to meet the

mind's appetite for marvels, and kindle up a crazed fancy.

The fact that persons, after falling into this monomania, have, as they often do, their capacities not impaired touching other subjects, is nothing unusual. The very word monomania imports just that. Indeed, it is a general fact, that derangement affects only a part of the faculties or operations of the mind. The chance to cure the delirious, lies in the fact that there is a sound part of the mind, on which you may stand to repair the unsound.

It has excited wonder and alarm, that so many of the recruits for our insane hospitals have come from the operations of the necromancers. Yet if it be true, that the belief in necromancy comes in the way which we have described; and that that belief, of course, is a species of derangement, or the work of derangement already begun, among the faculties, it is no matter of wonder. The disease once seated in our faculties is very apt to spread till it involves them all. For the reason dethroned in one of its provinces, is weakened in its power to maintain its general

dominion. This species of monomania cannot possess the mind, — working so powerfully upon its delicate faculties, without exceeding peril to the whole mind. So it is easy to trace the process by which these hundreds of people have gone, step by step, to the madhouse, and by which thousands more are following on. To some it has been a wonder, that after the tendency of the movement towards lunacy has been made so clear, after the victims have so multiplied in our madhouses, that the candidates for bedlam have not become themselves alarmed, and turned from their perilous course. But if we have correctly described the process by which they went into the snare, their recovery from it by such means is not at all to be expected. For the danger in the case addresses itself only to the reason. It ministers no bright visions to the imagination, and therefore, it will not be listened to at all. If it could be set forth as a fact, and made to the mind clear as sight, that every spirit-rapper and every dupe of spirit-rapping, so far had died in the madhouse, and that all the rest were sure to die

there, that showing would not recover a single believer from this snare of the devil. One hour of delight in indulging the play of the imagination through all the wonders of the "seven spheres," would, in his view, outweigh all the arguments that could be gathered from all the bedlams. There is nothing in his mind to which reason can speak with effect. This we conclude simply from an analysis of the operations of mind, in such a case, and from a view of the result, which is a dethronement of reason.

But we may not leave wholly out of view the providence of God in the matter. There are often incipient retributions in this world, and they affect the mind, as well as the body. And in an open view of the Scriptures, it is clear, that this business of pretending to reveal, and striving to discover the secrets of the world of spirits, is especially offensive to God. It is a sin, partaking of the same nature with that of rejecting what truth God has revealed. He has exercised his sovereign wisdom for our good, as much in concealing what he has concealed, as in revealing what he has revealed. "It is the glory of God to

conceal a thing." In our present state, the knowledge of some things which a prurient fancy wants to know, would be as hurtful as the ignorance of other things, which we need to know. Therefore, there are many matters which the goodness of God has appointed to be kept secret, till the proper time of revealing them shall come. He has expressly told us so,—that "secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those which are revealed belong to us, and to our children for ever." It is, therefore, as much an invasion of the authority of the revealer of eternal truth, to attempt to break the seal which is upon the treasures of forbidden knowledge, as it is profanity to cast away the treasures which he has put into our hands. Such attempts, then, to pry into the secrets of the spirit world, and to ascend to the third heavens, whether in the body or out of the body, and to bring down and utter here, the things which one visitant of those heavens found to be unutterable here, is a pointed provocation to the God who has given us a revelation of all the truth of the world to come, which we have need to know. For this, among other

reasons, he gave to the Hebrews a law, which made such an attempt a capital offence.

Nor could it be so great a crime, when that law was made, and now have become a mere innocent recreation, like a visit to a panorama. All the elements of criminality that ever inhered in the act are now in it, though it has not all the relations to our civil structure which it had to that of the Hebrews, making it treason against the State, as well as a sin against God. If it was then a sin, in that it carried away the mind into idolatry, in the form of homage rendered to and information sought from the spirit of the dead, or demons, as they were often called, so it is now. If it was then a sin, in that it fostered an impious desire for unlawful and impossible knowledge, so it is now. If it was then a sin in opening a wide door to licentiousness, so it is now. If it was a sin, in that it put men in the place of God, in his exclusive prerogative of declaring things to come, so it is now. If it was a sin, by substituting false sources of revelation, instead of the true, so it is now. If it was a



sin, by an abuse and derangement of the mind, so it is now.

So when one suffers himself to be initiated into the mysteries of these diviners, and deliberately subjects his mind to the fascination, that we have described, he consciously or unconsciously becomes before God a serious offender. He subjects his own mind to a treatment, that involves both impiety and self-destruction. Yea, he comes in the face of the clear prohibitions of the word of God, and it is to be expected, that providential retributions will be as busy upon this sin, as upon any other. When men sin against themselves, by dishonoring their own bodies, God is wont to seat in their bodies a recompense, which is remarkably fitted to the nature of the offence. But when men sin against the nobler part of their being, intoxicating and debauching their minds, till they have become maniacs or fools, — a laughing-stock to all sober men, — devouring for truth the most shapeless and ridiculous absurdities, what else have they to expect than a recompense from God suited to the nature of the offence? And what can be a more natural and fit recompense for such

an abuse of mind, than such fearful wrecks of mind as it has often produced? Those who have thus used their minds, have deserved to lose them.

But it will be asked— If the spirits of the dead have no agency in these remarkable phenomena, whence come those responses that that are said to be rapped out, or written out by the spirits? Are we to conclude, that every one pretending to give such communications is a conscious deceiver? That many of this class are conscious deceivers has been proved, in a detection of them. That all are such, we have no need to conclude. If there be that invisible agency unknown to science, producing at the will of the mediums the rapping and the table tipping, it has its source of operation in the mind of the medium. It acts from and upon that mind, and follows the line of its thoughts and volitions. If there be thoughts spelt out by raps, the spelling takes the imperfection of that of the medium, and not of the supposed spirit. So if you put the medium's pen under the guidance of his familiar spirit, for composition, the inspired nonsense which the spirit writes, always takes.

the level of the medium's mind. If you consult the spirits about any religious doctrine, the answer always accords with the previous views of the medium. If the medium gives a deliverance from Franklin or Washington, he gives none of the masterly sense of those minds, but makes us read some drivelling nonsense of his own. In the days of Queen Elizabeth, a courtier was suspected of being the author of a libellous production, which had greatly incensed the queen. She proposed to one of her counsellors, that he should be put upon the rack, to make him confess the authorship. The counsellor replied, "No, but put his style to the rack, and that will reveal the secret." Let that same method of detection be here applied. If the style of these pretenders were put upon the rack, it would soon confess enough to acquit the ghosts of the dead of any hand in it. If it be Washington or Franklin that speaks, and if their periods show the gait and tramp of their giant intellects,—the march of commanders in the field of thought,—it is well. But if they show the trail of an ass, or the dancing of a puppy, we must look for the author among

asses and puppies. We are not to believe that the minds of the masters of former generations have dwindled during their residence in the spirit world. For if the atmosphere of that world so dwarfs the intellect, it becomes us to shut all doors of communication with it. So it becomes the mediums when they give us dissertations or poems from the master-minds among the dead, to write in the style of such minds, — to give to us their lofty sense and royal phrase. If speaking in the name of Milton, they will utter themselves in the majestic thought and rhythm of the *Paradise Lost*; or if speaking in the name of Lord Bacon, they will flash forth volumes of truth in a sentence, lightening as they go, in the style of his aphorisms, they will better command the credit of sober men. What throws entire discredit on all the responses of the spirits is, that their style and thought never rises above the level of the minds of the mediums; and that they attribute to such men as Franklin and Webster, utterances of which the inmates of a pothouse would be ashamed. What better proof can be desired, that it is the medium and not the spirits that speaks?

Whether they are conscious deceivers or self-deceived, by mistaking the conceptions of their own fancies, controlled by unknown physical causes, is not an important question for us. We can easily conceive, that many of the mediums really believe themselves impelled by the spirits of the dead. Such a self-deception, as may save their credit for honesty, is possible. Yet it is probable, that in most instances, the responses are given with a conscious intent to deceive, and in all cases, it is clear, that "the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets," and that their own will is the source of their revelation. According to the Hebrew conception of necromancy, the spirit that inspires them dwells in their own belly.

II.

REASONS FOR AVOIDING ALL CONNECTION WITH NECROMANCY.



As real believers in this delusion are incapable of being recovered from it by reasoning, the entrance of people upon it must, if possible, be prevented, before it has paralyzed their reason. The only way in which the work of the delusion can be stayed, is by giving the public mind such information respecting it, as will cause it to be generally avoided by those that are not in it, and thus prevent the future supply of victims. It has many of the characteristics of an epidemic disease. The miasma, that spreads it, is mental, and goes abroad much upon mental sympathies and nervous temperaments, alighting upon those, as its victims, whose want of

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balance of mind predisposes them, or gives to appeals to curiosity and love of the marvellous a special power over them. The whole community have the same interest, in precautions against the spread of this epidemic, that they would have against the smallpox or the yellow fever. When such contagions are abroad, our boards of health are careful that the whole people should be well informed of the sanitary measures, and modes of individual regimen, that are thought best to escape the disease. Such common sense rules of regimen, as all can apprehend and use, are carefully promulgated, that each one, by his self-protection, may promote the common health. Rarely has an epidemic gone wider and devoured more victims than this. Others work ruin upon the body, and this upon the soul. Vast public interests, therefore, require that the public mind should be charged with a proper sense of the evil, and have a proper knowledge of the remedies. In order to the remedy, there are some matter of fact views of the subject, which may be made palpable to all minds, and which to rational minds, will present sufficient inducements to stand aloof from it.

The first of these is, a view of the seductive power which inheres in the art. Of this any one may be aware, from the nature of the case, as well as from results. Where so many others have been drawn in and befooled, one may know that it is not best for him to make the experiment. And especially since there are among the victims some, who would not have been thought capable of being so ensnared. Among the marvels presented them, is a mixture of truth and imposture,—so mixed as not to be easily separated. These are set forth, not in an appeal to reason, but to the curiosity, the fancy, and the love of the marvellous. They approach more what is weak and susceptible, than what is strong in our nature. In this way they have sometimes captivated the stronger minds, as well as the weak. In such an exposure, neither power of intellect nor breadth of learning avail, as a shield; because the seduction comes up from behind, approaches the side that is unshielded. Its play is upon the fancy, and upon one's passion for impossible glances into the spirit world. The judgment can no more defend itself when the assault is made on the fancy,

all absorbed, than Adam could protect the standing of the united head of the race, when the serpent, in his absence, was carrying his purpose with the woman. So this seduction first approaches the woman within us, — that is, the curiosity and the fancy, and prevailing with these, the faculty that should command is set aside.

But be the cause this or that, the seductive power is manifest and great. This is shown in the number of the victims. And this is reason enough for avoiding it. If in some instances it appears that the victims were predisposed to such a weakness, yet that weakness predisposing, is more manifest after the result, than it was before; and how do we know that it is not in others, and in our own minds, equally concealed?

Others may think that our fear to put our minds under the seductive power, involves a confession of the reality of its force. And we do indeed confess the reality of its power for seduction. But we do not confess, that it is any power of truth, or power of God, or power of demons, or spirits of the dead. But that it is an immense power for mischief, wielded

morally, if not physically, by the Evil One, we frankly confess. For the number of its victims, and the evil that it has done upon them, proves all this. It has done its work upon hundreds, in many instances robbing them of their common sense, and of their religion—if they had any—making them the comic actors in life's drama, or driving them to madness. After such developments, it is too late to question its power.

Others misapply to the case the apostle's injunction, "Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." True, all things must be proved. But must known poison be proved by taking it upon our stomachs? Here is a mixture of arsenic and bread, with which many have been killed. Is not that killing enough to prove it? Must we also eat the bread, so as to prove all things? An infectious disease is abroad, under which many are dying; must we go and inhale its breath, and take it in upon the seat of our own life, in order to prove all things?

In all our remarks, thus far, we have assumed, that the thing is evil and only evil, an assumption which will be wholly justified

before we shall have done. Our object here is simply to show that a fatal snare is here laid for the feet of many, surrounded by powerful seductive forces, and we make the known force of that seduction an argument for avoiding all approaches to the snare. It is enough for our present purpose to say, that if the serpent, by his thousand victims, has shown that he has power to charm and draw in birds that fly in sport and wonder about him, it becomes such like birds to keep at a proper distance. The more so, since the indulgence of curiosity upon such marvels is plainly forbidden in the Word of God: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth thee to err from the words of knowledge."

This opens to us our second reason, why all contact with the operations of the necromancers should be avoided. God has forbidden all participation in this work, in express terms. For what he said to his ancient people on that subject, is *in the principle of the thing* said to us, though not enforced upon us by the death penalty. It is said to us, because the reason of it is common to us and to the

Hebrews. It shows his abhorrence of the imposture, and his authority in forbidding it. To his ancient people he said: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, *and the sign or wonder cometh to pass*, whereof he spoke unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye will love the Lord your God." . . . "If thy brother the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods,—thou shalt not consent, neither shall thine eye pity him; neither shalt thou spare nor conceal him."

Here the strongest case is put, that where some truth mingles in the pretences of the impostor. It is assumed, that to make the trial greater, God permits these instruments of Satan to have something of reality among the marvels in which they deal. And this he does, for this reason: "For the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye will love the Lord." Even if the thing dreamed

come to pass, no matter; the end proposed, and the tendency of the proposal to go after other gods, stamps it as coming from beneath. In its very profession, it is a work of darkness, a withdrawal of allegiance from Jehovah, and transferring it to demons or imaginary spirits. The case here supposed, of a dreamer, or diviner sustaining the credit of his dreams, by some real wonder, insoluble by any existing science, is exactly what is alleged of the rappers. And God in his providence suffers the impostors to seize on these real and unaccountable facts, to make their pretences the more imposing, that he may try us, and the strength of our allegiance to him. But if they were ten times more imposing than they are, this should be enough to condemn them, and hold us aloof from them, that they propose to draw us away from the true God, and make us new oracles out of the spirits of dead men. The proposal itself is impious and God denying; and therefore may not be entertained. On this simple ground, and irrespective of all questions, as to the proportion of truth and falsehood which mingle in the conjuror's operations,

he expressly forbids our participating in the thing.

This opens the way to our third reason, why the shows of the rappers should be avoided; that is, that they are a species of idolatry, and therein offensive to God, and polluting to our minds. There are the same reasons why we refuse to participate in these, as why we should refuse to participate in the devotions of a heathen temple. This, with all the other branches of divination, was forbidden in Scripture; both because it was imposture, and because it was idolatry. They involved idolatry, because their foretelling of future events, which is a prerogative of God alone, was claimed to be done by information got from other spirits than God,—the deities or demons, which the heathen had made to themselves, by an apotheosis of dead men. Seating in their minds these spirits of the dead, to do for them the work of God in revealing secrets, they became idolaters. And what was idolatry then, is idolatry now. Those who now with faith and zeal enter into the matter of getting information from ghosts, do in that act reject the true God, the fountain of all

true revelation. Nor is it merely a constructive idolatry, nor an idolatry of heart without the outward, formal act. Sitting to hear the responses of the rappers or mediums, in real belief that ghosts speak through them, is worship rendered to idol gods, in spirit and in truth. It gives the homage that is due to God, to those that are by nature no gods. True, there is no burning of incense, no slaughter of victims, no prostration before an image of the spirit worshipped. But there is more than these; and there is that in which these among the heathen usually terminated. The consulting of the oracle was a higher form of worship, with the ancient heathen, than the burning of incense, or bowing before an image, and sacrifices were preparatory to it. So under the Hebrew economy, the inquiring of the Lord by Urim and Thummim, that is, consulting the oracle of God, was one of the higher forms of worship, and was preceded by sacrifices. And the mediums with us, who utter their oracles from the ghosts, are as truly ministers of idol-worship, as was Pythia herself, uttering the oracles of Apollo at Delphi. The gods introduced as speaking in that

case, and in this, are of the same class, — dead men's ghosts. In every instance, from Jupiter down to the more plebeian divinities, the gods of the ancient heathen were dead men. When the heathen worshipped the hosts of heaven, they first peopled and animated them with these ghosts; and some of the stars still bear their names, — as Jupiter, Saturn, and Venus.

There is a striking fact, which shows the sameness of the gods worshipped by idolaters, the world over. Necromancy, as through neighboring idolaters it invaded the Hebrew nation, was called consulting the spirit of Ob, or spirit of divination. Now, the same thing is called by the same name, by numerous heathen tribes on the west coast of Africa. In Africa, the word Obeah, — the same word as the Hebrew Ob, only altered in termination, to fit into the African languages, is used to express the same thing, — divining by the spirits of the dead. By dispersions of Jews and other Shemitish nations over Africa, many Asiatic ideas — that of circumcision with the rest — have gone over the whole continent. So now the very word by which the heathen in Western Asia, three thousand years ago,



described the work of divining by the dead, is now used in Western Africa to describe the same thing. And in the West Indies, and in our southern States, and, indeed, wherever the African slave-trade has carried it, that word and that practice now exist among the negroes. The sameness of the word is a striking proof, that what the Witch of Endor preached in her day, the negroes of Africa now practise; and that what is now practised by our necromancers as a new discovery, is the same, in substance, as that practised by the negroes, is fully attested by missionaries who have been eye-witnesses. They inform us, that not only is the negroes' necromancy the same as ours, but that the idolatry of the Africans consists wholly of a pretended intercourse with the spirits of the dead. So that what is regarded as a new thing here, has prevailed there from time immemorial.

And not only are the gods worshipped by our necromancers the same as those worshipped by both ancient and modern heathen, but the worship rendered is essentially of the same nature. Idol-worship is made up of different acts whether of body or mind, from

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the worship of the true God, and we err when we say that such and such things are not the worship of idols because the true God is not worshipped by similar acts. As we have said, the main branch of heathen worship consisted in going to their gods or spirits for revelations of things to come. Whatever other things formed a part of that worship, this was the main part, and in this main part of their idolatry they are joined by thousands in these Christian lands.

If this so-called spiritualism is so much in advance of all our previous sources of knowledge, then is Africa so much in advance of us as she has a fuller use of this best of all sources. If we must go to our mediums for higher and purer fountains of knowledge, then we must go higher still, and learn of those more experienced practitioners in the same art on the coast of Africa. The art must be in higher perfection, where it has prevailed for thousands of years than here where it is in its infancy. Here it uses its alphabet and spells its words one by one; there it talks right off. So if we must take our revelations from necromancers, we insist.

on employing those who are expert in the art. We insist on going to the highest sources, namely, the heathen negroes of Africa. If we must throw away our Bibles, and in the stead of them adopt responses from the dead, then we must confess that heathenism is better than Christianity, and throw aside all our Christian civilization and prefer the savage state of African negroes to our own civilization. If one half that is pretended by the rappers is true, this is an unavoidable inference from it.

Here, too, we see another feature wherein the use of this art is offensive to God. If Esau was a profane person, in that for one morsel of meat he sold his birthright, how much more are they profane and insulting to God, who prefer the silly impostures of the semi-brutes in Africa to the clear revelations of his written Word. There is the same indignity offered to God in this as that which kindled the jealousy of Jehovah against all idolaters.

It is offensive in another view. God has chosen his own way of communicating his will to us. Having opened before us the

book of nature, with the heavens declaring his glory, and the earth showing his handiwork, giving us free access to all sources of knowledge which nature opened to us with liberty to pursue them up to the utmost, he then from a source above nature let down a special revelation of his will and our duty, and our way of life. This he declared sufficient for any and all good purposes of ours, and left a solemn interdict upon all attempts of men to add to this, in these words: If any man shall add unto these things God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book. He herein claims that he has given a complete and the best revelation, and all that we have need to know for the future. Now, if we pretend to foist in other revelations, real or false, we assume the insufficiency of his, and make those which he has not warranted to supersede his, and so we offer to him the insult which brings down upon us his threatened plagues. But this is only a branch of that offence which is committed when men set aside the true God and worship idols in his place.

Sooner or later we must look in the face

the fact that as fast as our people fall into the snares of the rappers, so fast they traverse the boundaries between Christendom and heathendom, and become actual heathen or idol worshippers. Some months ago it was announced as a startling fact, that idolatry was really and formally inaugurated within the bounds of the United States, in allusion to the Chinese in California, who had set up their heathen worship there. But why should this surprise us? It may not be so easy to realize it in connection with those who have always passed for Christian people. But those Chinese in California are no more idolaters, no more worshippers of heathen gods than are our neighbors who are practising or using necromancy. Nor must we forget that the God of heaven has abated none of his jealousy of idols, — none of his detestation of idolaters. And this is reason enough why any one that fears God should fear to have any communion with these unfruitful works of darkness.

III.

ITS OPPOSITION TO THE WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD.

OUR next and fourth reason against all participation in the idolatrous rites of the necromancers, lies in their hostility to the allegiance and worship of the true God. As soon as one becomes a real believer in this thing, he has at least practically renounced the God of heaven. The laws of the human mind in this, are true to themselves. One cannot, if he will, render homage to his gods many, and at the same time render it to the only living and true God. He cannot be a worshipper of dead men, and at the same time a worshipper of the living God. For what communion hath light with darkness, and what

agreement hath the temple of God with idols ?

It is a remarkable fact, that unbelievers in Christianity are the most predisposed to this contagion. And it is equally remarkable, that professing Christians, when they adopt this delusion, are sure very soon, to throw their pretences to Christianity away. This is just what was to have been expected, if the thing be idolatrous, and abhorrent to the worship of the true God. And these facts being so invariable, show, that whatever else the system may be, it is not Christianity, but utterly at war with it. Be it true or false, good or bad, it is an enemy of the cross of Christ.

That there is this antagonism with the gospel, we see in the manifest attractions which the system has for infidel minds. Those who have lived all their days in rejection of the principles and spirit of the gospel, resisting floods of evidence of its Divine authority, have without any evidence addressed to reason, snatched the bait and been drawn into the snare. Many of them had been perfect Sadducees, believing in neither angel

nor spirit, nor in any life to come. But as soon as they caught an idea of a world of spirits, on which a battery could be reared to play against Christianity, they at once embarked upon it, and peopled its seven spheres with spirits of every kind and color. They who before had no God to pray to, have now deities as plenty as pigeons ; like the Romans they have their *dii minorum gentium*, and *dii majorum gentium*. Nor are they outstripped by the Greeks, who are said to have had more gods than men in Athens. They have no difficulty in believing in invisible spirits, provided they be such spirits as will aid them to set aside the spirit of Christianity, with its eternal retributions. Yes, the readiness with which infidels yield their previous principles, so far as is needful, to become rappers, and the credulity with which, with or without such yielding, they can swallow all the absurdities of necromancy, set reason at defiance, assume before the world positions so grossly ridiculous, is proof of an intense attraction between it and infidelity.

Take a recent instance from among strong men, Dr. Hare, a distinguished lecturer on

chemistry for medical students in Philadelphia. He has by his own confession spent a long life in an utter rejection of Christianity, though standing high in the walks of science. He had held his place long enough to have lectured in their succession to ten thousand students, and now in ripe old age, and on the borders of eternity, he has become a necromancer; as if that furnished him with stronger reasons than he had before, for his rejection of the gospel! And what were these reasons? Why, forsooth, the testimony of the spirits! What a spectacle have we here! A strong man, devoting all his days to science and to infidelity, and now obliged to be searching among the spirits of the dead, for arguments to prop up his infidel conclusions. He is now an unbeliever in Christ on his faith in responses of the ghosts!

“Oh star-eyed Science! hast thou wandered there,
To bring us back the message of despair?”

And yet the poor man is not suffered to enjoy the consolation of his familiar spirits, without counter responses from spirits of another school. On the 5th of September

last, when at Saratoga, he gave a lecture in the saloon of Congress Hall, in which he declared that the spirits had informed him, that the Christian Scriptures were not true. It so happened, that General Webb of New York was present, and interrupted him with the information, that Judge Edmonds, an equally distinguished necromancer, had informed him, that the spirits testified fully in favor of the truth of the Scriptures. What the Doctor replied then, we are not informed. But in the newspaper, called the New England Spiritualist, under date of September 27, is a reply from his pen, which neither denies nor at all explains away the fact of such a contradiction. After several flings at General Webb, and at Christianity, he challenges Webb to a public debate, and then he attempts an escape by saying that Bishop Hughes and Dr. Breckenridge, two believers in Christianity, gave conflicting testimony about the Christian rule of faith, — thus confounding two things that are quite separate, — that of differences of men in interpreting the oracles of God, and oracles themselves giving their responses in flat contradiction.

Nor does he seem to be aware, that a kingdom of spirits so divided against itself, cannot stand, — that oracles that contradict themselves are rubbish. That a mind so superior on other subjects, should expose such weakness here, shows the infatuating power of this delusion, and the intense infidelity of its spirit, — the special power which the system has over minds so inveterately inured to infidelity. He virtually confesses the self-contradiction of his oracles, and yet parades those oracles, as his backer in contradicting the oracles of God! Here we see how necromancy, once embraced, becomes the occasion of intensifying the infidel's hostility to Christ.

But the other fact named is no less determinative of the inherent hostility, between necromancy and Christianity, — that is, as soon as professing Christians embrace necromancy, their Christianity dies out. Not unfrequently, when they first begin to frequent the idol temple, they stoutly assert their Christian intentions, and even tell how their Christianity has been advanced, by their new light; and they remind us of how many infidels have been brought to believe in spirits,

who never believed in them before ; but they do not tell us how they have been made two-fold more the children of the devil than before. Such frivolous pleas, however, soon cease ; and with them all pretence to Christianity. So plain a contradiction is there between the two systems, that any professing Christian, that has fully embraced necromancy, is lost to Christianity. And no church can be true to her cause, without excluding such members, that are not of them. For what can amount to apostasy, if idolatry and a denial of the revelation on which Christianity rests, does not ?

This fact is admonitory to those that are tempted to put their minds under the influence of these diviners. Here they may know, that the step that they are invited to take, is an abandonment of Christianity, and an embrace of heathenism. It may address itself to one as not at all a religious question, — pretending to be one of curiosity or of philosophy. For in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird. The devil never shows his face, when he appears for temptation. He never says, “I am the devil, come and embrace

me." But when you shall have been once drawn in, and made a believer in necromancy, then will you find your whole mind roused, as if by some mysterious power in hostility to Christ and his cause. There will come an appeal to all that is rebellious against God within you; and then will come an open commitment of yourself to a course of open hostility to him. Let, then, any allurements which these deceivers present be met, in the full conviction that you are asked not to philosophize, but to abandon Christianity, — to deny the Redeemer, and to go into eternity upon that denial. And on that spot, before your fancy kindles, and your feelings become enlisted with a strength to betray you, — on that spot settle the question, whether Christianity be a reality or not. That being determined right, all you have to do with necromancy, or any other satanic theories, is to turn from them and pass away. No more than this is needed, to settle every Christian mind, that necromancy and Christianity are as opposite as light and darkness.

But those professing Christians, who have some hankering after the thing, and some

beginnings of curiosity about it, should remember, that all such delusions are instruments of Providence, for the trial of his people. God says, that he suffers these things to prove his people, whether they love him or not. And that "there must also be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest." Those in the church, whose minds have strong attractions for such a thing as this, are no Christians. And as the magnet will pick out iron filings from other substances, so will the allurements with which necromancy is surrounded, pick out some of the false professors from the church. And now perhaps this delusion, which has begun to draw with some power upon your mind, is the test which God is sending, to make known to yourself and the world, that you are no Christian.

Our next reason for avoiding this mischief is, that the providence of God is against it. The Hebrew law, which punished it with death, has expired by its own limitations. So it is not the will of God, that it should be so punished now. Yet the crime in itself is just as offensive to God, and injurious to

man, as it was then. It has not the same relations to us, as it had to the Hebrew state surrounded by a world of idolaters. It is not now as it then was, a species of treason against the State, or its supreme ruler, and therefore the death penalty is not applicable. Yet the sin contains the same elements of rebellion against God, and the same antagonism to his revealed truth, the same hostility to the eternal well-being of man, and the same degrading, disorganizing, and polluting influences upon society. So God sets his face against it, as his enemy and man's enemy. But what was formerly done by civil laws is done in other forms by the laws of Providence. The evil is suffered to go to such and such lengths, to show its true features, and give a new and impressive chapter of human nature. Then will come the recompense. Of this recompense some foretastes are already experienced. Indeed it carries with it a fearful recompense on every individual that embraces it. Every instance of mental derangement, or infatuation, or moral pollution, that has come in by the means, shows at once its proper fruits, and

the providence of God working a recompense in it, and by it. It is plainly God's will, that that form of abuse of our minds, and despite of his authority, shall be followed by such a debasement or wreck of mind, as we see coming of it. So that all the hundreds of instances of lunacy, which have come from the practice of this crime, are so many voices of God in condemnation of it, and pledging his justice, that those who practise it, or trust in it, shall not be held guiltless.

But there is another way in which Providence brings a recompense upon the rappers. Professing themselves wise they become fools. They boast of having broken the seal placed on treasures of knowledge, hitherto hid from us; and to have let in beams of light upon the world to come. But here God has met them upon their own ground, and snared them in the work of their own hands. They sinned in wanting such wisdom as they could get from the spirit world by their own inventions; and he has let them have it, to their heart's content; and till it has wrought upon them the results which such conceits are adapted to work. He has given them their

fill of such knowledge, and it has intoxicated them like new wine. Noah's exposure in his intoxication, was but a trifle compared with theirs. What seems to them the inspiration of wisdom, revelations of wondrous import, provokes, when uttered, the laughter of sober men; and they are perpetrating a series of follies, of which in their senses they would have been ashamed. If we could divest ourselves of the sadness and compassion which their case inspires, and look simply at the comic features of the whole development, we should find more that is truly laughable in the antics of these people, than in all the comic theatres in Christendom. Thus does God in his providence pour contempt on the devices of his enemies, and expose them to shame. And when the thing is fully developed it will be a hissing and byword throughout the world. Where the profession of a low conjurer now stands in the estimation of intelligent men, that of the necromancer is destined to stand.

There is one tendency of this thing, which should, of itself, set every pure mind against it. Idolatry in all its forms and modifica-

tions has been everywhere the patron of licentiousness. The imaginations of the heathen have fabricated to themselves such gods as their lusts demanded. If one would know how readily idolatry seeks the depths of uncleanness, let him read Paul's first chapter to the Romans, which is a graphic description of idolatry in its origin and results, which represents idolaters as "given up to vile affections." Then let him compare this with heathenism in all ages, and he will find, that if there is one fruit of idolatry more prominent and universal than all the rest, it is *unclean-ness*. Nor is the experience of our spiritualist idolaters an exception to this rule. This has already become a prominent result of the thing. It has already become a second Mormonism, emulating the revelations of Joe Smith in all that is filthy and vile. It cannot escape the charge of having put in motion a current, or rather a tide of desire, towards all uncleanness. In instances without number, the spirits' responses have chimed with the lusts of the flesh, and required a practice upon the system of spiritual marriage, so called, and so have caused the sundering of domestic

ties, the forming of illicit connections, and the practice of the free love principles. A large society of free lovers, men and women, has been organized in New York, holding large meetings, denouncing marriage, pleading for and practising unrestricted concubinage — the whole of which took its spring from necromancy, and all of whom were zealously attached to the system. Indeed, this system of imposture furnishes rare advantages for pushing imposture out into its other branches. A person standing in the relation in which the mediums stand to many dupes, male and female,—fully believing that all his or her utterances came from the spirit world, has vast power over minds in matters not altogether spiritual. For the declaration that the spirits require such and such things to be done, sunders with them the bonds of all laws, human and divine. We may not illustrate the case by the use of such actual examples as have occurred. For they cannot be recited. We will give an example that did not assume a criminal aspect, to show how worse things may easily be done under such auspices. A believer in necromancy

had been deeply afflicted in the loss of his wife; afterwards desiring to avail himself of the privileges of his faith, he sought to hold conversations with her. So he resorted to a damsel that had a spirit of divination, and through her he received a very full opening of her mind. Among other things, the deceased wife was reported to say that she was happy and she wished him to be so; and therefore she did not wish him to remain solitary, mourning her loss. He received the oracle in full faith and obedience, and in a very few days from the funeral of his wife the medium was installed in her place.

Indeed, the single fact of the licentiousness which the thing has produced, is enough to condemn it. "By their fruits ye shall know them;" a good tree does not bring forth evil fruit. As all the ancient systems of idolatry were systems of uncleanness, so is this; as all the priestesses of heathen oracles, and all the deities from which they received responses, were patrons of uncleanness, so will all these become when the thing shall have gone to seed.

IV.

ITS TENDENCY TO MENTAL DERANGEMENT, ETC.

UNDER other heads we have spoken of the tendency to mental derangement which belongs to this work of darkness. But this requires a distinct enumeration among the reasons why it should be avoided. We have shown, that faith in this delusion is itself derangement begun, and that progress follows such beginnings, appears in the multiplied instances in which a complete wreck of mind has followed. The present form of the thing has been in vogue but a few years, and yet it has sent hundreds on hundreds to insane hospitals, and can the cause of so much wreck and ruin be worthy of patronage? Has it

come from God? Shall we wantonly expose ourselves to such an unspeakable calamity as the loss of reason? We have seen that belief in this thing is derangement begun;—that the thing is a direct process of promoting derangement, and the result by experience is proved in many instances to be sure. And is not this enough? What have we to do any more with idols? We cannot give countenance to this thing, without contributing to swell a public calamity. If some contagious disease were abroad, and we in a delirium had conceived the notion that it was a glorious thing—one of the grandest improvements of the age, and so should form a league with others to spread it, we should be doing a work of like nature, with that of those who are compassing sea and land, to spread this disease of mind—but a work of less malignity, by as much as the present life is of less importance than the life to come. In short, omitting other ingredients that mingle in necromancy, we see in it a conspiracy of men, deluded indeed, but so much the more determined in their purpose, a conspiracy to accomplish what, if accomplished,

would convert the whole world to a mad-house.

Now sum up the account which we have taken of the reasons why this species of imposture should be avoided. Take into view its seductive power—the express terms in which God has forbidden it—its having the plain characteristics of idolatry, a sin so abhorred of God—its hostility to Christianity, and the worship of the true God—the clear working of God's providence against it—the impulse which it is giving to licentiousness, and its tremendous power in multiplying wrecks of the human mind, and one would think these were reasons enough to inspire a dread of all approaches to it.

As to the alleged agency of Satan in this thing, we are not forward to affirm or deny. Satan appropriates the fruits, and whether he reaps where he has not sown, and gathers where he has not strowed, ye will judge. If he does, it must come of the over zeal of his servants. Many persons rejecting the Bible, reject its doctrine of fallen spirits. But if the necromancers were infidels before, and being such denied the existence of devils, they have

need so far to retrace their steps — they must believe in devils if not in God, in order to carry on this part of the devil's work. Their system peoples the infernal regions, or the air — for we cannot say which — whether their gods are “spirits of the power of the air,” the spirits that work in the children of disobedience, or infernal spirits, we have not known — their system peoples these unknown regions, whither their fancy goes for revelations, with gods many and lords many. But that Satan really helps them by physical power, exerted on material things, which is the doctrine of witchcraft, we have not affirmed. That there were real demoniacal possessions in the days of Christ, we have the fullest evidence; and yet we have not the least idea that one of these rapping or writing mediums has attained the distinction of being possessed of the devil. That was wont to come upon man as a calamity; this is sought as a trade or profession. The difference between the two is that between Mary Magdalen, and Simon Magus. Thus, while we say that real possessions of the devil are in the nature of things possible, hav-

V.

IT IS PROFITLESS, AS IT IS MISCHIEVOUS.



BUT whether the work be of Satan, or of some better agent, it is plainly productive of no good, and no loss will come to any from letting it wholly alone. The Gospel has shown itself to be of God by its opening on the world the flow of God's beneficence, commissioning and blessing a thousand agencies of good to man, and securing to Christian lands all the advantages which distinguish them from heathen lands which are full of the habitations of cruelty. Now necromancy pretends to be another way of making known the will of God, and giving knowledge beyond the present grasp of our science. But after the present amount of experience had,

the question whether it is so becomes a simple question of fact. And the fact is one to be judged by the eye of sense and reason. For if we understand it, there is no pretence that this revelation from the spirits extends its benefits beyond this world. It is not a new way of salvation revealed. As to that it only pretends to save us trouble in this life by informing us that no way of salvation is necessary. And all the good it offers is for this world. So if it is not good for this world it is good for nothing. And what good has it done for this world? In its present form it has been in existence some tens of years. In some forms it has existed as long as heathenism itself. Every heathen nation has tested its advantages, and it has made them neither rich nor wise. And if it is making our Christian nations either richer or wiser, it is time to know it. If it opens to us such fountains of knowledge gathered from the height and breadth of the seven spheres, and makes over to us all the treasures of the experience of all the minds in the spirit world, what a quickening and expansion must it have given to every department of knowledge.



But where is the evidence of any such quickening from such a cause? What branch of science has received contributions from the correspondence of dead philosophers? It is a noteworthy fact that when the philosophers write to us through the mediums, they seem never to write as philosophers, nor to speak at all of the subjects on which they were wont while here to give instruction to the world. What seems out of character with them, they forbear to bring any of their new light to aid in the solution of those difficulties of science touching which they knew that we needed new light.

These commentators each dark passage shun,
And hold a farthing candle to the sun.

If they indeed had come to give us useful information, and to put forward the sciences, we should think the science of astronomy would have been especially promoted by them. For to them it must be as plain as our geography, with all its contents subject to the inspection of the countless travellers of the skies. If these be indeed the spirits of the dead that rap and write and peep and mutter,

they may be supposed to have been out upon tours of observation among the stars, to be able to give us information that would make all our rude instruments and mathematics superfluous, and enable us to draw a map of the starry heavens as exact as we can of the streets and lanes of our cities. Do they pretend to speak what they do know, and testify what they have seen, and yet have not given us a word of information that can tell upon the science of the starry worlds? If the pretences are true, they ought to be able to give us the material and structure of Saturn's ring, the origin of the zodiacal light, the mechanism and propelling force of the locomotive that draws the comet's train, and the material of the gems set in the mosaic pavement of the milky way. Indeed, if they cannot describe to us the starry world which is now their home — if they cannot teach us astronomy, what can they teach?

What we want for advancement in astronomy is information not about the different spheres in which spirits dwell. That, if it has a particle of truth, belongs to theology. It is not astronomy. For astronomy, we

want information that shall tally with the deductions of science, correct its errors, and put forward its advances. And to this end necromancy has not yet contributed an iota. Astronomy meanwhile is making rapid advances in its own ways, and by its own instruments, and not at all by familiar spirits or wizards.

And the like may be said of every other science. It is impossible to name one in the whole round of sciences, either of matter or of mind, that has profited by any of these revelations. And the same may be said of the useful arts, for the promotion of which the present age is so distinguished. Which of all these arts shows a single invention for which the first hint came from the spirits of the dead? If these spirits are so kind as to listen to the call of every vagabond medium, and so communicative as to answer all questions proposed, it is very strange that in no case have inventors in the arts profited by them. Yet their confiding devotees are challenged to visit the Patent Office at Washington, and lay their finger on a single one of the thousand models of inventions there, for

which the author was indebted to the spirits of the dead. Now this is very strange, if necromancy be so wonderful and fine. It is enough to put an extinguisher on all its pretences, to say that it has not added one grain to the amount of useful knowledge. It has given pretended answers to questions of curiosity and of quackery. But if all the literature fabricated on its tripod, — all the letters from dead friends, ancestors, and philosophers should be first proved to be authentic, and really from them, and then burnt in one bonfire, that fire would give more light to the world than it would extinguish.

But can that be of God and worth a rational man's attention, — can that justify such risks of destroying the faculties that God has given us which so clearly produces no good, and embraces such a host of evils? Does it become us to forsake the fountain of living waters for such a broken cistern? While the Sun of Righteousness is high in the heavens, and his light is beaming forth in its fulness, shall we cover ourselves with thick darkness, and go and rob the heathen of their Jack o' lanterns?

VI.

THE RETRIBUTIVE HAND OF GOD IN THESE DELUSIONS.

BUT there is a still more serious view of this subject to be taken, that is that of the retributive hand of God. It is a clear principle of God's word that in visiting men for their sins, so far as he does it in this life, it is common for him to pay them in their own coin ; that is, suit the punishment to the nature of the offence. Where men have sinned by chosen delusions, it is not strange if he send them strong delusions to believe a lie. When the Hebrews in the desert rebelled and clamored for flesh to eat, they were punished with an abundance of flesh, and their excesses upon it. So God says of him who

loved cursing,—“ So let it come unto him ; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing as with a garment ; so let it come into his bowels like water and like oil into his bones.” So the apostle says, “*For this cause* God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie ;” that is, because they believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Here we are informed that God does send delusions, and that he sends them upon those who have chosen delusions, and because they would not believe his truth. So God said to Isaiah, — “ Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not ; see ye indeed, but perceive not, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed.” This was a prophecy of that astonishing blindness which prevented the Jews from knowing the Lord of life, when he came to them. They were so blinded, that they could not see the Sun of Righteousness, when his full-orbed splendors were upon them ; and that because they had

wilfully extinguished the lights sent by prophets to light the way of his coming. Here a blinded mind and hardened heart come as a recompense, for a blinded mind and hardened heart.

In Paul's letter to the Romans describing the way in which men become heathen, this principle is set out in clearer application to this class of "filthy dreamers," who are laboring to carry us back to the idolatries of the heathen. What Paul says of the heathen, after whom they copy, of course is descriptive of them. "Because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened; professing themselves wise they became fools." "Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness." Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. And all this is sent upon them, because they changed the truth of God into a lie. It is here expressly asserted, that these delusions were sent upon them, and they were suffered

to make heathen of themselves, because they changed the truth of God to a lie. So now God allows men born under a clearer light, to enter on the process of heathenizing themselves, because they have cast away his revealed truth. So clear does his word make it, that he is wont to punish men for rejecting his truth or the doctrines of his grace by sending strong delusions. Here it stands forth as a leading principle of his administration, that men may know what to expect, when, having pleasure in unrighteousness, they reject those Gospel truths, that lay a heavy hand upon their unrighteousness. If this be a principle of his administration, in what instances has it been more clearly brought into action, than in the strong delusions sent upon the necromancers? Not that all the rejecters of Gospel truth have become necromancers, nor that all the necromancers were previously known to be rejecters of that truth. But we see, that almost all that are smitten with this delusion were previously of this class under some of the names of Deism, Atheism, Rationalism, Pantheism, Universalism, or Unitarianism. And

if we could know the previous state of the minds of the very few, who have gone into this delusion from a profession of evangelical truth, we should probably find, that they were not exceptions. We should be sure to find, that they had never received the truth in the love of it. So it is true, that this curse confines its flow to channels opened by hostility to evangelical truth. And though its victims are but a small portion of the multitude offending in the same way, yet the fact that they come wholly of this class, shows one of two things, — either that this hostility to evangelical truth forms a predisposition of mind, yea, a special susceptibility to this delusion, and so works as a cause to the effect, or else there is a special hand of Providence visiting offenders, in this sin. For mere chance works not so like an invariable law. It matters not whether you call it a special providence, or the effect from a cause which God has seated in the mind. In either case it is the hand of God sending strong delusions on those who have resisted the light and rejected God's revealed truth. He suffers them to dethrone their reason, and

to put out the light of truth, and grope in blindness. On the same principle the men of Sodom were smitten with blindness, as a punishment for their rash and blind attempts upon the messengers from heaven.

In this delusion there is a fitness to serve as a recompense for a wilful rejection of the doctrines of grace. It is the pride of reason, that rejects the doctrines of the cross. These things are hid from those, whose pride flatters them, that they are wise and prudent. They have too high an estimate put upon themselves, too lofty a conception of their own wisdom, to receive a system as from God, which brings down their high looks, and casts down every imagination that exalts itself, and provides that no flesh shall glory in his presence. Such a gospel is hid to those who are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the mind; it is foolishness to them. Christ crucified is a stumbling-block and foolishness. All of men's hostility to salvation by grace is animated by their pride of reason, their conceit of a wisdom too elevated, to bow to the supreme authority of God's revelation. They, forsooth, know too

much, to allow God to teach them, or to allow that teaching that thwarts their conceits, can be from God. For a fit punishment for this insolence of man's reason, God has only to throw the reins upon that reason's neck, and let it run whither it will. Soon you will see the mind that was too wise to learn of God, becoming the laughing-stock of fools,—taking revelations of the world to come from them that rap and peep and mutter. For Nebuchadnezzar's sin they have had Nebuchadnezzar's fall. He, while strutting and vaunting and adoring his own shadow, and saying, Is not this great Babylon which I have built, was precipitated from his lofty heights, to the level of the brutes, eating grass. And now is *this* Nebuchadnezzar the Great? Is this he that looked so glorious on the throne, and was so formidable in the field, and so matchless in council? What! this beast eating grass like an ox? Is this the name that made the earth to tremble, and that shook kingdoms? And is this transformation to a brute the fit punishment for a man's reason and pride swelling above his Maker? A like fall from fancied heights

have they, who rejecting the wisdom of God in the Gospel, are let down to depths of folly more than brutish, — who for wilfully cherishing one delusion, are suffered to go mad upon delusions, and enter upon a stage for lunatic performances. And while we weep and laugh at the spectacle, we are forced to ask, Who are these comic players, and whence their endowments for this stage? We little think, that these are they, that lately were too wise to be able to learn any thing of God, and that the change which they have undergone comes of God's removing his restraints, and letting their wisdom reveal itself. Says God, in a like case, — "Behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work and a wonder. For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish." "Stay yourselves and wonder, cry ye out and cry, — They are drunken, but not with wine, they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon them a spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed their eyes." Who can fail to see in the maddening of the necromancers, the hand of him who claims it as his wont, "*to make diviners mad?*" Who can fail to see in this multitude of persons,

who have lost their reason in an expedition set on foot by the pride of reason rejecting evangelical truth,—who can fail to see a clear retribution for that rejection?

This class of facts might sustain a powerful appeal to the reason of those rejecting these truths, but who have not yet lost their reason by their rejection of them. They of course cannot see any retribution for sin in them; for they see no sin in that rejection. But they cannot escape the conclusion, that there is something in this rejection of God's truth, which predisposes the mind to take up such delusions. The facts constantly occurring in that line, sustain the conviction, that there is the operation of some fixed cause in the mind itself leading to such results. And if there be such affinity between unbelief and necromancy, that this delusion finds its victims so invariably among unbelievers, what shall we say? Is this unbelief a sound state of mind? Is it agreeable to right reason, and promotive of the health of the soul? Is not that which so predisposes the mind to madness, itself the beginning of madness? And if this delusion selects its victims from

among unbelievers in the peculiar principles of Christianity, then is a belief of those principles a bar to this delusion, and a guard to the soundness of the mind. And one hostile to this belief is in a false position. That which is so healthy to the mind must have come from God who made the mind, and the soul's present health stands in the same means as its future salvation.

This view of facts shows the way to set bounds to this delusion. Let the minds of our friends be brought to receive the truth of the Gospel in the love of it, that they may be saved from this, as well as from other forms of the ruin of the soul. From this sin every one that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. In such a matter so vital to salvation, it is not possible to deceive the very elect. If here and there one has gone out from us, into this apostasy, it is because they were not of us. It is true of the grosser delusions in general, but especially true of this, that they find few recruits from congregations that sustain the clear and discriminating preaching of the doctrines of the cross.

Paul sets forth completeness in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, as that which binds the mind down to its proper foundations, so that "we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and the cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive." And all experience concurs with this. For some tens of years the rapping mania has been multiplying its victims, and showing for what mental atmosphere it is best adapted. But it has in a wonderful degree gone clear of those churches, where the peculiar doctrines of Christianity are brought clearly out. Men may choose what words they will, to vent their hostility to the doctrines of the cross, they cannot deny that these doctrines exert over human society a rare conservative power. And now, while the public mind is moved hither and thither by so many disturbing forces, they hold the power of a balance wheel in the rapidly going machinery of our Christian civilization. There is no check on disorders and hurtful developments, having equal force to this.

The parent who in these days of excitement and of danger, is bringing upon the stage a group of children in whose safety his own life is bound up, sees among all the probable sources of danger none more to be dreaded than that band of furies taking the form of flesh-pleasing delusions, and addressing the young and simple with more than the enticements of the strange woman. And wherewithal shall the young man cleanse his way, in the midst of besetments so foul? "By taking heed thereto according to God's word," — by being rooted and grounded in the truth. Parents have no assurance that their children will not have their minds wrecked by necromancy, their morals corrupted by Mormonism or some other ism equally foul, or their souls destroyed by Universalism, and the like, — they have no security, but in bringing them to receive the truth in the love of it, that they may be saved. Let that truth of salvation by Christ, which is the incorruptible seed that lives and abides for ever, strike its roots in their souls, and they are safe, and only then. So let all who deplore the mischiefs that are in progress under this foul spirit of delusion

know, that the remedy is found only in the
gospel of Christ.

“ This remedy did wisdom find,
To heal diseases of the mind,
This sovereign balm, whose virtues can
Restore the ruined creature man.” 218

END.

