

# **Spiritualism, an address, to the Bristol County Medical Society / by Dan King.**

## **Contributors**

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183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

KING (DAN.)

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SPIRITUALISM

UNMASKED,

BY

DAN KING, M. D.

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Box 57

THE SPIRITUAL

AND

PHYSICAL

THE SPIRITUAL

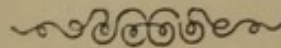
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BY

DAN KING, M.D.

SPIRITUALISM,  
AN  
ADDRESS,  
TO THE  
BRISTOL COUNTY  
MEDICAL SOCIETY,

BY  
DAN KING, M. D.



TAUNTON,  
PRINTED BY C. A. HACK, 5 MAIN STREET,  
1857.

## ADDRESS

GRATEFUL.—One of the most exciting topics of the present time is what is now called spiritualism. Although not strictly a subject of medical inquiry, yet as it concerns our intellectual as well as moral being, we may properly consider it to be within our province, and its extraordinary pretensions seem to demand a serious consideration. "Man know thyself," is one of the highest injunctions of both medical and moral philosophy, and he is most skillful in either department who best obeys this command.

The nineteenth century boasts of intelligence and knowledge surpassing all former times and this in some respects may be true; when we consider the numerous important scientific discoveries and wonderful progress made by machinery, which have been made in the present age; whether we contemplate the steam locomotion as he courses over his iron path, breathing fire and making a track of distance, or the floating palace with all her dazzling appendages, traversing the ocean and defying the elements, or that stupendous chain which is to bind continents together, and become a highway for the lightning; we are lost in admiration of the wonderful achievements of human ingenuity and readily assent to the present age for most extravagant demands. But if we retire from these contemplations, and endeavor to take a view of

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GENTLEMEN,—One of the most exciting topics of the present time, is what is now called Spiritualism. Although not strictly a subject of medical inquiry, yet as it concerns our intellectual as well as moral being, we may properly consider it to be within our province; and and its extraordinary pretensions seem to demand a serious consideration. “Man know thyself,” is one of the highest injunctions of both medical and moral philosophy, and he is most skilful in either department who best obeys this command.

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the human mind itself, we shall soon find reason to humble our pride, and check our boastings. Man's innate, intellectual capacities, have not increased to that degree that his works would seem to imply, and at last we are led to the conclusion, that all the boasted improvements of the present time, are little more than the aggregate, and necessary results of former discoveries. The mind still gropes in metaphysical darkness, and becomes an easy prey to delusions. Man himself is an enigma which he can never fully understand. Ushered into life, he looks around him and beholds much to admire, yet little that he can comprehend. Himself a mere atom in the universe—confined to a single point—shut in on all sides—every where surrounded by high impervious walls—endowed with a brief existence, and limited intellectual capacities, and yet possessing an insatiable thirst for knowledge; the mind like a caged bird, is ever striving to break through the barriers that are placed around it, and to expand its wings in boundless intelligence. A strong desire to peep through the meshes of that veil, which hides everything future from mortal ken, has always everywhere existed, and led to numerous devices for the attainment of that great object. Not satisfied with the light of Revelation, nature has been put upon the rack to make her disclose her arcana. Dreams and visions, the flight of birds and the motions of animals, and the ever varying phenomena, of the natural world, have all been regarded as exponents of future events. From evening till morning, night after night, and year after year, the devoted Egyptians gazed upon the Heavens, and watched the stars. Upon that cerulean scroll astrology thought to find inscrib-

ed the destiny of every human being. Greece, Rome and Egypt had their oracles. Throughout those refined and populous kingdoms,—the homes of the arts and the cradles of science,—where Homer wrote his Iliad,—where Cæsar commanded his legions and Cicero moved his senates; spacious temples dedicated to imaginary deities reared their lofty domes, and displayed their gilded minarets. In each of these temples, some deity was supposed to reside. Here the people paid their morning and evening sacrifices, and here, they resorted, to gain a knowledge of future events. For centuries no important undertaking was made, without first enquiring of some oracle. Princes went to war, or made peace, invaded anothers territory or abandoned their own, as the oracle dictated. The pagan priests had entire control of the oracles, and all who dared to disbelieve them were charged with infidelity, although it was allowed that a portion of these oracular deities, were evil spirits, and often gave false responses. The masses believed, worshipped, and adored alike, the good, and the bad. Century after century these temples controlled the destinies of Asia. A single response was enough to make a nation quake with fear, or become frantic with joy. The wretched minions of pagan priesthood who were enshrined in these temples and gave out the answers, were some of the vilest of beings, whose only knowledge consisted in framing equivocal and ambiguous answers to all interrogations. But this mighty delusion at length came to an end—its priests passed away, their shrines were abandoned, and their temples fell; and all the world decided that there never was any truth in them. Is the testimony adduced to prove Spiritualism now

stronger or better, than that which supported it in ancient times? The human mind is the same in all ages, and to a certain extent, under all circumstances. Intellectual and moral culture may do much towards dispelling the delusions of superstition, but they have never yet been able to eradicate that insatiable love of the marvellous with which all men seem to be endowed. Many of the means made use of two thousand years ago in aid of Spiritualism are resorted to now to give weight and verity to its exhibitions. As if Spirits were afraid of light, the darkness of night has ever been chosen for their manifestations. Solitary places have been preferred, and the Genii of forests and grave yards have been invoked. More than two thousand years ago those who practised the art of divination pretended to receive spiritual communications whilst they slept, and the clairvoyant of the present time makes the same pretensions. The ancient diviners gave responses by various ambiguous signs and noises, they also pretended to have intercourse with departed Spirits, and the united acclamations of confiding thousands attested to the truth of their declarations. What more can modern Spiritualism claim?

The silly pretexes by which she endeavors to sustain herself sink into insignificance when compared with the imposing array of testimony in support of Grecian and Roman oracles. Whoever will take the trouble to inquire may easily satisfy himself that there is nothing new in modern Spiritualism. It is only the same old hobby that has been ridden to market hundreds of times before; the ears may have been cropped and the caparison changed, but after all it is

the very same old jade, on the same errands. And if time cannot convert a falsehood into truth, that which was a fraud and delusion two thousand years ago remains a falsehood still. Unerring truth is the attribute of Deity. Through the entire universe perfect order and regularity everywhere prevails, and nothing ever occurs, or can occur, to disturb that harmony. Therefore every pretended Spiritual manifestation which impugns that harmony must be false, and we are well assured that in all the farrago of Spiritual manifestation nothing has ever taken place, or can take place, which scientific investigations cannot account for.

Men talk about Spirits as though they were ordinary things, well known and understood. But what are Spirits? Who has seen a Spirit or can describe such an incorporeal existence? We cannot even in imagination have any conception of an immaterial being, because, we have no faculties by which we can recognize such existences. All experience proves that our knowledge of the external world is acquired wholly through the medium of bodily organs. Each organ has its distinct and separate task, and can never perform any vicarious duty. The optic nerve is the sole organ of vision, and when wholly destroyed, total blindness ensues. The sense of hearing comes through the auditory nerves; when these are destroyed or wanting we have no means of acquiring a knowledge of sounds, and perfect deafness is the consequence: so of every other organ by which we become acquainted with external objects. Therefore when we are told, upon no matter what authority, that any individual can see without eyes, or has the faculty of any other sense

without its appropriate organ, we are bound to consider all such testimony false. But we are told that one invisible Spirit may operate upon the Spirit of another living being, and make use of his bodily organs as means of communication ; and this we are informed is the *modus operandi* of Spiritual manifestations. Precisely in the same way the ancient oracles pretended to operate. The man in the temple was the medium, and the invisible Spirits were supposed to manifest themselves through him. Their Spirits however did not always make use of human beings as media, sometimes birds, sometimes insects, and sometimes a bull calf brought the intelligence ; and sometimes the will of their deities was made known by the casting of lots. A review of history proves conclusively that the Spiritualism of the nineteenth century is essentially the very same thing that existed in the dark ages long before the christian era. Indeed it has always existed in some form, and under some name, and the strong love of the marvellous which is a component part of our intellectual being, seems to have made provision for its everlasting perpetuity. This mental proclivity is often unhappily increased by morbid impressions and erroneous teachings in early life. From our cradles upwards we have been entertained by nurses, Grandmothers and great Grandmothers, with histories of witches, Ghosts and apparitions of a thousand forms. Tradition has brought an army of these beings from the remotest ages, and will carry them down to coming generations, though it is to be hoped with less, and less power. By such means the dark delusions of ages far back on the page of history cast their lurid shadows upon the present generation.

A morbid state of the sensorium if not indispensable is certainly favorable to spectral delusions. This is shown not only in cases of hysteria, but also in other disorders which derange the mental organism; cloud the intellect, and impair the functions of the brain. The votaries of Spiritualism often point you to men once eminent in the professions, venerable clergymen and Hon. Judges, who have become converts to this doctrine. But all such examples instead of giving weight and authority to the delusion, only go to confirm the truth of my proposition, viz: that a morbid condition of the intellect favours its development. Examine these instances and you will find that those giant minds have suffered deterioration, and have become weakened by age and infirmities, the noble ship once proof against all the assaults of the elements lies stranded upon a lee shore, the machine whose giant power once worked wonders, now lies in scattered fragments, the mammoth clock that for ages crowned the summit of some lofty dome, and uninfluenced by the vicissitudes of time or season told every hour correctly, has at length become worn out, its wheels are out of gear, and it tells false time. In like manner time has laid her hand upon the man and he is once more a child. His harp is unstrung and hangs upon the willows.

Nearly all the believers in Spiritualism are persons of a peculiar nervous temperament. They are unstable, restless, fickle minded and extremely sensitive, fond of novelties and always catching at every new phantom that makes its appearance. They have strong imaginations, and weak reasoning powers.

They may succeed well and even become eminent in some one branch of business, but they do not reason soundly upon every subject, and therefore are very liable to be led astray by the force of their own imagination, and fall into gross errors. They are the foam and the spray, that rise upon the surface of the stream to bubble and flash and disappear.

At best there is no perfection in the human mind. Every one has failings and imperfections. The soundest and most reliable often show their weak sides, and the man who is very wise in some things, often shows himself a fool in something else. He may be a very learned divine but a very poor mechanic, he may be a great politician, yet a poor moralist, or he may know how to get and keep money, and yet know very little of anything else. Therefore it is wrong to suppose that because an individual holds a respectable position in some department of business he is equally reliable in everything else.

To sound well informed minds, in their calm reasoning moments, departed spirits never make their appearance, and if all men were of this class we should hear no more of the self exhumed corpses dancing upon their graves in winding sheets. Frightful spectres would cease to visit the bedrooms of innocent females at the solemn hour of midnight, and every pretence to intercourse with the Spirits of the dead would be regarded as it should be, as an impious falsehood. The Roman priests not being always satisfied with the responses of the good deities declared, that if God would not communicate his secrets to men, it was perfectly right to seek information of the devil. Hence many of their oracular deities were of that class. But

in more modern times a different sentiment has prevailed, and an intercourse with evil spirits has been supposed to imply a deep moral depravity, and the laws of most civilized nations have made it a capital offence. Great numbers in Europe and some in this country have been put to death because they were supposed to have intercourse with evil spirits. And although we regret the morbid credulity and infatuation that led to such convictions, we are bound to respect those sacred principles of morality that looked with detestation and abhorrence upon such vile performances. Those who are endeavoring to make capital out of this delusion, and their benighted followers charge all who will not believe them with infidelity. But there is nothing new in this, it has been a standing accusation from the remotest periods, and has been made a thousand times by the vilest of imposters against the wisest and best of men. Long before Christianity was known the pagan priests charged all with infidelity who would not believe in their supernatural endowments, and since the advent of Christianity the same old accusation has been continually reiterated. The investigations of science and philosophy and all experience prove conclusively, that the whole universe and every atom of which it is composed, is governed by immutable laws, as perfect and unerring as Jehovah himself. Upon those fixed laws the earth, and all things animate and inanimate pertaining to it depend for their very existence, and he who denies this, might as well deny his own existence. But whoever declares his belief in this incontrovertible truth, is liable to be charged with infidelity, because men of weak minds, and christians of weak faith

erroneously suppose this to be a denial of the Scripture account of miracles. They are afraid to compare Christianity with the light of philosophy and experience, lest it should not stand the test. This is the way to make infidels, and hypocrites. But true Christianity is not afraid of the light, she seeks investigation and is confirmed by philosophy and experience. Milton, Middleton and many other able writers have come forward and boldly advocated this doctrine, yet we are asked, when did miracles cease? In reply it is sufficient to say, that they ceased when the great occasion for which they were used had passed, and as there is no proof of their existence since, we may safely conclude that they are at an end. This mooted question does not however apply in the present case, as there is no similarity between the exhibitions of modern Spiritualism, and the Scripture miracles. And besides all this, we are wholly relieved from the argument, because the advocates of Spiritualism boldly deny the authority of the Scriptures, and declare, that Zoroaster, the book of Zendavesta, and other fabulous writings are of much higher authority than the Bible. This is infidelity itself standing erect in bold impunity. This Spirit once kept in abeyance by public opinion, has for a long time burrowed in the by-ways and lanes of some of our large cities, and occasionally shown itself in Tammany Hall, and other places of deistical resort. Now this hydra headed viper, warmed into life by the mephitic exhalations that reach us from foreign shores, rises up, and exhibits its fearful dimensions, bidding defiance to all civil, moral and religious restraints. As soon as an individual begins to yield up his reason and assent to the pretensions of Spiritualism, he is on

the lookout to find evidence to support his position, his sensibilities are awakened, and everything that he sees, or hears, is fraught with Spiritual manifestations. Every shadow that flits across his path, he deems a winged messenger from the Spirit land, and every evening breeze comes freighted with prophetic information. He becomes wholly absorbed in this hallucination, it occupies his thoughts by day, and his dreams by night, he is led captive by his own imagination, and becomes <sup>a</sup> monomaniac. He may be sane upon other subjects, but he is insane upon this. There may be some among those who are acting as mediums, who are silly enough to suppose that they are really supernaturally impressed and have become the bearers of messages from departed Spirits. But we can have no such charity for the principal operators in this infernal drama; all is falsehood and deception on their part and blindness and misapprehension on the part of the too credulous believers. As long as this matter was confined to a few hysterical females and clairvoyant quacks, it deserved very little notice; but that time has passed, and the subject has come to assume a graver aspect, and it seems to deserve so much notice as will bring upon it the just execration of an insulted community. Some idea may be formed of the rapid and insidious increase of this delusion, from the fact, that so called Spiritual publications are almost daily springing into existence all around us, and a large number of volumes of considerable size, have already been written by its advocates. About seventy volumes are now advertised by one publishing house in New York city; some of these containing six or seven hundred pages. Men, once occupying high positions

in science and literature, have inhaled this moral malaria, and become insane advocates of the accursed heresy. In some of our large cities it is gaining in strength and magnitude little suspected by the quiet inhabitants of our rural districts. The doctrines put forth in their publications, are of the most astounding character, and bid defiance to reason and experience. In this nest of unclean birds, is a book of nearly three hundred pages written by the hand of a Clergyman by the name of Hammon, and dictated to him as he says by the Spirit of Tom Paine. This Rev. Mr. Hammon informs us, that he has been connected with the ministry for more than twenty years, and that before writing it, he knew nothing of the life, or death of Paine, and had no desire to write such a book. But the work has been done against his own will by the Spirit of Paine which moved and controlled his hand. That there might be no mistake in the case I have taken the liberty to copy a single paragraph from the preface to this book. The writer says, "*indeed I have found by actual experiment that in a great many instances the Spirit who controls my hand has succeeded in writing sentences contrary to my will and while I was endeavoring with all my volition to write something else*". Now this statement is either true or false.—If false it is sacrilegious blasphemy and the author deserves the highest punishment known to our laws. But as it is believed to correspond with the avowed sentiments of the sect to which the author belongs, we may examine it. A Spirit moves the hand of the medium and obliges him to do what he strives with all his volition to avoid.—Then why may not this Spirit move the hand to write falshood instead of truth?

Judging from the character of Paine whilst in this world, we should be inclined to think him more likely to lie than speak the truth. And what if this invisible, irresistible and irresponsible Spirit should move the hand to plunge a dagger into a neighbors bosom!! What, if in the darkness of midnight, such a hand should be moved to apply a burning torch to some defenceless mansion!! Let this doctrine be set up in your Courts of Justice and become an established principle of Jurisprudence and what next? All laws against wrong doers would be virtually abrogated, and civil society merged in one grand Pandemonium.

Can it be supposed that the great Creator of all things,—the supreme ruler of the Universe, whose dominion is infinite,—who has spread out the Heavens as a curtain, and hung the stars upon nothing,—who has filled immensity with those shining orbs of whose magnitude and glory we can have no conception,—that being in whose view the universe is but an atom and every atom a universe,—whose hand gilds the rainbow, and paints the lily,—whose works everywhere display perfect order, regularity, integrity and beauty, he who is Omnipotent, and Omniscient, the same yesterday, to day, and forever, stoops to play the pitiful tricks, of tipping tables, thumping sounds, or scrawling marks for the amusement of the silly or the vicious. The idea is too absurd to be entertained a single moment.

To those who have paid little attention to history, the present appears to be an extraordinary age. They see progress inscribed upon everything. Nothing but the newest of the new gains favour with them. Just because improvements are going on in mechanical op-

erations and occasional scientific discoveries are made, they are induced to suppose that everything is in transit, and that all old things are worthless and should be cast away. Give them the pruning knife and nothing would be left but mushrooms of their own raising. The laws which the Creator gave to matter are quite too old to have authority with them, and he who believes in their integrity and permanency is, in their opinion, and old foggy. Their cry is Progress! Progress! This is one great mistake. Every generation in all past time have supposed that their own period was most extraordinary,—every new discovery became a subject of wonder and astonishment, and every succeeding age looked with derision upon the ignorance of all preceding. The path of time has ever been strown with new things, yet how few of all the supposed discoveries have stood the test of experience.—The disciples of Paracelsus who taught the wonders of Alchyma, and the thousands who engaged in the vain search for the Philosopher's stone, more than ~~two~~<sup>2</sup> thousand years ago, all supposed that they had made discoveries that were to illuminate the world,—which would wholly change the condition of human life, and bury in undistinguished oblivion, all the knowledge of the past. Yet all those golden dreams fled,—their hopes perished, and little remains of all their proud schemes but a history of their extravagance and folly. In the arts and sciences, in intellectual and metaphysical philosophy, theory, after theory, hypothesis, after hypothesis, has been promulgated only to be refuted and abandoned. Throughout all the long line of ages, bubble after bubble has burst, and every succeeding explosion has only made room for something still newer. In

view of all this change, it is gratifying to know that there are fixed principles and unerring truths, that have stood the test of all experience, and are as enduring and unchangable as their creator. The planets quietly maintain their appointed places in the Heavens,—each orb continues to perform its regular round of duty, uninfluenced by the fickleness of man,—civil and moral laws may be broken, but we have abundant assurance that the irrefragible laws of nature must forever remain inviolate.

The unhappy tendency of this miserable infatuation is, <sup>to</sup> subvert social order, and bring into contempt all the teachings of experience, and every principle of philosophy. Under the specious name of progress, it makes a mock of common sense, discards long established truths, and substitutes the wildest vagaries of fancy. Give it scope and it would sweep away every means in our power to distinguish truth from falsehood,—blot out all the lights of science, reason and revelation. In its dark embrace the condition of its deluded votaries would resemble that of a mariner in mid-ocean, without compass or quadrant,—surrounded on all sides by dense fog, without a single star for his guide. To acknowledge the pretensions of Spiritualism would be, to surrender society with all its cherished institutions into the hands of false prophets.

The more we contemplate the inevitable consequences that must follow the spread of this delusion, the greater its enormity appears. Its existance indicates great moral delinquency. On the one hand we are astonished at the blind credulity of those who believe in it, and on the other, at the bold impunity of its lying pretenders. They would have you believe

that they are able to see through the veil that separates this from the invisible world and search out those things which the Most High had designed to hide from mortals. They range freely up and down through the mansions of Spirits, and have familiar intercourse with them,—they look over into the bottomless pit, and take a view of those unfortunate beings who are enduring its tortures,—they ascend into Heaven and hold communion with the saints, and even approach the throne of the Almighty and scan its dimensions!! What is this but blasphemy? and what language is adequate to express its horrible turpitude? View the subject in whatever light you will, to a sensitive mind it is sickning in the extreme. Its obvious absurdities, exposures, and falshoods, tend to impair public confidence in Divine Revelation and spread the chilling gloom of skepticism over whole communities. Wherever it prevails, it corrupts the whole moral atmosphere, defiles the fountains of virtue, and pours pollution into the sacred chalice. He who mingles base metal with pure coin is justly punished and government lays a heavy hand upon the man who adulterates food,—cities institute expensive and powerful quarantine regulations to protect their inhabitants from dangerous epidemics,—and what ought to be done with him who mingles base falshood with sacred truths, and spreads a moral pestilence on every side?

Spiritualism is a *Mare Mortuum*, a moral Asphaltites and whoever launches his bark upon its briny bosom will find the turbid element in constant agitation and himself moved to and fro by countercurrents and adverse winds. With no sun for his guide,—and no port of destination in view,—overcome by the delirious aura

of those poisonous waters, in which no living thing is seen, and through whose darkening atmosphere, nothing but the rapacious vulture or foul cormorant ever spread the wing,—tantalized by fog suns that mock his vision and bewilder his brain,—he will at length be compelled to commit himself to the Bark of Charon or be doomed to spend his probation in wandering upon the shores of that infernal lake, where clouds of vermin swarm amid the stench of putrid carcasses,—slimy serpents coil in every path, and the most tempting fruit is filled with dust and ashes.

Doubtless there are some amongst those who have consented to be enrolled as members of this sect, who are honest well meaning men, who, just because they couldnot readily account for all they saw, or herd, concluded that there must be something in it, and therefore incautiously, allowed themselves to glide into the vortex, without considering its fearful consequences. Some of these men, when they come to awake from their delirious stupor, will be ashamed of their company, and horror stricken at the condition in which they find themselves. They will find themselves united with a motley crew of infidels, hypocrites, and benighted professors of Christianity, in a common crusade against reason and revelation. The ignorant and the vile of all sorts, with a few mistaken fanatics, and here and there a fallen star, constitute the whole of this Spiritual group. It may be compared to a common sewer, into which every individual thing that is thrown must find the same level. But these are trifling considerations compared with the doctrine that it teaches. Every intelligent man must know that all his hopes of immortality are derived from the Bible.

Aside from this, we have no evidence of a future state of existence. Without this, to use the language of Doct. Dwight man is "born none knows why,—and destined to go,—none knows whither". Darkness surrounds him in this life, and the chilling thought of annihilation hovers over his end. Now if Spiritualism is true this Bible is of little authority, because a communication from Voltaire, Tom Paine, or any other infidel, may at any time contradict any part, or the whole of it. And in fact, such communications are already made. One of their most reliable media, a man of whom they delight to boast, has already declared that he has received Spiritual communications informing him that the Bible is nothing but a fabrication, and wholly false. Thus in a single moment, with one fell swoop, the testimony of Robert Hare, consigns the Bible to the flames, and banishes all our hopes of immortality.—And when we consider that many of their most prominent men are avowed infidels, we have good reason to expect more communications of the same character. Therefore if Spiritualism is true, the Bible is a nullity, and all our information concerning futurity must be obtained alone through Spiritual media. If Spiritualism is true let us forget our teachings and all our professional experience, burn our libraries, and commit the care of the sick to itinerant clairvoyants. If Spiritualism is true, the Judge may dismiss the witness at the bar, and rely alone on Spiritual testimony. If Spiritualism is true, give the Bible to the Moles and the Bats, and the sacred desk to Spiritual media. If Spiritualism is true, let every mad fanatic quietly cut his own throat, and fly away to the circle of Tom Paine. But we are not prepared for such des-

perate results,—Spiritualism is not true,—it is the dream of the maniac, and the doctrine of devils. It is a moral pestilence, that threatens to lay waste some of the fairest portions of our social communities, and consign to a hopeless grave all our cherished institutions. It is said that the Dromedary when he encounters a Simoom in crossing Arabian deserts is wont to prostrate himself and hold his breath until the foul air has passed. A moral Simoom more paralizing than Sahara ever witnessed is now passing over us,—The air is already darkened by its mysterious gyrations, and those who are overcome by it will suffer mental depravation, with little hope of recovery. And shall we prostrate ourselves before this poisonous breeze, or like cowards stand still until it has spent its fury upon the innocent and unguarded? I hope we shall do neither,—but as men and philanthropists stand up and resist its encroachments. And although we cannot expect suddenly to quiet the tempest, curb its rage, or restore those who are already buried in its suffocating sands, we may exert ourselves to enlighten the ignorant, to alarm the careless, and guard the unwary from its baneful effects.

