1. Brane

NARRATIVE

CIRCUMSTANCES

THE LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH

MRS. SOUTHCOTT,

AN ACCOUNT

Appearances exhibited on Dissection .

THE ARTIFICES THAT WERE EMPLOYED

TO DECEIVE HER MEDICAL ATTENDANTS.

SECOND EDITION.

RICHARD REECE, M.D.

Lenden:

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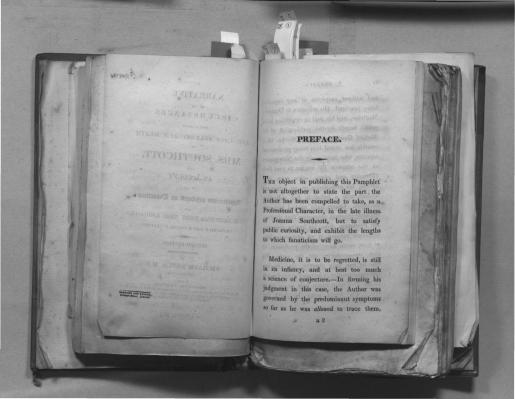
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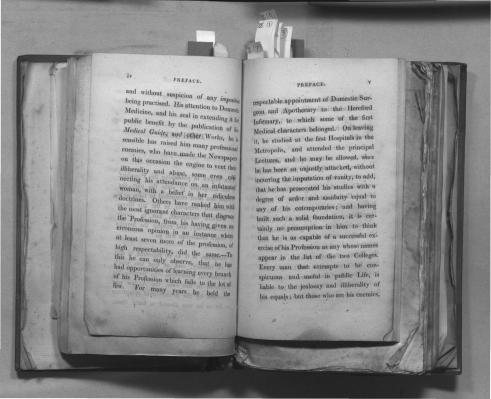
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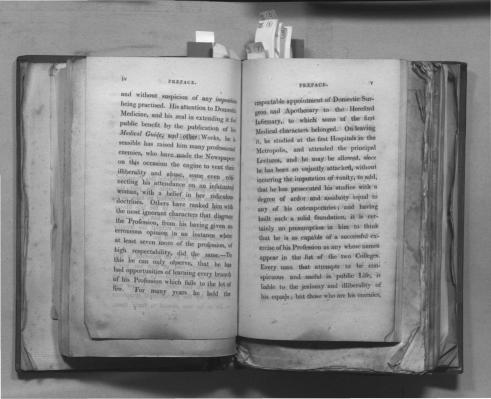
MALES IN THE UNITED BINGLOSS.

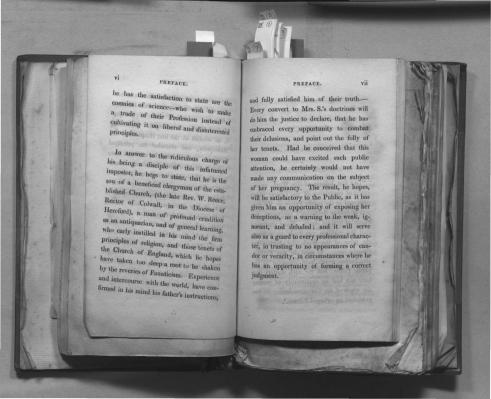
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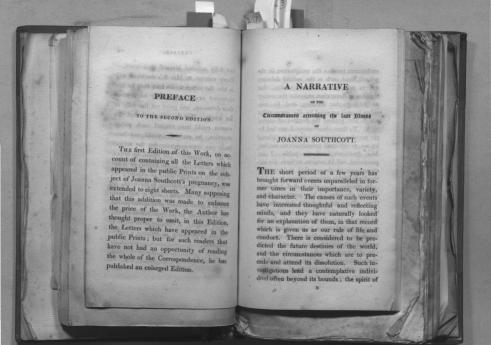
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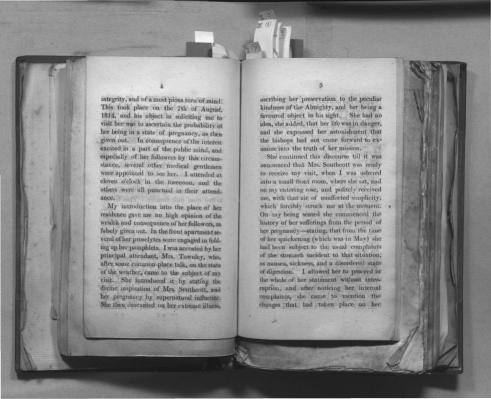


enthusiasm touches the imagination in the pursuit, and such is the mental delusion apt to take place in these studies, that the idea of inspiration animates the votary of Bibliographic learning, and he considers himself actuated by the same spirit which first penned the dictates of sacred writ. To these observations I am led by the peculiar situation in which I am placed by my professional attendance on the late Mrs. Southcott, and the public, I am persuaded, will be anxious to learn the circumstances which preceded and attended the death of this singular woman.

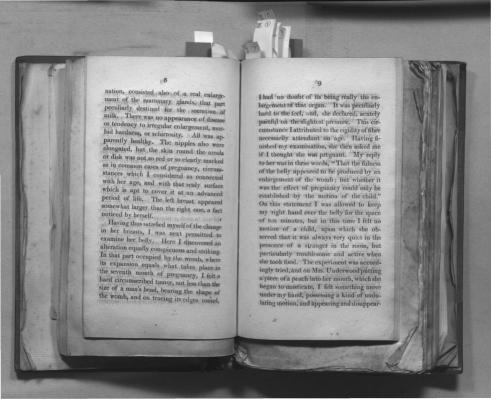
In entering upon this task I lay aside

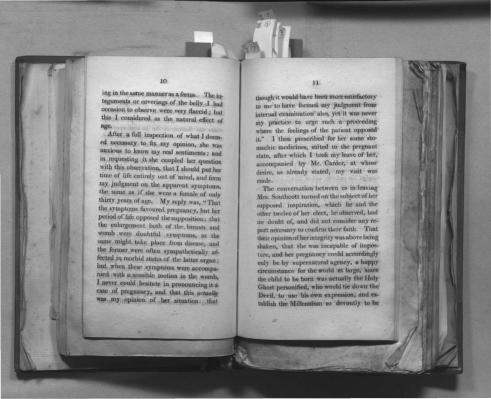
In entering upon this task I lay aside entirely the idea of her prophetic functions. These must rest, with those who are able to judge of their truth or otherwise, as an impartial person, to her character and demeanor. I must admit that I was very much struck with the mildness and simplicity of her manners, the motherly kindness that distinguished her behaviour, and the artless and unaffected detail of many circumstances of her life. Such a woman circumstances of her life.

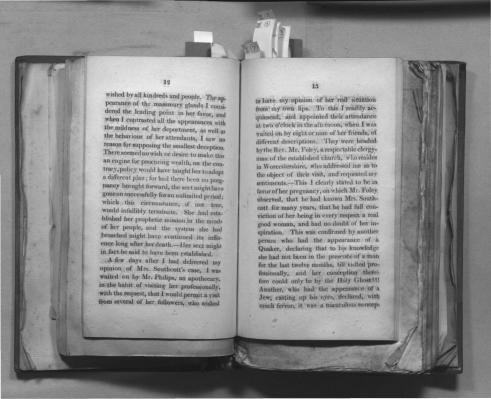
I naturally said, does not carry with her the stamps of imposture. There seemed to be no bias to self interest in her conduct. Her apartment was paltry and mean, and she did not appear to be loaded with the delicacies of life, or to press upon her followers for more than the bare necessaries of existence. Her tenets correspond also to this general feeling. There is no threat or persecution connected with her doctrines. and her proselytes preserve the same regularity and mildness of conduct which seems to flow from their founder. Thus favourably impressed with her at first sight, after my curiosity had subsided, which no doubt impelled me in the first to agree to visit her, I was induced from public duty, as a professional character, to continue my attendance, and to give her all that aid which her peculiar situation required, and which sommon feeling as a man to a female, suffering by disease, had a right to claim. I was first introduced to her as a medical man by an old patient of my own, (Mr. Carder, of Leicester-place), a gentleman of great moral worth, of inflexible

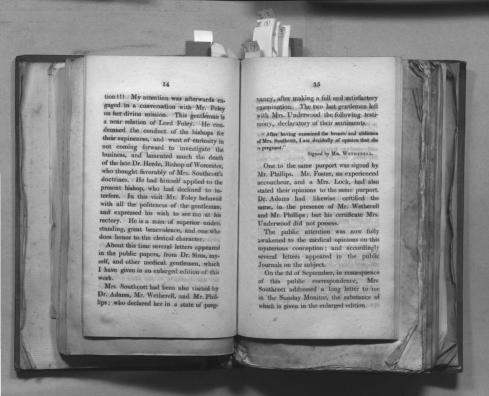












The interest thus so strongly excited, induced Dr. Sims, whose practices, I believe, are chiefly confined to midwifer, to pay a visit officially to this singular character, and in consequence of that visit and an examination he then made, be addressed the following letter, dated Sept. 3d, 1814, to the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

⁶ The feel of the abdomen through her linen was not unlike that of a woman in the eighth month of her pregnancy, but, as it seemed to me, less hard, seemed at the lower part and part through a part of the part of the

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

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

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

[&]quot;SIR.

[&]quot;As I read a very sensible well-written letter, signed by you, in the Sunday's Review, relative to Joanna's

pregrately, I am induced to trouble you with a few lines on that nyterious subject! My love of πευτ, and of course, my hatred to all kinds of imposition, have determined me to irrestigate the matter as I find there are many thousands of the followers (as self as believer in the milleminum) are in full expectation that she is to bring forth the sussexant!

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

On the Lord rely
So safe shalt thou go on,
Fix on his worn thy stedfast eye!
So shall thy work be done,
What profit can't thee gain
By self-consuming care,
Trust in the Lord Jehovah
Trust,
And know, thy God is near.

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

"70, Edgware Road, Paddington,
Angust 51, 1814."

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

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

On this part of the subject, I am sorry it is not in my power to present here a copy of the letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury.—Never indeed was shewn more strongly than in this case of Mrs. Southcott, the power of fanaticism over the mind in the firm belief of her own suppositions, which had impressed and biinded this enthusiastic woman, who certainly acted under the influence of the most powerful mental delusion that has occurred in modern times. Those who were disposed to believe in her mission were not, however, altogether settled or casy under the opinion! I had given, in respect to her situation; for on the 13th of December, I received from Mrs. Thicknesse, the following letter:

"SIR,

41 take the liberty of once more troubling you on the very mysterious and imperature of Jenner's pregency, which you (in the letter you henced as with) seemed to look upon as in the letter you henced as with) seemed to look upon as you are you are you sain from more imperiment found even you are questions from more imperiment found even outly, for be assured, I am actuated upon, by religious principles only, and of course, an anxious degire to know the trath, and thereby, relieve my mind four every shadow of doubt! I will repeat what I had written to the Archibidop, viz; 'that no humas being could have had the antactity to have written such things as it is pretended the surfarr uttered, and with that boldones too, a only trutte could impire! I'm.

"I have taken great pains to compare her writings

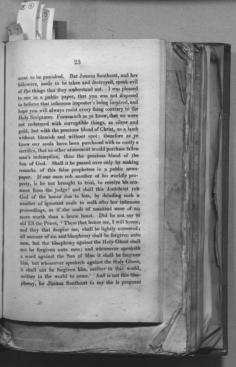
with Sacred Writ, and am more and more convinced, that the time of the MILLENNIUM is approaching! and if she be really pregnant, there seems but little doubt of its being supernatural, for this case hath already baffled the wisdom and skill of the most eminent of the faculty, whom with yourself, imagined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

" I have the honour to be,

"Your most obliged, humble Servant,
"Ann THICKNESSE."

"70, Edgware Road, Paddington, Dec. 13, 1814."

P. S. "The rumour to-day is, she was taken in labour last night! Pray write one line to inform me if it be true! Mrs. Drew promised to let me know, but I have heard pot from her."



22

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

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

"Hon. SIR,

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



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

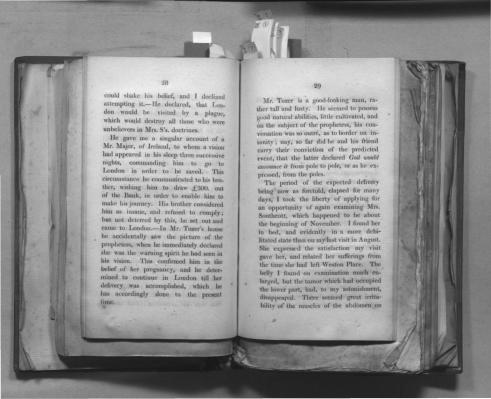
" From a sincere worshipper of the true Messiah, to whom be glory and honor, Amen." " Ludlow, Nov. 29, 1814."

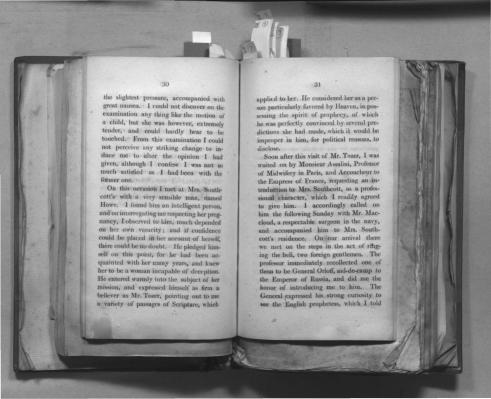
As an example of the abuse, which many of them contained, the following will serve as a sufficient specimen. " My friend," says one of them, " was offered 20 pounds but you took 15."-In answer to this, I can only say, that my attendance on Mrs. Southcott, was entirely gratuitous, and I do not believe,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

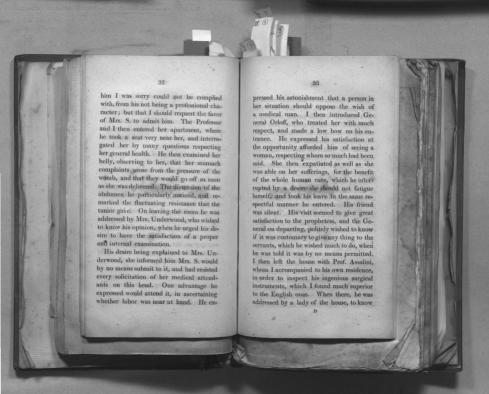
Some letters bore the address of friend-

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









if Joanna was not an impostor, as stated in the papers. "Pshaw," says he, "don't you know that the English papers are only a black paint," intending to signify they were entitled to no credit, for what they say one day they unsay the next.

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

« S.»

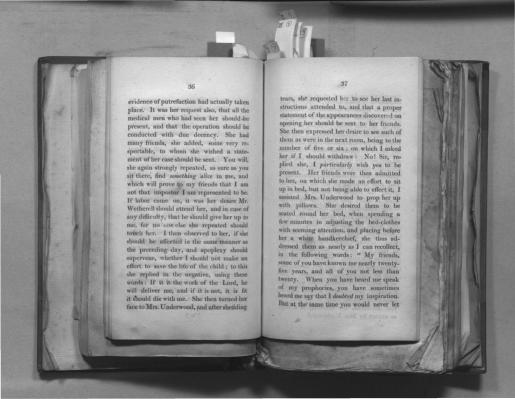
"Mrs. Southcott has had a very restless night. She desires me to say, that she has something on her mind which she wishes to communicate to you. I hope therefore you will call this evening or to-morrow morning.

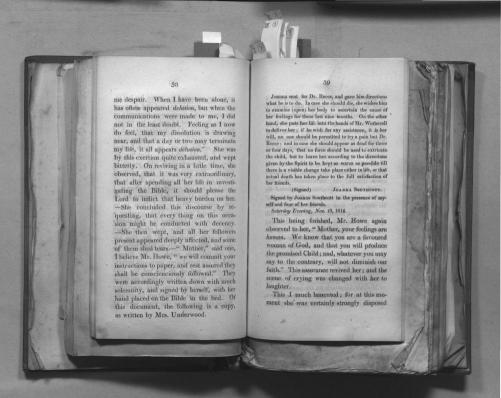
"I am, Sir,
"Your obedient Servant,
"Ann Underwood."
"Manchester Street,
"Nov. 19, 1814."

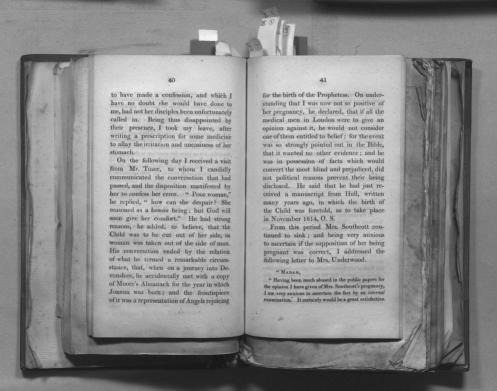
On the receipt of the above, I made no delay in attending to Mrs. Underwood's request, and called in an hour after. The account then given me was, that since my last interview, Mrs. S. had been extremely all, having, after a severe fit of vomiting.

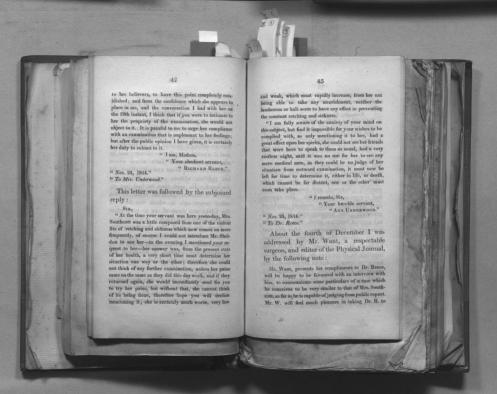
been seized with stupor, succeeded by great debility, the room seeming at the time as if going round with her, and she had every feeling of appreaching dissolution.—Under this impression, she had expressed great uneasiness at laving given me authority to open her body, and had sent for me purposely to give fresh instructions on this point.

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





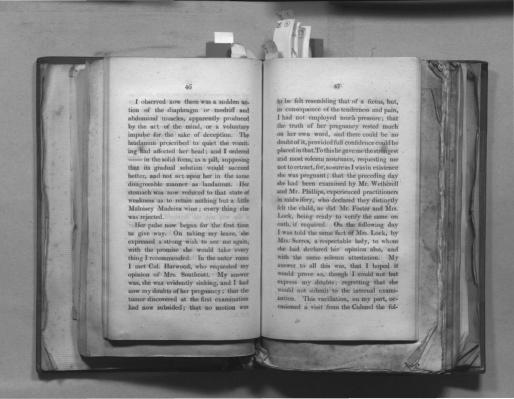




his patient, and is very desirous of comparing the two cases by an interview with Mrs. S. if it be attain.

Wednesday Evening, 1, North Crescent, Bedford Square.

My reply was, I would attend him to his patient on Sunday evening, which I accordingly did. She was a lady who had borne many children. About fifteen months ago she had suffered from the symptoms of pregnancy, viz. nausea and sickness. About four months after this, she anparently quickened, and has continued to feel symptoms of fœtal life. Her appearance externally bears evident marks of gestation. She appears very large, and her general health is good. This I consider a dropsy of the ovarium. After this visit to his patient, Mr. Want was introduced by me to Mrs. Southcott : and I left them together in order that he might be at liberty to question her as he pleased. He made no examination, and consequently could say nothing of her pregnancy from her not wishing to submit to an internal examination, which he considered the only decisive mode of ascertaining it.





extreme faintness which succeeds the retching, is attended with a cold perspiration over her whole frame; she says she feels a sensation in every mere, as if she should faint, and become insensible to her present sufferings, which she most carnestly prays may soon take place, in hope their that a few days may satisfy the minds of the public as to her real situation, and relieve her friends from their present persecution.

"I remain, Sir,
"Your humble Servant.

"ANN UNDERWOOD."
"Saturday, Dec. 10, 1814."

"To Dr. Recce."

On the 15th she wrote to me as follows—
"Sir,

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

"I remain, Sir,

"Your humble Servant,
"Ann Underwood."

" Dec. 15, 1814."
" To Dr. Recce."

On the 17th, I received the following letter-

" Sin,

s Mrs. Southcott has had a very restless night; he mind was wandering, sometimes quite sensible of her present state; and the war going fast, and then wardered to something clue; had very little sleep; complined of a coldness and pain in her stomach. I attended her with hot cloths, which gave her relief, but teturned again this morning. I think she is nearly in the same state she was yesterday; I cannot perceive any alteration.

"I remain, Sir,
"Your humble Servant,
"ANX UNDERWOOD."

" Saturday, Dec. 17, 1814."
" To Dr. Reece."

I paid her a visit soon after the receipt of this letter. I found her in a rambling state, her pulse extremely weak and intermitting, her countenance sallow and cadarcrous, with coldness of the extremities, and every mark of approaching dissolution. On rousing her she seemed to recognize me, and said she was very ill. Colonel Harwood soon after entered the room, when she said to him, putting out her hand, "What does the Lord mean by this



52

-I am certainly duing." " No, no:" replied he, smiling, " you will not die: or if you should, you will return again." This answer seemed to give her satisfaction. Her discourse was then addressed to me. observing, that her mind wandered much. that she had no intention of giving any one offence, and she hoped they would nav no attention to any thing she said in her present state: that she felt extremely glad to see me, and would endeavour to keep herself collected while I was with her, placing at the same time her hand emphatically to her forehead, an effort I have never before observed to be made by a person in that convulsive condition. She, however, soon relapsed into her former state, and every appearance indicated she would not be alive more than two days.

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

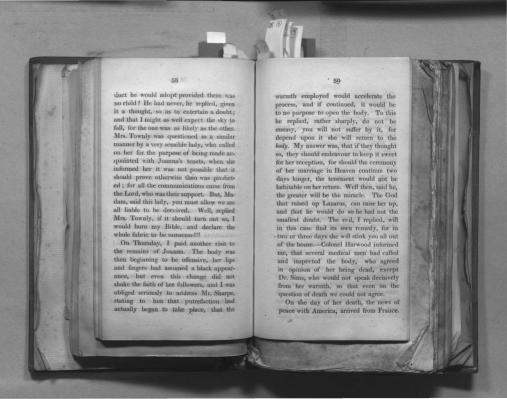
On my calling on Monday, I was much

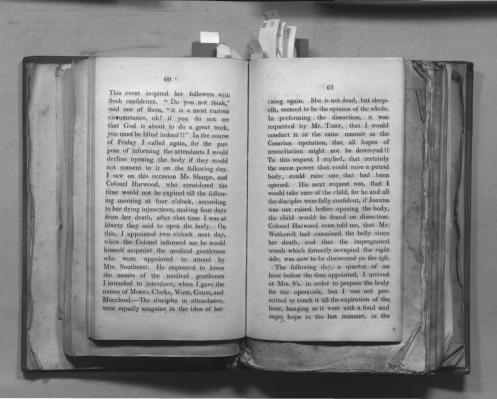
surprised to find she had somewhat rallied, her extremities being much warmer, and her mind having acquired some steadiness and recollection. She then declared she had had strong labour pains, and that the event would soon be over. She had at this time taken a little nourishment, which her stomach retained, but her pulse was extremely languid. This appearance elevated the spirits of her disciples. They considered one prophecy now verified, that the medical men would be puzzled. My opinion, however, I told them was not altered, though this unexpected change had taken place, still she could not survive above a few days; and such alterations towards the close were not uncommon in affections of the stomach. They smiled upon this, and observed, they had no doubt she would be in that state, which all her medical attendants would pronounce

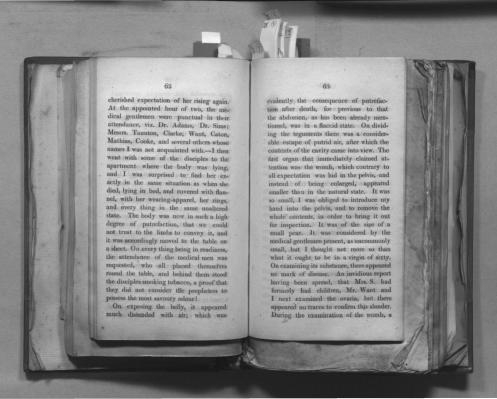
At this time I was visited by Mr. Sharpe, whom I found a plain honest man, of deep thought and great research. Our conversation turned on Mrs. S.'s inspiration. He

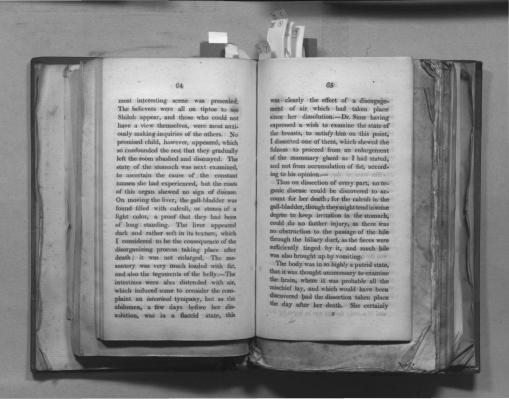














suffered from determination of blood to the head; and the sensations of gliddiness and numbriess of the extremities she experenced about a month before her dissolation, indicated compression of the brain from distension of blood vessels. When I saw her the day preceding her death, she was apolectic, and in this state it may be said she died.

The state of the internal coat of the stomach was particularly inspected, in consequence of information having been sent to the coroner that she had been poisoned; but the appearance of it proved there was no foundation for such a supposition.

The disappointment of her disciples on opening of the body, many be better conceived than described. It was strongly depicted in every countenance. Mr. Sharpe was the only one that held out to the rest the balm of consolation. Life, he observed, was involved in mystery. His mind had been often turned to the investigation of the works of the Delty, to discover evidence for the existence of the soul; that he was satisfied of the existence of a god and of a soul: that he was in hopes by this

woman something would be revealed: but now he felt greatly disappointed, and all he could say was that he was in the same state with respect to his knowledge of God as before he saw this woman. The two female attendants. Mrs. Townly and Mrs. Underwood, were inconsolable. They had all pictured to themselves many happy days, the enjoyment of a heaven on earth. This sad event, this unexpected change, so suddenly coming upon them, was too much to bear. One of the disciples declared he should turn Unitarian. None condemned her as an impostor-One declared he would ever revere her memory. and once a month visit the spot where she was laid with pious and reverential awe!!!

CONCLUSION AND REMARKS.

SUCH is a plain narrative of all the circumstances which attended my intercourse with this singular character. In giving my opinion of her pregnancy, I was led to confide much in her own statement, and on the known veracity of her character.

