

**SPIRITUAL  
FRAGMENTS;  
PP. 14-260**

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Spiritual fragments; pp. 14-260 by J. J. Owen

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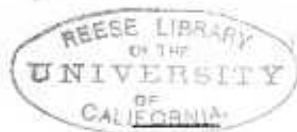
SPIRITUAL  

 FRAGMENTS

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By J. J. OWEN,

Late editor, for 24 years, of the "San Jose (Cal.) Mercury,"  
Editor of "Golden Gate," and author of  
"Our Sunday Talks."



SAN FRANCISCO.  
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## INTRODUCTION.

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This is a busy world, and life is too short, and too busily occupied for one to go a roundabout way to truth, when the end can be more readily reached by a short cut across lots. Most people prefer advice in homoeopathic doses, and religion in a condensed form—the latter, especially, they would have divested of long prayers, and everything that squints at cant. These ‘Fragments’ are the mere flashes of thought, and as such, we imagine, will arrest the attention of many minds when the obscurity of a bewildering argument, or tiresome essay, would only inspire indifference. It is with this thought we send this book of “Fragments” adrift, claiming for the many and varied topics treated the rare virtue of brevity, if nothing more, and craving for it the kind indulgence of a discerning, but not always sympathetic public.

THE AUTHOR.





#### DRIFT OF CIVILIZATION.

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The drift of civilization is in the direction of the enlargement of the field of human reason. The time was when to think outside of a certain prescribed formula was heresy, punishable with all manner of pious cruelty. That time has past. There is nothing now too venerable with age, or too sacred with tradition, that man does not claim the right to investigate and subject to the scales and crucible of human reason. If you confront him with a "Thus saith the Lord," he is determined to know when the Lord said it, who said He said it, and how, when, where and to whom it was said. If you bring forward written authority to prove that the sun stood still to enable a certain ancient general to prolong the slaughter of his enemies, or that another prominent personage survived the digestion of a big fish for three days, human reason will naturally question your authority. The fables to which the religious world has so long given credence, are brought under the scrutiny of science and enlightened judgment, and if found unreasonable are cast aside, as moral and intellectual rubbish.

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And why should man not reason upon the improbabilities of an ancient book just the same as he would upon any other subject? There can be no better guide than reason, quickened by intuition—notwithstanding we once heard a good Presbyterian clergyman thank God that he had "a religion that was not based on human reason!" What would be thought of the sailor who should cast his compass and quadrant into the deep, and trust to the winds and waves to bear his vessel safely into port? When man sets aside his reason he simply throws his compass overboard. The time is at hand



when he will have no religion that does not square with his reason. Why is it that our church pews are mainly empty of brainy men and women, unless it be because thoughtful people are not content longer to listen to doctrines repugnant, not only to reason, but to every sense of human justice. Habitual church-goers are mainly good and respectable people, who haven't the time or inclination to do much religious thinking for themselves, but are passively content to take their religious opinions second-handed.

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MEMORY.

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Memory! How like an avenging demon it will follow one through life, and out and on into the infinite realm of spirit—the memory of unholy deeds! True, the conscience may be scared by many and oft repeated wrongs, until the memory thereof may make but little, if any, impression upon the mind. But there comes a time, as God is just, when the spirit will reach its lowest depth of indifference, and feel the first gentle promptings to a higher life. Then memory will do its work, if never before. What ages of agony may not the darkened soul experience in its long, sad journey towards the light! And so, also, the pleasures of memory to a life well spent—what can be more delightful! The pleasing incidents of childhood—a mother's tender love and care; a father's thoughtful guidance to a manly career—the joys and pleasures, the fond associations, the happy dreams of love—how they will be borne to us on memory's silver wings, sweetening the years of time, and adding rich argosies of gems to the treasures of eternity! There is no accusing angel so relentless as that of one's own soul—no all-seeing eye so penetrating as that whereby man shall see himself. And this is the true way of life from darkness to light—from the night of ignorance, to the glorious day of man's spiritual unfoldment—when he shall be a law unto himself forevermore.

**HOMESICK.**

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What a dull, leaden thing is a human heart away from its home nest and longing to return. The man or woman who was never homesick has missed just one note of agony in the gamut of human suffering, that would vastly enrich their experience to realize. We well remember, when a boy of twelve years, we left the shelter of the paternal roof to solve the problem of life—to learn the printer's trade. Eleven miles away! What an infinite distance, and what aeons of time were involved in that first week of absence! Strange faces and scenes all around, and such an aching lump in the breast! And when Saturday night came, with what eager joy we walked those eleven miles to be once more cuddled in the dear old home nest. What a joyous welcome from the six noisy brothers and the one wee sister, as the traveler (?) returned to them, and the sainted mother gathered her wanderer of a great long week to her loving heart. Ah, that was in the "lang sync." Where now is that happy household? All except the writer and the then baby girl in some of the many mansions of the Infinite Father in the Beyond! And we toughened and grizzled with the footprints of time, sit here dreaming of the good time coming in the evening—the Saturday evening—when our task shall be finished, and we can go home!

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**MISSIONARIES.**

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Twenty missionaries sailed from the city of San Francisco recently for Siam, China, and other places in the Orient, to teach the people of those lands something about Jesus. What a waste of good men and women! Missionaries, from a country that licenses rum-selling; from a people far less honest, or moral, in a general sense, than those to whom these missionaries are sent! How the chains of a perverted education

must cling to the limbs of these poor missionaries. They give up their lives for the imagined welfare of the poor heathen, who care nothing at all for their teachings, unless it be that they may thereby acquire a knowledge of another tongue. The Hindu doesn't want our religion, for the very good reason that he thinks he has a much better kind of religion of his own. He *might* profit by some of our science—our superior knowledge of many things; but that isn't religion, and that isn't what these men and women go out to teach.

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**MOTHER.**

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Beautiful mother! How patiently and gently she bears up under the heavy burden of her almost desolate life. Desolate, did we say? Not so. Loving angels are her daily companions; they walk by her side, through the fields and over the hills of her lonely mountain home—wherever duty calls her—and they brood her with their sweet presence through the silent watches of the night, ever enthusing her heart with an abiding trust in the All-Good. At her tasks, early and late, though not strong for such arduous toil, yet never complaining—always the gentle word and the kind thought, and always the comfort of others in preference to that of herself. Grand, unselfish soul! There is a brighter day dawning for you. Think not the clouds that have so long lowered over your widowed life have no silver lining. Already the light is breaking, and the glow and warmth of happier hours are near at hand. There are years of happiness before you in this life, and a crown of peace, the guerdon of a beautiful womanhood, in the life Beyond.

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**SECRET OF STRENGTH.**

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A lady friend, nearly sixty years of age, who had tramped all day through the busy streets, preparatory to departing on a