

**SCIENCE AND HUMANITY;
OR, A PLEA FOR
THE SUPERIORITY OF
SPIRIT OVER MATTER**

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Science and Humanity; Or, a Plea for the Superiority of Spirit over Matter by Noah Porter

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BY

NOAH PORTER, D.D., LL.D.,

President of Yale College.



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P R E F A C E .



PORTIONS of the following essay were delivered as an address before the Societies of the *Φ. B. K.*, in Harvard and Trinity Colleges, in June and July last. The request for its publication has been made by many persons, and in form by a committee of the Society in Trinity College. The author preferred to publish the whole as a philosophical essay, with some additional paragraphs and notes. No explanation is required in respect to the in-

terest and the importance of the subject—
especially at the present time—in this country
and in Great Britain.

N. P.

Yale College, Dec., 1871

SCIENCE, AND HUMANITY.

NOT many days ago, as I strayed into the study of an eminent physicist, I observed hanging against the wall, framed like a choice engraving, several dingy, ribbon-like strips of, I knew not what, arranged in parallel rows. My curiosity was at once aroused. What were they? and why were they so carefully protected and so greatly honored by my realistic friend? They might be shreds of mummy-wraps or bits of friable bark-cloth from the Pacific, and there-

fore needing to be guarded under glass ; or perhaps, indeed, they were remnants from a grandmother's wedding dress ; or shoe-ties, out of which all color had faded, leaving a faint shimmer of satin finish on the water-stained surface. They were none of these ; to have suggested any of which might have been resented by the grave philosopher, who solidly explained that they were carefully-prepared photographs of portions of the Solar Spectrum.

I stood and mused, absorbed in the varying yet significant intensities of light and shade, bordered by mystic letters and symbolic numbers. As I mused, the pale legend began to glow with life. Every line became luminous with meaning. Every shadow was suffused with light shining from behind, suggesting some mighty

achievement of knowledge; of knowledge growing more daring in proportion to the remoteness of the object known; of knowledge becoming more positive in its answers, as the questions which were asked seemed unanswerable. No Runic legend, no Babylonish arrow-head, no Egyptian hieroglyph, no Moabite stone, could present a history like this, or suggest thoughts of such weighty import, or so stimulate and exalt the imagination.

Over against these symbolic bands—records of light by means of the light and glowing with light to the soul—hung the portrait of Newton, with its wondrous forehead and eagle glance. I turned from the spectrum to the portrait and from the portrait to the spectrum, still musing as I turned. Newton's daring