Published version. Third Coast (Spring 1998): 10. Publisher link.
Who became a professional medium after she reported the "Hydesville rappings" of 1848, and who later confessed to fraud.

When I was thirteen, I thought I would grow pale as lace, forced to sew and sew my brain into a filigree of threads and holes. Then I learned to crack my toe-bones until they echoed like raps from beyond the grave. Soon, my body was a bag of tricks, a telegraphic alphabet: croaks, moans, clicks.

I wore black gloves and a veil wrapped around my face like a wasp's nest. I charged a dollar per deceased and fifty cents for stillborn babies.

And what do you know? The spirits spoke, rapping shall we gather at the river—Do I wish I'd married a farmer like my father, with burrs in his beard? No;

I cleared eight hundred bucks a year, though the frontier of the dead was closed—I moved like a pioneer into the deep recesses of my knees and throat.
Knock-knock!
   Who’s there?

It was always me,
never an infant with coins on its lids,
ever a fisherman caught in a net. I was the whole
heavenly host. I was as good as it gets.