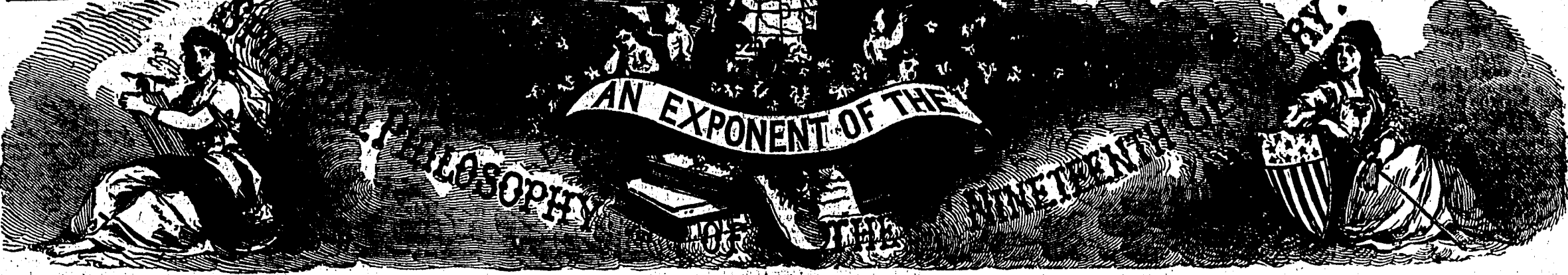


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The Spiritual Rostrum.

Prayer in the Light of Reason and Common Sense.

A Lecture Delivered in Music Hall, Boston, in 1877.

BY PROF. WILLIAM DENTON.

[Reported for the Banner of Light.]

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered, or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh—
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near."

So sang Montgomery, and I have very little criticism to offer upon that kind of prayer. In that sense of the word I pray, you pray, everybody prays; and prayer is almost as natural to us as our breath. But when the word prayer is used, something very different from this is generally meant. The great majority of prayers do not come under this definition. Prayer in the sense of begging, beseeching, pleading for favors of God, and expecting to receive thereby gifts or advantages that are in direct contravention to the operations of natural law—it is this kind of prayer to which I most decidedly object, and which I intend to criticize this afternoon.

Prayer in this sense is doubtless of heathen origin. The Egyptian book of the dead, written long before the first chapter of Genesis, contains many prayers; and doubtless the custom of praying was in existence ages before that; belonging to a time when there were "Lords many and Gods many," and arising as a habit among people who believed in gods of the rivers, woods and mountains—gods of fire and gods of wind. These were much like human beings; in their fury they flooded the rivers and overflowed the lands; they blew with a hurricane blast, and desolated the fair fields with the tempest; and so it was natural to seek to propitiate them. They could not, however, receive anything in person, hence sacrifices which they might smell, and praises and prayers which they might hear, became very natural means of securing their favor. Thus the lover prayed to Venus, to help his suit; the warrior called on Mars to give him the victory; the sailor prayed to Neptune for a prosperous voyage, and the sick called on Asclepius for help in getting well again. And Jove, the great Father of the Gods, was appealed to on every hand, and by all classes. Christianity and Judaism diminished the number of the gods, but retained their characteristics. The very same practices were to be found among the incultures of the Jewish law, as under the heathen. Noah offered a burnt offering, and God smelled a sweet savor and was pleased, and promised that he would no more curse the ground. In Christianity prayers and praises ascend to his ears, and we are told that by thus attracting his attention to us, we can induce him to give us what he could not or would not otherwise bestow. The God of the Bible is one that hears and answers prayer; he will be inquired of. The command given by Jesus is: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." If this be true, it is exceedingly important. God is the possessor of all things, and if we can obtain from him what we need, by simple request, what can be easier, what better suited to the condition of needy humanity than this? And we are also encouraged, by the direct statements of Jesus, to believe that by beseeching and pleading we may carry our point at last. If God does not hear us the first time, he will the second; but if not, we must tease him till he does hear and we obtain a favorable answer. The Evangelist tells us:

"He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.
Saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man.
And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.
And he would not for awhile; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

Then he asks: "Shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." He gives us another parable about a person coming to a neighbor and asking for a loan of three loaves, and the man from within answers: "Lame, xiv, 7." Trouble me not the doors are shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. But the man keeps rap, rap, rap; and we are told, though he would not rise and give him, because he was his friend, yet "because of his importunity" he did rise and gave him what he desired. Here is the idea advanced that God is like the unjust judge, or the neighbor who would not accommodate his friend, but that if we only tease him long enough he will at last bestow what we desire. I know of nothing more clearly showing how Jesus was

limited by his early education than his suffering his common sense to be led astray by this most absurd of all notions—that the Soul of the Universe can be induced, by teasing, to do that which otherwise would not have been done. I do not wonder that those who believe in his teachings, in the prayer-meetings or revivals shout out: "Do come, Lord! Lord, come now!" "Reveal thy presence—keep thy promise to thy children!" and many other earnest ejaculations, as if God was a man, and very desirous of "basking" from some bad bargain he had made! I don't wonder at them; the idea is in perfect harmony with the declaration of Jesus, wild and extravagant as it may appear to us, and as it doubtless is.

Now it is very certain that all this absolutely amounts to nothing. Let us look at this common and very Christian idea, and we shall see there is no truth in it: A friend is going by packet to Europe; we pray that he may have a prosperous voyage and arrive safely at his destination. That this prayer may be answered it is necessary that the vessel should be good; and this depends upon the skill and faithfulness with which it was constructed years before the prayer was offered. Who believes that this will be miraculously cared for when he offers such a prayer? Or, if any one believes it, what evidence have we that any such result will follow? Not a particle; but the very contrary. Again: Let the prayer be for a safe journey for your friend by land to California and return. This involves a good locomotive, wheels, cylinders, axles, boiler; there must be no rivet loose in the boiler, nor too much pressure of steam within it; no flaw in the axles; and this depends on the honesty of the parties who made them five years ago as to whether an inferior quality of iron was put in the middle to save expense; the flanges and the castings must be sound; the conductor, engineer and stoker capable and sober; the embankments in good condition; the rails so sound that they will not break, and so fastened that they will not jump; and every flagman and switch-tender must do his duty, or the prayer may fail. If such prayers as these are of any avail, all these and a multitude of other possible sources of danger must be guarded against; and many of them could only be by foreseeing this possible prayer years beforehand, and providing for its answer in time. And this could only be done by a succession of miracles. The man who forges the engine's shaft must be miraculously directed to choose the best of iron, and the welder of it must make his iron of the right heat, and hammer it so that there shall be no flaw in the finished work. And to make this absolutely certain he must be watched, and if need be, miraculously directed. If a rail is so unsound that it would break by the passage of the train, it must be miraculously toughened so as to bear the strain; if a boiler in some steep excavation is so loosened that the jar of the passing cars would roll it on the track just before the train passes, it must be miraculously held. And if such things followed such prayers, the railway companies would soon learn the secret, and would send plunders individuals on every train, and pay their plunders friends to pray for them. And they could afford good salaries to such as were "mighty in prayer." Thus their expenses would be reduced to—well, absolutely nothing, except for the prayers. God's purposes cannot be thwarted by the carelessness of man. If God answers such prayers, locomotives can run on ties as well as on rails—and just as well without ties as with them; broken axles are just as good as sound ones, and a pasteboard boiler would bear as much pressure to the square inch as one made of half-inch boiler-iron.

You pray for friends at sea: what a series of miracles must be performed to answer your prayer. God must have attended to the construction of the ship years before the prayer was offered. The favorable answer depends upon fires that will not burn even when lighted, or the ship would be endangered by them. It depends upon lightning. How many ships have been struck and destroyed! The lightning must be made to glance aside and spare the vessel. Pirates have destroyed some of the finest craft that ever sailed. Their cannon balls must glance harmless from the wooden walls of the vessels that contain heaven's favorites, or the attackers must be so blinded that they cannot see her, when within the circle of their vision. These, or miracles quite as wonderful, must be performed for her special benefit. The captain and sailors must be sober and steady, or if they drink rum or whiskey it must not make them drunk, as that would endanger the safety of the vessel. The charts must be accurate—though made years ago—by which the ship is directed, as a slight mistake may cause the vessel's destruction, and this again depends upon circumstances previous to the prayer.

Such prayers are offered by the million. No ship leaves port to carry passengers to Europe, but prayers are offered in behalf of those passengers. But suppose they possessed the power of drawing down the miraculous interposition of heaven to control material matters. Why, as with the railroads, the steamboat lines would learn to consider plous passengers as life-preservers and insurance policies. It would be just as easy for God to send your friend across the ocean without a boat at all.

These prayers are absolutely useless, and any man or woman of common sense will perceive it in an instant. It is only because we are blinded by our early theological—our superstitious education in reality—which clings to us like our flesh, that we fall to see this thing, and still continue to make these ridiculous requests. Let us look at another common prayer; one which was once very popular but now is falling into disuse—the prayer for rain. Thus we find it in the Episcopal prayer-book:

"O God, Heavenly Father, who by thy Son Jesus Christ hast promised to all those who seek thy kingdom, and the righteousness thereof, all things necessary to their bodily sustenance; send us, we beseech thee, in our necessity, such moderate rain and showers, that we may receive the fruits of the earth to our comfort and to thy honor, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

How nicely that word "moderate" comes in! [Laughter.] Rains depend, as we know, principally upon the prevailing winds; and winds here depend upon winds elsewhere, and so on round the globe. And to answer such prayers a multitude of miracles would be necessary, in order to water somebody's potato patch. [Laughter.] Do you think there is any sense in this? Not a particle! and our ministers are beginning to learn it. They have left off making a speciality in their prayers. You can't get making a prayer for rain as devoutly as in the good old days. Perhaps at the end of a long, dry spell, when they think it likely it will rain before long, they will just intimate to God that a little rain would be very acceptable just now.

Another common prayer is for fruitful harvests. To answer this, frosts, rains, drought, insects, and all other agencies upon which harvests depend must be regulated; and who that prays expects any such thing to be done? Who does not see the unreasonable character of all this? If prayer could secure a prosperous voyage, a pious man might cross the Atlantic in an Indian canoe or a washing-tub more safely than in a Cun-

ard steamer. If prayer could make fruitful harvests, there never could be any other; for prayers for this purpose are offered every season by the million.

Unflinching, unswerving are the great laws of the universe, turning neither to the right hand nor the left. They can never be changed or amended. They are of necessity from the beginning. Are any prayers of more avail? Pray that fire may not burn, or water drown, or cold freeze; pray that the day may be darkness and midnight lighter than the sunniest noon! Of what avail would it be? Other prayers are equally without avail. You pray to be delivered from sin. What sin are you guilty of? You are gluttonous; you eat so that you injure your body and bedevil your mind. To answer that prayer it would be necessary to reform your manner of living. Your wife must forget how to make rich cakes, or they must be so spoiled in the baking, that they cannot be eaten; for your appetite is so much the master of you that, when placed before you, you cannot resist the temptation. Or you sin in lying to the people with whom you deal, and this is owing to lack of conscientiousness and the deficiencies of your education. Is there any amount of prayer that can miraculously change the shape of a man's head?

Pray till thy knees are horny as a camel's, the tiniest working-bee accomplishes more than thee. [Applause.] Change to-morrow's weather with thy breath, and thou canst move the planets from their orbits and derange the universe. Walk under Niagara and suspend its waters in mid air! Bristle a granite boulder and float around the world with the sailing clouds, or blow the ocean dry and leave the yawning gulf. If thy prayers cannot accomplish this, what can they do? They could as soon cleave a passage through the Andes as achieve any other result. The man that obtains an answer to prayer has moved the arm of Omnipotence, and to that arm there can be no great and no small—just as easy for it to drown a world as produce a shower. Hast thou smelt? Whine not for mercy; the penalty evermore follows the offense, and no prayers or entreaties can come between the wrong deed and the inevitable consequences. Bear patiently what cannot now be changed, but learn by this experience and do better for the future. Here is this great universe, and our business is to place ourselves in harmony with its laws. If we do so it is well, but if we come in contact with them they plow us through. There is no power on earth or in heaven that can change the operation of these laws. The sooner we learn this the better it will be for us. I know that the common doctrine is very different from this, but I also know the commonly-received doctrine is absurd. Not one of the prayers to be found in the printed books, or which are offered in our fashionable churches, will bear five minutes' criticism. Listen to one: "Oh! Lord God, Almighty, the High and the Holy One that inhabitest eternity, whose name is holy! Before thee cherubim and seraphim veil their faces with their wings as they cry, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory.' What are we that we should appear in thy presence and lift up our eyes to the place where thine honor dwelleth? Hast thou been just to mark and severe to punish, we had long since been in that place where hope never comes." We thank thee, oh God! for the gift of thy son, Jesus Christ, our Lord!—and here comes in the begging—"In his name we beseech thee to grant," "we pray," "we entreat thee," and so on, to the end of the chapter. So the minister goes on, spending half-an-hour in telling God what a mighty potentate he is, and what miserable wretches we are, whom, if he had not been unjust, he would have consigned long ago to that dungeon whose gates move but one way. Now where is the benefit of this? If God is the high and holy one, he knows it without being told. If we are so vile that we ought to be damned, why, let him damn us, and be done with it! [Applause.] If not so, don't go on telling such a story to God. The man never lived on this planet who was so vile as the general mass of Christian worshippers say they are when they assemble in the churches on Sunday. [Applause.]

Oh, but you say, "There are prayers that will bear criticism." Where? and you say, "How about the Lord's Prayer?" Let us look at this "Lord's Prayer," as you call it—this model prayer of Jesus, repeated millions of times every day. It is far, very far from reasonable.

It begins "Our Father which art in heaven." But is God any more in heaven than on earth? A being everywhere present is on earth as truly as in heaven. If God is in heaven he knows it, and there is no need to tell him; but to the thinking mind God is here as much as anywhere. [Applause.]

"Hallowed be thy name." What's the matter with God's name? This is just the same as saying to God: "Lord, you have not been doing exactly right in the past; you must do better, so that your name may be hallowed. Please be a little more particular in the future." If I wished my name to be hallowed I should do what would bring about that result; and if God's name is to be hallowed he must adopt a similar course.

"Thy kingdom come." Whose kingdom is it now? The devil's? [Applause.] Has not God's kingdom come? If not, whose fault is it? Since God has had the whole matter in his keeping, it must be his fault if his kingdom is not in successful operation. If it has not come, it must be because it is his desire that it should not. Then why should we say so, in direct opposition to his will?

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Is it not? If it is not, whose fault is it? God's will is supposed to be omnipotent, and his will must be done. If not, and God desires that it should be as it is, then that is his will, and it is done. [Applause.]

"Give us this day our daily bread." Have n't you got your daily bread in the house—every man and woman of you—and in most cases four enough for months to come? And yet you go on offering the petition, as if you had not had a bite since yesterday. Suppose you did not have the bread, or the flour, or the money to buy it with? you might pray till you were blind before you would get it. "But," some one says, "it was a proper prayer for the disciples of Jesus to offer." I don't think it was proper even for them. If they desired bread, they should have stunk to their fishing, and people would have gladly exchanged with them bread for fish; or they would have given money for their fish, with which they might have bought their bread. "But they had a nobler work than fishing!" Let the people feed them, then, and if they do not, it is an evidence that they do not desire their services.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." The idea is in some respects a beautiful one, but it is vain to ask God to forgive trespasses; he cannot do it, because the universe is so constituted that it must balance; every deed is followed by its consequences, and to pray that it may not be, is to pray that the universe may be destroyed. This fact every man's experience ought to teach him. "Lead us not into temptation." Is it God, then, that leads people into temptation? I thought it was the province of the devil. [Laughter.] James declares that "God cannot be tempted with evil; neither

tempteth he any man." Ah! James, you must have forgotten the prayer your Master taught you, or you would know better than to contradict him. But if God does tempt men, he does it for some wise purpose, a theologian would say. Then it cannot be proper to say "lead us not into temptation."

"But deliver us from evil." But why does God permit evil? Looking at the matter from a Christian standpoint, it must be because he sees that it is best. Why then should we pray to be delivered from it? It is proper that we should have our share, and receive its benefits. Looking at the matter from a natural point of observation, evil is essential; the world could not be destitute of it; and when we pray to be delivered from it, we offer a prayer that neither men nor gods can answer!

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever." God knows all about that—if it is a fact. And the "Amen" that closes the petition, what does that mean? Why, simply "so be it," or "be it so"; as much as to say: "Oh Lord, I did n't mean what I was just saying, but I do mean it now."

From beginning to end, this favorite prayer will not bear criticism on a single passage. And if the prayer of Jesus will not bear examination, how many of other men's petitions can hope to do so? But let us look at another very common notion as regarding the efficacy of prayer. If there was any truth in it, how long could anything wrong endure? We are told by Jesus, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." I have heard ministers say that the Church lived beneath her privilege. Yes, and every two members of it must live infinitely beneath their privilege. What could they not do? Two simple members of the church could convert every human being on this planet before the next twenty-four hours had passed. Why these missionary meetings? these prayer meetings? Sunday after Sunday, year in and year out? Why this gathering of pennies, this scolding of sinners by brimstone sermons, when all could be accomplished by a few words on the part of two Christians? The misery of all lost souls lies at the door of those who neglect to use the simple means that God has placed in their hands. But I cannot see why God should allow an idle, unbelieving church to curse the entire race. I cannot see why he should wait till some one asks him to do these things; why not, himself, convert all and save all?

I remember a strong case in point in my own experience, which bears on the reliability of this promise of Jesus just related: When I was a Methodist I went to a friend whose name was John Brown—not the hero of Ossawatimie, however—and said to him: "John, you know that Jesus has said, 'If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.' Now let us agree to ask for a revival; let us strike hands together in this matter, and pray that we may have the greatest revival of religion ever known in Shilidon." He agreed, and so we went to work. We did not ask God once, but twice—twenty times—but there was no reply to our fervent petitions. That was one of the things that shook my faith in its very foundations. I was young enough then to have faith, and John was green enough to have faith. But despite our earnest agreement, and our compliance with the promise of Jesus himself, we failed utterly; our prayers and faith were vain.

If prayer is effectual, as Christians think it, and as they manifest their faith by their prayers, they should never pray for one when they could pray for two, nor for two when they could as effectually pray for twenty—nor indeed for twenty, but for all. The best prayer I ever heard of was made by a negro. He attended a prayer-meeting, where, as usual, the supplicants prayed all round the world and for everything they could think of, until his patience was well-nigh exhausted. At last he got an opportunity to put in a few words, and this was his prayer: "Oh! God, kill me; put out hell, and we shall need no more teachers and no more preachers, nevermore, amen!" [Laughter and applause.] That was a sweeping, wholesome prayer, and evidently offered in faith, and should have been effectual. But then it would be better to convert the devil than to kill him; for such an earnest, energetic spirit as this might do good service on the Lord's side. And this seems to have been the sentiment of the monk who offered the following prayer for the devil. Imagine that old father, kneeling in the chapel; the faint light of a midnight lamp burning upon the altar reveals his pale and tearful countenance, as with uplifted hands and trembling voice he offers his "Prayer for the Devil!":

"Oh God," he said, "I cannot be. Thy Morning Star with endless moon Should lift his fading orb to thee And thou be happy on thy throne. It were not kind, nay, Father, nay, It were not just, oh God! I say; Pray for the Devil—Jesus, pray!

How can thy kingdom ever come While the fair angels howl below? All holy voices would be dumb, To think the lordliest peer of heaven—The starry leader of the seven—Would never, never be forgiven.

Pray for the Devil, Jesus, pray! Oh Father! think upon thy child; Turn from thine own bright world away And look upon that dungeon wild. Oh God! oh Jesus! see how dark That den of woe! oh Saviour! mark How angels weep, how groan! hark! hark!

He will not, will not do it more; Restore him to his throne again. Oh, open wide that dismal door That presses on the souls in pain; So men and angels all will say, 'Our God is God! Oh! day by day, Pray for the Devil—Jesus, pray!'

All night Aquinas kneels alone, Alone with black and dreadful night, Until before his pleading moan The darkness ebbs away in light. Then rose the saint, and "God," said he, "If darkness change to light with thee, The Devil may yet an angel be!"

Exactly so! If there had been a devil that prayer ought to have converted him; and then all his power would have been exercised for humanity's good. Sound and sensible prayer! It is a model for the blind church that prays off the twigs from the great tree of evil, and allows the tree itself to produce millions of new ones from age to age, and grow undisturbed. If the whole praying force could be directed to praying for the devil, and he was once converted—always supposing such a being to exist—what a world should we see, if Orthodoxy has ascribed things to their proper sources. The fountain of vice and crime would be dried up, and all evil would cease at once and forever! But I am told God does answer prayer; that Elijah prayed that it might not rain, and it did not rain for three years and six months. Read the account as con-

cluded in Kings, and you will see that it is fabulous. About the end of this long dry period, when it had not rained for more than three years, (1 Kings xviii.) Ahab the King of Israel, called Obadiah, the master or governor of his house, and told him to go into the land, to all fountains of water and all brooks to find grass to save the horses and mules alive. "So they divided the land between them. . . . Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself." What a story! Imagine the King of Israel trudging off alone one way and the master of his house the other, searching for grass and water after a drought of over three years! How many fountains would be flowing and brooks running after such a long period of time? Palestine is one of the driest of places under ordinary circumstances. The underlying rock of that country is cretaceous limestone, very porous, and a year of dry weather would lick up all the brooks and fountains—there could be no water found save in the river Jordan.

But we are told again: "Hezekiah prayed, and fifteen years were added to his life." Who could know that fifteen years were added to a man's life? To know that, a man must know how long he would have lived if he had not prayed, which is, of course, impossible. According to the thirty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, Hezekiah had a boil, and this may have been so painful that he thought he was about to die. So he sent for Isaiah, and he put a plaster of figs upon it, and prayed with him, and he recovered. Which had the most to do with it, the prayer or the plaster? Why, to my mind, at least, the recovery and subsequent continuance of fifteen years of life—if true at all, for we have only Isaiah's word for it—were due to the plaster of figs. [Applause.] But if God did it by miraculous interposition, why not have done the business more thoroughly; why lengthen the man's life only fifteen years? why not fifteen hundred? The one is just as easy to Omnipotence as the other; this would have been evidence that might have reached the most skeptical.

But I am told we have men who have been and are living lives of prayer: Müller in Bristol, Frank in Germany. God supplies them with all they need to carry on grand enterprises. But how? When Müller needs five or ten thousand dollars for his Orphan Asylum at Bristol, what does he do? Why he sends out thousands of circulars, in which he informs his friends and the public that he is about to commence praying to God for the money, and directly some persons are found who feel called upon to answer the prayer to God by proxy, so that the mouth of blasphemous infidelity may be stopped by the direct demonstration that there is a God who heareth prayer. But suppose Müller did not tell anybody that he was praying? How long would a pious Christian have to lift up his voice to God in prayer for twenty thousand dollars to start such a grand enterprise as an orphan asylum? He might pray to all eternity, if he did not imitate Müller, and send out practical calls upon his fellow-men through the avenues of their religious belief. To pray with absolute secrecy would be the true test of the matter. I once heard Fred Douglass say: "My friends, I longed for my freedom; I prayed and besought God to give me what ought to be the right of every living soul. But at last," said he, "I prayed with my legs, and then I got my liberty." Just so; that is the true way to pray.

But I am told that praying men are better than those who are not in the habit of so doing. This by no means follows. I deny the assertion. The Mahometans pray seven times more than Christians—they are seven times better? The Roman Catholics pray more than their Protestant brethren—are they better? Abraham was a man of prayer, but that does not seem to have hindered him from lying and inducing his wife to lie, from holding slaves, practicing polygamy, or turning his wife and child out of doors to perish. David was a king of prayer as well as a praying king; his psalms are a prayer-book; he says that he trusted in God from his youth. What a holy man this should be, if praying ever makes men good. Yet his prayers did not prevent his murdering two hundred men that he might be Saul's son-in-law; they did not prevent his lying to Abimelech, nor murdering the friends of King Achish with whom he dwelt when among the Philistines.

As far as my experience goes, the more enlightened men become, in a spiritual sense, the shorter are their prayers. Unitarians pray less frequently than Universalists, and Spiritualists less than either. They begin to see that there is no good to be derived from it, and so they give it up. Am I to be told that men are better in consequence of their prayers? I say that every time and all the time the facts point in the contrary direction. "But," some one says, "we don't expect to change the mind of God. We acknowledge that prayers do not alter the purpose of God; they merely affect us, and put us in a proper frame of mind to receive blessings." Yes; but if this be true, a wooden God would answer the purpose as well as any, if we only had faith in it. How long would men pray: "Bless the poor and the afflicted," if they knew that all the blessing must come from human beings, and that the prayer does not contribute an iota to the result? How long would they pray for knowledge, after they knew that all knowledge must be obtained by labor?

"But," you say, "is there no truth in this system whatever? wherever you find humanity, you find men and women praying." I say, Yes. Even in the most wild and most absurd petition there is a kernel of truth lurking, if it can only be got at. It is not all in vain that desires are breathed. We can affect others, as well as ourselves, by our prayers. I do not deny it. When I lift my hand it is in answer to prayer. I desire it, and the hand rises obedient to that desire. This power, so omnipotent over my own body, is not destitute of power over others. The mother may affect her boy by her strong desires, though the thick ness of the world lies between them. Unconsciously, prayers have thus been answered, the parties supposing that God had miraculously moved to bring about the result. There is a truth in this matter, and it behooves us to look into it. There is truth in the Roman Catholic idea of praying to the saints. Our friends in another world, as we say, are in reality in this world, for the spirit-world and this are in direct embrace. These spirit friends are around us for good, generally speaking, and we can frequently obtain their assistance by asking for it. Here is a prayer which to me seems sensible, and perfectly in accordance with natural law. There is also a truth in the belief of the influence of prayer upon the soul. The true man lives in an atmosphere of prayer, and these aspirations for good gradually change his whole nature in accordance with the great principles of growth, and lift him higher and higher in the scale of being.

But prayer also works evil as well as good, in its power to affect others. See those revivalists gathering like vultures around that poor, trembling sinner! They are perfect magnetic batteries charged with superstition, and they psychologize him till he feels the influence of what he calls a "changed heart"—he has got religion—but it has no more to do with any God or Holy Spirit than the result produced on the mesmerist subject, who sees the mosquito or the craw-

was distinctively women's work, and that man could not perform it without loss of dignity. So strong was this feeling that the best men who were guilty of military offenses to grudgingly accept an humiliating punishment. Yet an American woman who should make grueling corn her occupation would undoubtedly be thought to have invaded man's sphere; if still not entitled to respect, that any useful and important work was properly to be done by anybody who could do it well.

TO BOOK PURCHASERS.

Colby & Rich, Publishers, 14 Franklin Street, Boston, Mass., keep for sale a complete assortment of Spiritualist, Progressive, Reformatory and Miscellaneous Books, at Wholesale and Retail Prices. Terms Cash. Orders for Books, to be sent by Express, must be accompanied by full or cash. When the money is forwarded, it is not sufficient to fill the order, the balance must be paid. C. O. D. Orders for Books, to be sent by Mail, must be accompanied by cash to the amount of each order. We would send our patrons the balance of the fractional part of a dollar in postage stamps—ones and twos preferred. Postage stamps in quantities of 50¢ or more than one dollar will not be accepted. All business orders looking to the sale of books on commission respectfully declined. Any book published in England or America (not out of print) will be sent by mail or express. Catalogues of Books Published and for Sale by Colby & Rich sent free.

SPECIAL NOTICES.

In quoting from the BANNER OF LIGHT care should be taken to distinguish between editorial articles and the communications of correspondents. Our columns are open for the expression of impersonal free thought, but we cannot undertake to endorse the varied shades of opinion to which correspondents give utterance. We do not read anonymous letters and communications. The name and address of the writer are in all cases indispensable as a guarantee of good faith, and are not used, unless the writer or publisher consents to their publication. When newspapers are forwarded which contain matter for our inspection, the sender will confer a favor by drawing a line around the article he desires especially to recommend for perusal. Notices of Spiritualist Meetings, in order to insure prompt insertion, must reach this office on Monday, as the BANNER OF LIGHT goes to press every Tuesday.

Banner of Light.

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SPIRITUALISM is the Science and Philosophy of the Universe as viewed from the Spiritual Standpoint. It is identical with Spiritualism.—SPIRIT S. B. BRITTON.

Degrees in Spirit-Life.

We have been very much interested and instructed by the reading of an address, delivered in London through the mediumship of J. J. Morse, on "Three Degrees of Spirit-Life." It is a discourse which, without the mention of names, is a cogent reply to the ignorant strictures urged ever and anon against Spiritualism by people of the Brooklyn Talmage stripe. Referring to the increasing skepticism concerning the doctrine of immortality as furnished by the Christian faith, the conceptions prevailing in regard to the future life having grown more and more complicated and confusing, the controlling spirit says that the idea of a future life taught by Churchian Christianity does not minister to the intellectual requirements of advancing civilization to-day, and that men, therefore, direct their attention to this world and its concerns, to humanity and its present possibilities, rather than to a future life and a hypothetical race of beings called spirits, or angels. The attempt, however, to improve the ideas and opinions respecting the future life is beset with difficulties which are the outcome of the erroneous and egregious errors which this Churchian teaching has created and imposed. The cultured and intelligent classes, having emancipated themselves from dogmatic rule and theological subservency, naturally say to any other class who attempts to deal with the doctrine of future life: "How do we know that your statements are not equally superstitious with those we have abandoned?"

Then the speaking spirit inquires, which, among the classes of people to-day, are able to deal with this question of the future life in a manner and a measure that will be in any degree satisfactory? It answers its own question with the statement that there are only two classes who can do it—the followers of Emanuel Swedenborg and the disciples of Modern Spiritualism. These two divisions of faith, belief or hope in the doctrine of a future state are the only two that are real leaders in spiritual matters; the only two classes that have some reason and solid foundation for their statements; the only two that appeal in any way to reason, to fact, and to experience in regard to matters that relate to a future life. In the case of the Swedish seer, it is but citing the dead past to suit the requirements of the living present, which is always dangerous, unless the evidence of the past can be reproduced to-day. But in the case of the Spiritualist, if asked on what he rests, he at once answers: "On a living, present-day communion; a demonstration here and now that there is communion between the two worlds, and that men who have gone forward into the spirit-world can hold communion with their fellows left behind in this state." And the Spiritualist says further, "I am prepared to prove it, and to put you in the way of proving it for yourselves." The whole question at once, then, assumes a new aspect, and there are only three ways of meeting it.

The first way is to laugh it down, to sneer at it and ridicule it; to call those who believe in it fanatics or fools; to laugh the whole matter out of hearing, as too absurd for the intelligence of this nineteenth century. The other methods are, either scientifically or theologically to denounce the whole; to say that mediums are rascals and impostors, and all Spiritualists fools or knaves, who deserve to be put down by the strong arm of the law—that mediums and believers should be put under the ban of the Church and Society—that the practice of Spiritualism should be deemed illegal, and every profession of belief in it either the act of a criminal or the craze of a lunatic—and theologically to damn every believer to endless pains and penalties of flame and hell for an honest attempt to solve the mystery and the nature of the hereafter. Bigotry, it seems, is not confined to the pulpit. It is found equally in the study of certain scientists, and among those who plead the hardest for physical research, but who at once draw the line when physical research is mentioned. "You will never get intellectual liberty or spiritual freedom," said the gifted speaker, "while the police court is the reward on one side or hell the end of it on the other." Therefore this is the conclusion which confronts us: that the claims of Spiritualism demand to be investigated as honestly and as rigidly as the claims of any scientific discovery preferred for the confirmation of the world.

If the claims of Spiritualism cannot stand the scientific scrutiny and the most thorough

and complete examination, then Spiritualism will have to take its place among the epidemic delusions which have from time to time visited the world, and every Spiritualist will have to confess himself deceived. This is the defensive attitude of Spiritualism; but when it claims to have a present-day demonstration of the future life, it shows itself at once to be the better of the two parties that are capable of dealing with the reality of a future life, and that is able to remove some of the misconceptions regarding that life, helping humanity to a more rational understanding of a life that in itself is a rational life which is now being pursued by good mortals humanity. If accepted on such grounds, Spiritualism is the best of all forms of thought that are to-day capable of throwing light upon the problems of the future. The subject is divisible into three branches. There are three planes of spiritual life, which are the actual condition itself in each case. There are likewise three planes of development in the individuals who will be found in these three degrees of spiritual life. And there are, also, three grades of quality in the individual cases. This, however, is but the threshold of the subject, as it were, and its treatment must not be considered as dealing with the entirety of the spirit-life, either in regard to its facts or to its possibilities.

The first stage of this spirit-life is here in this world; if we are here externally material beings, internally we are spiritual beings, and internally this world is a spiritual world also. We are living here in a double existence, and here in this world is the first degree of spiritual existence. We grow and mature spiritually as we grow and mature physically, and we unfold our spiritual nature and qualities as our external nature and qualities are unfolded. The ripeness of earthly manhood is a development of spiritual manhood; and when that period is reached, the processes of what we call death really begin their operations. Death is but the severance of our interior relations and external conditions. We become actually a spiritual being afterward, being free from this physical relationship which we had previously sustained. We are not necessarily taken out of the world; we may be living in its inner life, a spiritual being, living within the spiritual possibilities contained within the material world. Hence, the first degree of spirit-life—said the speaker—is being such the inner sphere of this world, and, being such, will present to its inhabitants the counterpart of all the former conditions that they have been acquainted with. It is the threshold of spiritual existence, as it is only the primary school. It is not an exalted place, yet it is a veritable spiritual home, with many familiar indications to its inhabitants, and it is as gratefully accepted as the present life is.

Passing beyond the threshold—continues Mr. Morse's control—there is a spiritual condition surrounding the world itself; a kind of belt surrounding it, very much as the well-known rings surround the planet Saturn. On this zone of spiritual life are found external phenomenal forms of life corresponding to those which are found here. They bear essential relationship to forms and orders of life previously known to exist in the world whence those living among them have come. This zone of spiritualized matter forms the "spirit-land," and is really the first distinct spiritual degree into which the departed spirit enters. It affords the spirit all the opportunities for progress and unfoldment which his aspirations demand. This constitutes the second degree of discrete spiritual existence. But it does not supply complete opportunities for the development of the possibilities that the soul feels stirring within its being. A third stage is therefore demanded, and it is found on a zone of spiritualized matter that is substantially contributed to by the etherized essence thrown off from all planets in this particular solar system. That third stage is a zone, so to call it, of spiritualized matter, created by substances exhaled from the entirety of planets composing the planetary system, and having for its centre the sun itself. Thus we have three degrees of spirit-life; but we are not to conclude that a passage through them will bring into action all the possibilities belonging to our spirit nature.

It is only the possibilities brought into action by man's life in this world that are liberated during his passage through these several degrees. Then an altogether new development unfolds itself, and possibilities never before dreamed of arise in the spirit's career. They are real conditions that belong to the two subsequent stages; there is nothing imaginary or subjective about the spiritual world any more than about this world. It is a realm of forces in operation—of forms and organization; it is a realm of realities, diversified with all the infinite varieties of scenery and situation which mark the diversity of this. But there is this essential difference between the spiritual and material conditions: so far as this world is concerned, it may aptly be described as only a blurred, misshapen caricature, the faintest prophecy of the grandeur and beauty which the two succeeding degrees of spiritual life present and unfold. Nevertheless it is a prophecy. To a certain extent it is representative. The completed picture is only the fulfillment of the preliminary sketch. This world is but an outline sketch, a faint suggestion of the sublime realities that are unfolded in the next. Everything that can make life beautiful, everything that can disclose the unapproachable skill of God, everything that can manifest his wisdom, is there expressed: A real world, with physical diversities, with flora and fauna, the unfoldment of the glorious harmonies of God himself.

It will naturally be asked what are the qualities of these three degrees of being. In their lower forms, their qualities would be expressed by their Loves. Love in its lowest form and most selfish expression is the condition and quality of those who are to be found in the first degree of life—that is, the inner spiritual life of the world. But ultimately rising from that element, it undergoes a moral and intellectual unfoldment that may be described as the development of the ruling power of Justice. In this degree of spirit-life the sense of justice is unfolded, and men learn to live more justly and honorably, to make better use of the powers and qualities they possess, to unfold themselves in regard to higher truths, and to unfold their intellectual faculty to a higher degree than hitherto, as they have unfolded, in the former degree, the purely affectional capacity of their nature. By-and-by the development becomes complete, and desires for other fields of action begin to arise in the mind, and finally the spirit is able to migrate to the next degree of spirit-life, which is the sphere of Wisdom. It then becomes a self-centred, spiritual being; the spiritual nature of the individual then asserts itself. All the lower and grosser elements consequent upon the passage through

material life, with its associations, now disappear entirely, and the higher, better, and truer selfhood asserts itself. Love, Justice and Wisdom are the several qualities and the three degrees of development, expressed in the three several states which the spirit passes through.

These three degrees of spirit-life are presented in the name of Spiritualism; and hence Spiritualism is the one of all forms of thought to-day that attempts to give a truly rational solution of the problems of a future life. It makes no appeal to superstition or credulity. It makes no appeal to the partiality of God as expressed in the idea of people being rewarded with happiness hereafter, through their profession of a particular faith. But it gives to every man and woman, good or bad, wise or foolish, a place in the immortal realms which they fit and fill, and offers to every inhabitant of immortal life other places, which, when they are fit, they shall fill also. It opens up possibilities of internal expansion of character, progress and development for all mankind. And it is prepared to vindicate its statements by putting others into communication with those alone who can make sure statements as to such matters, namely, the inhabitants themselves of these degrees of spirit-life.

A Clergyman Offends his Parishioners by Healing the Sick.

A curious case is reported in the Times (Hartford, Ct.) of May 8th. Stratford, the pleasant old Connecticut town which is the scene of the occurrence, will be remembered as having been the locality where in 1849 and '50 a series of very marked physical demonstrations of spirit power in the control of material objects took place, at the residence of Rev. Dr. Phelps. Now the case is a very different one: the mysterious power, instead of seeking to attract attention by grotesque disturbances of household goods, is exercised simply for the benefit of sick and suffering humanity. "The Rev. Arthur Sloan, the rector of Christ Church," says the Times, "has been curing several cases of disease that had baffled the doctors, through the occult power known as the 'faith cure,' or 'mind cure.' His cures began to attract so much attention, and to create so much talk, that his wardens and vestry did not like it. Clearly it was not respectable to have the rector engaged in such work. The proprieties must be consulted. Mrs. Grundy was around. If there was any high example in the New Testament to justify the rector in healing publicans and sinners, that, evidently, was not thought of by the wardens and vestrymen; the one thing that was patent and conspicuous was, that the Rev. Arthur Sloan, rector of Christ Church, was doing such things as ill seemed a rector and the conventionalities which he should follow."

So great was the disaffection caused in the society on account of its pastor following the apostolic lead in filling his office, that Bishop Williams was sent for, and found himself, upon his arrival and listening to the facts, in a very unpleasant dilemma, from which he saw it was impossible to immediately extricate himself, and so concluded to hold the case under advisement.

But we are told by the Times, the Stratford rector, knowing that the cures he has wrought—whatever these may be—have not been due to his seeking, and believing the case involves a truth, or a law, as holy as any other, decides to be true to that conviction, and to follow now the dictates of that inner tribunal which he cannot escape in the great hereafter, even were he to stifle its voice here and adhere to the respectable regulations and the supposed proprieties that hedge about the walk and conversation of a rector of the Church of Christ. So he resigns, without waiting to hear from the good Bishop, and thus relieves that worthy prelate of a puzzling responsibility, while at the same time he feels freer to follow the behests of individual duty.

Death of William H. Mumler.

Mr. William H. Mumler, who became prominently identified with Spiritualism many years ago as a medium for the production of what were termed spirit-photographs, and was one of the earliest instruments for that phase of spirit-manifestation, passed from this sphere of existence on Friday of last week, May 16th. Mr. Mumler was born in this city in 1832. For a period of twenty years he followed the profession of an engraver, in which he became very proficient, and attained an extended reputation for excellent work in that line. Being naturally of an inventive turn of mind, he was susceptible to the influence of spirit-intelligences, seeking to convey to earth new methods of artistic skill, and eventually produced what is known as the Mumler-process, by which photo-electrotype plates are produced and as readily printed from as wood cuts on an ordinary printing-press, and at great saving of expense. A company for operating the business was formed about seven years ago, of which he was treasurer, continuing such until his decease.

And now there is another find. One of our exchanges informs us that a certain "learned librarian" while preparing the catalogue of the "Anglica Library at Rome, has discovered a manuscript containing fifty letters attributed to the great St. Augustine, and naively adds that it will be difficult to pronounce on their authenticity until a "critical examination of their Latinity and style be instituted, as it is at least a fact that these letters were unknown to the compilers of the works of St. Augustine." Had this critical examination of the Latinity and style of Tacitus been instituted prior to the attempt to foist his admission of "the Christ" upon the "faithful," the scheme might possibly have proven a success, and investigators of the present day would have one reason less for looking with suspicion on the "finds of learned librarians."

"CURIOUS SPIRITUALISTS."—We understand that there are Spiritualists in Baltimore and New York who send their children to creedal Sunday schools instead of the Spiritual Lyceums. A correspondent under the heading of "Maryland," says there are wealthy men in Baltimore who are confirmed Spiritualists in private, that take no part in any public spiritualistic movement. It is just the same in other cities. These are the eleventh-hour converts, who will by-and-by, when Spiritualism becomes popular, come to the front as would-be "leaders"—there are two or three of this class in our ranks already, we are sorry to say.

Dr. J. M. Peebles, though publicly persisting that he is not in the spiritualistic field, addressed the Spiritualists of Stratford, Ct., the first two Sundays of May, and during the week-day evenings lectured upon Physiology and Hygiene, besides giving a private lecture to gentlemen and ladies each. This society owns an excellent office.

The American Spiritualist Alliance.

On the second page of the present number of the Banner the reader will find a concise summary of last year's proceedings of this useful institution, as presented by its indefatigable President, Nelson Cross, Esq.

We are pleased to note, among other things, that the replies to the circular letter on affiliation issued by this society and forwarded to others in various parts of this country and Europe indicate that the idea has been received with general approval.

[In that part of the report touching on the transition of some of its members "Mr. Henry O. Barr" should read Baker. In the following paragraph, wherein the generosity of a kind lady friend is acknowledged, the name should read Miss Elizabeth Mason, instead of Mrs.]

At the annual meeting of the Alliance held at headquarters, on the 13th inst., the following officers were unanimously elected for the ensuing year:

President, Nelson Cross; First Vice-President, H. J. Newton; Second Vice-President, Chas. Partridge; Treasurer, F. S. Maynard; Corresponding Secretary, Charles P. McCarthy; Recording Secretary, J. F. Jeanneret; Councilors, Mrs. M. A. Newton, Erastus Benn, E. Leonard. All communications should be addressed to the Secretary, J. F. Jeanneret, 137 West 35th street, New York City.

We are in receipt of a report of the proceedings of the Alliance, May 4th and 11th, furnished us by Secretary Jeanneret, which we shall print next week.

Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten in New York.

This lady is now awakening much interest by her discourses at Republican Hall. She is ready to consider proposals for lectures elsewhere, on Spiritualism, also "Astronomy," "Egypt," "New Zealand," etc. These latter addresses are finely illustrated by stereopticon views of a high order of merit, and cannot fail of being of a mentally attractive and profitable character. The practical value of her platform addresses upon Spiritualism *per se*, requires no additional endorsement at our hands. Mrs. Britten can be addressed for the present at 263 West 34th street, New York City.

Mrs. Richmond.

Had a grand public reception in the Town Hall, Kensington, London, April 30th, presided over by "M. A. (Oxon)." We shall publish a full account in our next issue.

Last week, under the heading of "PENTATEUCH HUMBUGS," we paid our respects to the "Prof. Wayland-W. H. Conant" combination of jugglers, who were reported to be, May 11th, operating in Brattleboro, Vt. Since then we are in receipt of a copy of *The Reformer*, of that place, (dated May 16th,) in which the editor devotes about one and one-half columns to showing up these swindlers as they deserve. He concludes his scathing denunciation with the following paragraph, to every word of which we earnestly say: "Amen!"

"New York, Massachusetts and Vermont papers will confer a service upon their respective towns by passing these fellows round as fifth-rate humbugs, and by so doing will probably save their fellow townspeople from being badly 'taken in.'"

Our thanks are due, and are hereby extended to "A Friend," in Chicopee, Mass., who sent on May 19th two beautiful floral offerings for our Free Circle Meeting table. These decorations, in which choice colors were blended with excellent taste, were in the form of a floral anchor, and a bow and arrow, and were from the well-known conservatory of N. J. Herriot, of Springfield, Mass. The letter of transmittal set forth the inspiring source of this grateful art in the following laconic style: "I send by express this P. M., flowers for Spirit George Combe, the phrenologist, his brother, Dr. Andrew Combe, and the Indian, Samoset, who said, 'Welcome, Englishmen,' to the little band at Plymouth."

We are in receipt of the first number of a spiritualistic weekly paper of eight pages, which is published in Oakland, Cal., at \$3.00 per year, entitled *The Pacific Leader*—O. S. Ingham, Mary A. Gunn and G. W. Gunn, proprietors. The editor, Mr. Ingham, says in his salutatory that as there are supposed to be at least fifty thousand professed Spiritualists on the Pacific coast, such a respectable body of people should have an organ there devoted to the interests of Spiritualism, and that the *Leader* hopes to fill this demand. Success to our new contemporary.

It gives us pleasure to state that Mr. S. T. Marchant has been made the recipient of a benefit testimonial contributed to by the members of "The School of Mediumship," Brooklyn, N. Y., in token of their esteem and regard for that gentleman as a friend and co-laborer in the cause they represent. The gift was accompanied with a pleasant note, stating the above as the purpose of the presentation, signed by Mrs. M. A. Gridley, under whose supervision the School is conducted, and each individual member.

Among the spirit-messages in this issue is one from Katie Richardson, in which she relates the sad story of her brief earthly life. The scene was most affecting, and many in the audience were in tears during its recital. At its close, a reverend gentleman who was present said: "It was a most touching discourse, fitted to pierce the heart of any man who had ever found himself willing to sacrifice the innocence of woman to his own selfish and cruel desires."

The *Wicket Island Home*, Onset Bay, Mass., will be opened to the public for the season, on the 26th inst., Mr. W. I. Wilcox, manager and proprietor. Mrs. A. E. Cutter, M. D., will be on hand to welcome her many friends, as heretofore, while Mrs. Helen Wilcox, who is said to be an excellent clairvoyant, business and test-medium, can be consulted at this very healthy locality.

Alluding to the recent bereavement in the Royal Family of England, the *Spiritual Record* says: "The amiable and clever Prince was, like some, if not all, his nearest relatives, a Spiritualist, not from hearsay only, but from personal observation of spiritual manifestations."

Miss Lottie Fowler, who has so thoroughly satisfied the British public of the legitimacy of her mediumship, is in town for only a few weeks—therefore those who desire to have sittings with her should do so at once.

Read the announcements of the forthcoming Spiritualist Conventions, etc., etc., on various pages of the present issue.

Two Fine Discourses.

Specially reported for our columns, will appear in the *Banner of Light* next week, viz.:

"Dr. Talmage, the Slanderer of Spiritualists," a lecture delivered before the Ladies' Aid Society of Boston, on Sunday evening, May 11th. "Materialization: Is it True? And if so, What is the Philosophy of its Production?" An address selected by the audience and given by Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, at Republican Hall, New York, Sunday morning, May 11th, before the First Spiritualist Society.

A correspondent, Mr. Thomas Wright, informs us that the well-known materializing medium, Mrs. N. D. Miller, after nine months' stay in St. Louis, returned to Denver, Colorado, where she held very successful sances, convincing many of the truth of Spiritualism. She was to leave Denver about the 20th inst. for Los Angeles and San Francisco, and return to St. Louis about the 1st of October.

Colby & Rich, Book Publishers, No. 9 Bowditch street, Boston, have received the third edition from the author of "THE RELIGION OF SPIRITUALISM, ITS PHENOMENA AND PHILOSOPHY," by Samuel Watson. The work contains a fine steel-plate portrait of the author. Fuller particulars may be found in another column.

The London Medium of May 2d reprints Bro. Henry J. Horn's address on the occasion of the thirty-sixth anniversary of the discovery of the rappings at Hydesville, that was delivered before the Saratoga Society of Spiritualists, of which he is President. Mr. Burns considers Bro. Horn's anniversary speech a valuable historical document.

The English Spiritualistic papers continue to give interesting accounts of extraordinary psychographic sances with Mr. Eglington, whose mediumship is unquestioned. We shall print in our next an account of a sitting recently given by him in London, that our readers may judge for themselves.

Mr. Colville's London letter on another page of this issue speaks encouragingly of the progress of Modern Spiritualism in England. It says the American trance-medium, Mrs. Cora L. Richmond, had an enthusiastic reception in the British metropolis on her arrival. We are in receipt of the elegantly printed programme.

We are in receipt of the first number of *L'Anti-Mitracle*, a semi-monthly journal published in Paris, by the Zouave Jacob. In its table of contents we notice several articles from the pens of Claudius Raynaud, Farfadet, and a list of the works of Zouave Jacob, entitled, "Quackery in Medicine and Hygiene."

Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten's remarkable work, *NINETEENTH CENTURY MIRACLES*, has already reached a sale amounting to thousands of copies. An announcement concerning its scope, illustrations and character will be found on our fifth page.

The First Society of Spiritualists of Brooklyn, N. Y., tendered Mr. and Mrs. J. Wm. Fletcher a public reception on Monday evening, May 19th, at Conservatory Hall. The exercises consisted of music, speaking, etc.

J. Clegg Wright

Addressed the Ladies' Aid Society of Boston at its Parlor, No. 1031 Washington street, on the afternoon and evening of Sunday last. His presence on both occasions called out large audiences, and his remarks were heartily endorsed by all present. In the afternoon he spoke upon "Inspiration Illustrated in Literature, Art and Civilization"; in the evening he considered "The Mythological Origin of Dogmatic Christianity."

Next Sunday afternoon and evening he speaks at the same place, which will be his last Sunday in Boston for the present. His evening lecture on that date will have for its topic the query, "Moses or Darwin—Which?"

On Sunday, June 1st, Mr. Wright speaks for the Portland, Me., Society, returning to Boston for rest the remainder of the week. He will, on June 8th, be present at the Yearly Convention to be held in Manchester, N. H. Mr. Wright is to be a permanent attraction at the Nashaminy Falls Camp-Meeting this season, and cannot fail of accomplishing much good work for that popular enterprise.

The Boston Spiritual Temple

Will close its second successful season with a Grand Musical, Literary and Social Entertainment at Horticultural Hall on Wednesday evening, May 28th, commencing at 8 o'clock.

Short addresses will be given by Mrs. R. Shepard Little and Mr. J. Clegg Wright; musical exercises will be participated in by Mrs. D. M. Wilson, Mr. J. T. Little and others; recitations by Miss Onthank, Miss Kate Wilson and Miss Kittie M. Bosquet; the young Misses Katie Lee and Cora Beaudry, but seven years of age (whose performances were so interesting and gave such general satisfaction at the Anniversary celebration), will sing and dance in costume; Mrs. G. V. G. Heberton (the original Yankee girl, "Matilda Jane," of Father Gray's old folks' troupe of New York), will also take part, making a combination of talent that cannot fail to draw a crowded house.

In addition to the above, we understand, Mrs. Little has painted two elegant pictures which she has kindly donated to the Society. They have been placed in appropriate gilt frames, and are to become the property of the individuals who are so fortunate as to purchase the tickets bearing upon their face the lucky numbers.

Mrs. M. A. Howes, the test medium, who has lately resided at No. 30 East Newton street, has now taken up her abode at No. 6 Worcester Square, and dedicated her new residence on Tuesday evening by a gathering of some of her friends for social, literary and spiritual entertainment, and this trinity, or three, in one, was very successful. Among those present was Mr. Ayres, of Chester Park, who is one of the principal promoters of the new temple now being erected on the Back Bay; also Dr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lovering, the medium, and others belonging to that society; Mrs. M. V. Lincoln, also, of the Ladies' Aid Society; Mr. Foss and others of the Temple Society, which holds its meetings at Horticultural Hall, and Mr. Wetherbee, who belongs to all in general and none in particular. The honored guests of the occasion were Mr. J. Clegg Wright and Dr. J. V. Mansfield. There was present, also, some fine musical talent. After appropriate remarks by Mrs. Howes, followed by some amusing squaw talk through Mrs. Lincoln, entranced, and then a soft strain of music, Mr. Wright arose and spoke very eloquently for about an hour, catching on to the Indian idea that preceded him, and gradually getting into deeper as well as varied trains of thought, he was exceedingly interesting as well as instructive, and was enthusiastically applauded. Mr. Wetherbee was then called upon, but rather hesitated following such a logical Niagara, but was persuaded by a manifest polite desire that he say something. He attempted the reading of a short Indian poem, but had to give it up, the print being too fine for his optics, and he terminated in a speech instead. Well, it made a break, and prepared the way for a brief speech from the Rev. Mr. Taylor, who was followed by Mr. Mansfield, who said he was no talker, but he interested the friends in some length by anecdotes and remarkable spiritual manifestations from his experience, which in spiritual matters runs back some thirty years since he began his work of materializing for the spirits. Then, it getting late, the very brief and gathering separated.

now the candle holds up a half-crescent formed of flowers; their background is white; in the center is the word "Peace," formed of purple violets.

