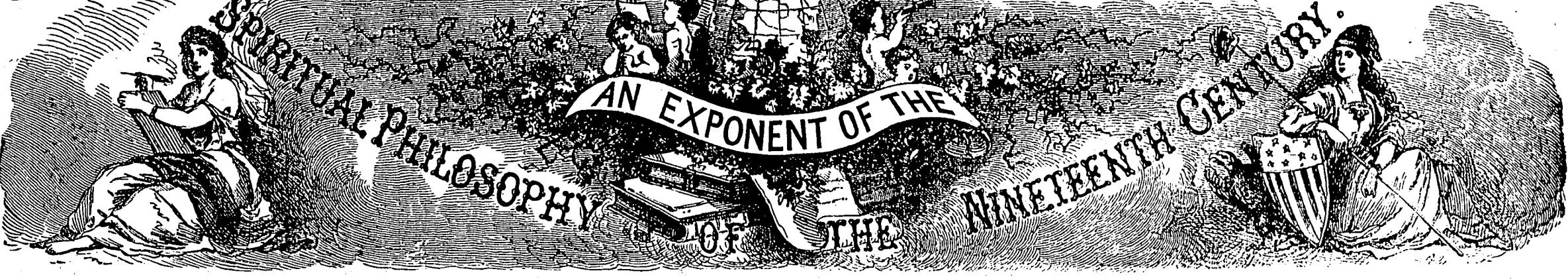


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## The Rostrom.

### PRAYER:

TO WHOM SHALL WE PRAY?—BENEFITS OF PRAYER  
—ANSWERS TO PRAYER—SHALL WE PRAY  
TO THE ANGELS?—SHALL WE PRAY  
FOR THE DEAD?—PRAYER IN  
SPIRITUAL CIRCLES.

A Lecture Delivered in the Free Course of Spiritualist Meetings at Parker Memorial Hall, Boston, Mass., Sunday Afternoon, Oct. 13th.

BY DR. JAMES M. PEEBLES.

[Reported for the Banner of Light.]

After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father, which art in heaven.—Matt. vi. 9.

"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him."—James v. 13-14.

"A Jew stepped into a Parsee temple and saw there the holy fire. He spake to the priest: What, do you worship the fire? Not the fire, replied the priest: It is to us an emblem of the sun, and of its genial light. Then asked the Jew, Do you then worship the sun as your God? Do you not know that this also is a creation of the Almighty? That we know, answered the priest, but man being dependent on his senses, needs sensible signs in order to apprehend the Most High. And is not the sun, the type of the invisible, incomprehensible Source of light that embraces and blesses all?"

"Then the Israelite answered: Do you people, then, distinguish the type from the prototype? Already they call the sun their god, and even sinking from this again to a lower image, bow before the earthly flame. You charm his external and dazzle his internal eye; and while you hold up before him the earthly light, you withdraw from him the heavenly. You should not make unto thee any image, nor any likeness at all."

"How then, asked the Parsee, do you designate the highest nature? The Jew replied: We call it JEHOVAH ADONAI, that is, the Lord who is, who was, and who will be! Your word is great and glorious, said the Parsee, but it is fearful."

"A Christian then stepped up and said, We call him OUR FATHER. "A Christian then stepped up and said, We call him OUR FATHER. "A Christian then stepped up and said, We call him OUR FATHER. "A Christian then stepped up and said, We call him OUR FATHER."

"And when we pray we say OUR FATHER. The Gentile and the Jew looked on each other with amazement, and said, That is the nearest and the highest. But who gives you the courage thus to address the Eternal? Who else, said the Christian, but He, the Father himself?"

"And when they understood it they believed, and lifted up their eyes joyfully toward heaven, and said, full of fervor and spirit, Father! dear Father!"

"And now all three shook hands and called themselves BROTHERS."—The Parable.

The crescent, in some parts of the world, holds the ascendancy over the cross. All religions have their symbols. It is estimated that there are some two hundred millions of Mahometans in Eastern lands, and it is universally conceded by travelers that they are a people given to prayer. The muezzins' calls to prayer sound from the minarets of the mosques five times each day. When the first rays of light stream from Eastern skies, the plaintive half-singing prayer is heard—"Awake, awake and pray. It is better to pray than to sleep. There is but one God, Allah." At noontime the piteous, pleading command goes forth, "Come to prayer—there is only one God, Allah, the merciful." Two hours before sundown, at the going down of the sun in clouds of gold, and again two hours after sunset, the faithful are summoned to prayer.

The Jews for thousands of years have repaired to their synagogues and reverently bowed in prayer to Jehovah, the God of Israel. Hindus and Parsis in their temples, and Roman Catholic, Greek and Protestant Christians, have their set seasons, days and hours for supplication and prayer. Worship and prayer in some form, like the desire for immortality, are almost if not altogether universal. They seem to be innate sentiments of the soul, bubbling up spontaneously, as do crystal streams from living fountains.

It has been said that moles never look up to see the light. This might be expected of burrowing moles. And so swine feast upon acorns in autumn-time, but never look up in thoughtful gratitude to the oak from whence they fell. Men are more than swine. They feast in gratitude upon the divine bounty, and rest in security upon the bosom of the ineffable Presence.

But what is prayer?  
What its object and uses?  
To whom shall we pray?  
What are the benefits of prayer?

Are prayers, thanksgivings and invocations synonyms—that is to say, convertible terms?

Prayer is not posture; not a cold repetition of words; not self-excitation; not chafing the skin; not irritating the throat; not scarring the knees; not fretting the emotions; not twisting and struggling at our shoe-latches to lift ourselves to a heated heaven; but in the best sense prayer is aspiration; the gushing-up of the soul's desires; the overflowing of the soul's gratitude; the expression of great resolves for high and holy attainments; the silent strugglings of the divinity within after the Infinite Good!

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

Prayer, gratitude and invocation must not be confounded. These words have entirely different meanings. The more philosophical seldom pray to God in words. With them prayer is not the term to be used. Their so-called prayers partake more of profound aspiration—deep, up-welling gratitude and thanksgiving. It is useless to pray to God for selfishly personal and special favors, because God is unchangeable, governing the universe by fixed and immutable laws. Conscious, thoughtful souls, therefore, instead of pleading

of God to do this and that, reverently render gratitude and thanksgiving to the Infinite Father and Mother of us all. And while they thank God, they invoke the presence and the aid of angels and sympathizing ministering spirits, and they also pray for the dead—for the morally dead in this world; and for the so-called dead in the lower spheres of the spirit-world. Phenologically speaking, man has the cranial organ of reverence, and accordingly aspiration and thanksgivings are natural. As soul emotions, they reach outward and upward toward God, the Infinite All-Father. But prayer as supplication does not change the Deific Mind, nor the divine laws of Nature. These are absolutely immutable. The apple falls; the missile, hurled from the sling, descends to earth; the planets roll in circling grandeur through the interstellar spaces, and no prayers can affect them, nor can a link in the chain of causation be severed!

We grow to be like what we think of. Thinking, then, of God, gratitude to God and aspirations toward God are serviceable, inasmuch as they draw us toward the ideal of perfection. The Indian, with skin attached by strips of bark to the mammoth rock in the circular lake, did not, by looking at and pulling, draw the rock to him, but himself to the rock. God is the rock eternal. Changes are in us, not God.

Jesus, in the popular acceptance of the term, was not a praying man. If bodily in our midst to-day he would not patronize twelve o'clock prayer-meetings. He continually rebuked the pious frauds and shams of his age. Sanctimonious hypocrites trembled in his presence. "When thou prayest," said he, "thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." "Wo unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation!"

Fearful and abominable are some of the abuses of prayer. During our civil war, with its six hundred battles, chaplains north and south prayed for victories, each with equal fervency. The great Napoleon trusted more, however, "to dry powder and plenty of it," than to prayers. The sectarist in times of drought prays God to send down copious showers; the reformer prays by irrigating his fields and gardens. The sectarist prays God to provide food to feed the starving poor; the philanthropist prays by carrying them well-filled baskets and helping them to remunerative employment. The sectarist prays God to promote the cause of temperance and dry up the drinking saloons; the reformer prays by signing the pledge and inducing others to do the same. The sectarist, digesting a warm meal, kneels by a downy bed and prays God to clothe the widow and comfort the fatherless; the reformer, not lazy enough to ask God to do his work for him, feeds the orphan and cheerfully supports the widow. Sectarists, as governors in Southern States, issue proclamations calling to fasting and prayer to stay the deadly prevalence of the yellow fever, and even the bishop of Ohio puts forth a form of prayer, virtually asking God to arrest the plague at once that is now draping the sunny South in vestures of mourning; the scientist and the royal-soldier reformer pray by sending sums of money to the poor sufferers, and by insisting that hereafter Southern cities shall drain their marshes, remove their cess-pools, cleanse their lanes and streets, disinfect their cellars, purify their yards and houses, and rigidly obey the laws of hygiene.

Sectarian Christians say their prayers in sepulchral tones, while reformers and Spiritualists do their prayers. Work and prayer should go together. Douglass, the colored orator, said that "when he prayed to his legs and used them" he got his liberty.

Every bush and flower and forest-tree is aflame with aspiration. And prayer in the sense of aspiration is the human feeling after the divine—the human everywhere, in all lands, feeling after the divine. Each should pray for himself, pray a long prayer of ceaseless aspiration after all that is pure and true and holy. He should pray for others by doing them good. He should pray for the dead, whether in mortal bodies or disenthralled from them. He should recognize that divine ideal toward which we are tending—that hopeful longing to be true, to be noble, manly, and more like the immortal gods. The poet Lowell thus expresses it:

"Of all the myriad moods of mind  
That through the soul come thronging,  
Which one is clearest, so kind,  
So beautiful as longing?  
The thing we long for, that we are,  
For one transcendent moment,  
Before the present, poor and bare,  
Can make its sneering comment."

"Still, through our paltry strife and strife,  
Glow down the wished ideal,  
And longing mold in clay what life  
Carves in the marble real;  
To let the new life in, we know  
Desire must open the portal;  
Perhaps the longing to be so  
Helps make the soul immortal."

"Longing is God's fresh, heavenward will  
With our poor earthward striving;  
We quench it that we may be still  
Content with merely living;  
But would we learn that heart's full scope  
Our lives are hourly wronging,  
Which must climb from hope to hope,  
And realize our longing."

"Ah, let us hope that to our praise  
Good God not only reckons  
The moments when we tread his ways  
But when the spirit beckons!  
That some slight good is wrought,  
Beyond self-satisfaction,  
When we are simply good in thought,  
Howe'er we fail in action."

Spiritualism does not, as certain sectarists have said, detract from belief in and worship of God. Our hearts' gratitude, our souls' highest aspirations, ever ascend to God, the Father and Mother of us all. And no enlightened Spiritualist worships spirits and angels in the sense that he does God. There is, as every scholar knows, a wide distinction between Latría, gratitude given to God, and Doula, prayers offered to saints, spirits and angels. There is an account given in the nineteenth chapter of Revelations of John's mistaking an angel for God. St. Augustine says: "This angel appeared in so glorious a manner that St. John took him to be the eternal God, and was about to give him divine honor, when the angel said, 'See thou do it not. I am an ancient prophet, one of thy fellow-servants; worship God.'" Spiritualists worship neither spirits nor mediums, as did Cornelius the centurion, when he "fell down to worship Peter," and to whom Peter said, "Stand up, for I also am a man."

The apostle James gave this command: "Pray for one another," and why not? Why should we not pray the prayers of good-will, and breathe out good wishes even to our enemies? And why should we not ask, ay, fervently pray for

apostles, prophets, and good angels to come into our presence?

Royal-arch companions and Knight Templars can descend and sit in subordinate Lodges to aid and counsel Apprenticed Masons. So martyrs, sages, prophets, and other exalted souls of heaven, though beyond the tears that so often bedim the eyes of mortals, though untroubled by the disappointments and the death-knells that so frequently cast a blight over the beautiful things of youth, still they cherish memories of their long-past mortal years, memories of a once struggling humanity, and can and do descend to minister to and guide us to the better, higher life.

Is it not right, then, to pray to them, right to invoke their presence? Are not Roman Catholics justifiable in praying to saints and seraphs? Often prayers are answered in the most wonderful manner—probably this is always so when, all things considered, it would be best.

The books of antiquity abound in records of prayers that were answered by gods, angels, and ministering spirits.

Diodorus Siculus assures us Osiris, one of Egypt's gods, was a great conqueror while living, and defied after his death. During wars he frequently prayed to tutelary gods for aid. Jupiter, according to Cicero, signifies helping-father. The Arcadians disputed with the Cretans the honor of giving him birth. Both countries, however, considered him originally a man. After his death he was put in the Pantheon and honored as god; ay, more, vows and prayers were offered to him, believing that he granted the mariner calm, the traveler a safe return, and the soldier victory. Xenophon testifies that Cyrus "prayed for the assistance of the heroes, the guardians of Media, and they helped him in battle." He further said that "the gods who hold the guardian care of mortals help and prosper those who pray to them." History repeats itself. Those in the living present who pray to angels and sympathizing spirits are often aided by them. Their prayers are answered. Take the following cases among thousands.

In a work by John Richardson Phillips, entitled "Remarkable Answers to Prayer," there are several given, one of which I will quote (page 21):

"A lady who had just sat down to breakfast had a strong impression upon her mind that she must instantly carry a loaf of bread to a poor man who lived about half-a-mile from her house, by the side of a common. Her husband wished her either to postpone taking the loaf of bread till after breakfast, or to send it by her servant, but she chose to take it herself instantly. As she approached the hut she heard the sound of a human voice. Willing to hear what it was, she stepped softly, and unperceived, opened the door. She now heard the poor man praying, and among other things he said, 'Oh, Lord, help me! Lord, Thou wilt help me! Thy providence cannot fail; Thy listening angels are ever present, and although my wife, self, and children have no bread to eat, and it is now a whole day since we had any, I know Thou wilt supply me (though Thou shouldst again rain down manna from heaven). The lady could wait no longer; she opened the door, 'Yes,' she replied, 'God has sent you relief. Take this loaf, and be encouraged to cast your care upon Him who careth for you; and when you ever want a loaf of bread come to my house.'"

To many the above may be conclusive proof of the direct answer to the prayer of this needy supplicant. To a mind coldly philosophical, it may simply appear a remarkable coincidence. To the materialistic and hypercritical scientist it may present itself as a superstition or ridiculous pretence, having no foundation in fact. By the Spiritualist it may be recognized as a truthful record and incontrovertible evidence of the wonderful operation of some admirable sympathetic psychological laws as yet very imperfectly understood.

"Take the perfectly well-authenticated case referred to by Epes Sargent, as related by the late Rev. Dr. Bushnell, of Capt. Yount, the Californian, who dreamed that an emigrant party were perishing two hundred miles off in the Carson Valley Pass. He got up an expedition, sent it out at his own expense, and rescued the remnant of a party that had undergone incredible sufferings in the snow. Will any intelligent Spiritualist scout the theory that the prayers of the sufferers may have attracted spirits who made the recipient and impressive mind of Capt. Yount their instrument for bringing about the rescue?"

"It needed no change of a law of Nature to produce these deliverances; and yet they may have been the direct result of the potency of earnest prayers, under certain favorable conditions."

The distinguished English naturalist, Alfred R. Wallace, in treating of the philosophy of and answers to prayers, says: "The recently discussed question of the efficacy of prayer receives a perfect solution by Spiritualism. Prayer may be often answered, though not directly, by the Deity. Nor does the answer depend wholly on the morality or the religion of the petitioner; but as men who are both moral and religious, and are firm believers in a divine response to prayer, will pray more frequently, more earnestly, and more disinterestedly, they will attract toward them a number of spiritual beings who sympathize with them, and who, when the necessary mediunistic power is present, will be able, as they are often willing, to answer prayer."

"A striking case is that of George Müller, of Bristol, who has now for forty-four years depended wholly for his own support, and that of his wonderful charities, on answer to prayer."

Mr. Wallace further observes, "his George Müller's narrative (6th edition, 1869), should have been referred to in the late discussion, since it furnishes a better demonstration that prayer is sometimes really answered than the hospital experiment proposed by Sir Henry Thomson could possibly have done. In this work we have a precise yearly statement of his receipts and expenditure for many years. He never asked any one, or allowed any one to be asked directly or indirectly, for a penny. No subscriptions or collections were ever made; yet from 1830 (when he married without any income whatever) he has lived, brought up a family, and established institutions which have steadily increased, till now four thousand orphan children are educated, and in part supported. It has happened hundreds of times that there has been no food in his house, and no money to buy any, or no bread, or milk, or sugar for the children. Yet he never took a loaf, or any other article, on credit even for a day; and during the thirty years over which his narrative extends, neither he nor the hundreds of children dependent upon him for their daily food have ever been without a regular meal! They have lived literally from hand to mouth; and his one and only resource has been secret prayer. Here is a case which has been going on in the midst of us for forty years, and is still going on; it has been published to the world many years, yet a warm discussion is carried on by eminent men as to the fact of whether prayer is or is not answered, and not one of them exhibits the least knowledge of this most pertinent and illustrative phenomenon! The Spiritualist explains all this as personal influence. The perfect simplicity, faith, boundless charity and goodness of George Müller have enlisted in his cause spiritual beings of a like nature, and his mediunistic powers have enabled them to work for him by influencing others to send him money, food, clothes, and all arriving just at the time most needed."—"Miracles and Modern Spiritualism," Wallace.

The above quotations of facts are sufficient to show that gods, angels and ministering spirits cognize human wants, and under proper conditions answer the prayers of pleading mortals.

Should we pray for the dead—that is to say, should we pray for the low, undeveloped spirits of the spirit-world?

This was the custom in Oriental countries, as their sacred books and scrolls abundantly prove. And then the early church fathers, such as St. Jerome, St. Cyprian, St. Hilary, St. Augustine, Origen, and others, not only believed in the continuance of spiritual gifts, but they believed in praying

for "the wicked dead." The first ecclesiastical father who called in question the invocation of angels and prayers for the dead was Vigilantius, who flourished something over three hundred years after Jesus Christ. The church fathers, with one united voice, stigmatized the teachings of the ambitious Vigilantius as untrue and unscholarly. St. Jerome in refuting him wrote: "The apostles and martyrs, while still in their bodies on earth, could pray for others at a time when they ought to have been solicitous concerning their own welfare; how much more natural is it that they should do so now, after the attainment of their crowns, their victories and their triumphs." Paul, the apostle, tells us that two hundred three-score and sixteen souls in the ship with him were saved by his prayers; and am I to believe that the moment he was dissolved, and began to be with Christ Jesus, that then his voice was hushed forever; that he had no longer the power even to breathe a prayer for those who had been evangelized by his preaching?

St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, who wrote in the Greek in the year 351, makes this observation: "We pray for the sick and the afflicted. . . . We commemorate those who have gone before us, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs. . . . We pray for the holy fathers, the bishops, the faithful departed for all the dead. . . . believing that their souls receive very great relief from these prayers."

St. Hilary, a compeer of Cyril, who wrote about 315, says "To those who wish to stand firmly, there is not wanting the custody of the saints nor the guardianship of the angels. . . . There are many spiritual powers that are called angels, who preside over churches and persons. They pray for us, and we pray for the dead."

St. Cyprian, who wrote in the year 218, gave this exhortation: "Let us be merciful of one another in our prayers; with one mind and one heart in this world and in the next. Let us always pray with mutual charity relieving our afflictions, and may our prayers for our brethren and sisters in whatever world not cease."

Origen, who flourished near the end of the second century, when treating of prayers, guardian spirits and their influence over mortals, wrote: "Who can doubt that our holy fathers aid us by their prayers, and strengthen and excite us by their examples, and the writings they left behind them? The angels of deliverance are ever present; come thou, thou angel, receive him that is changed from his former error and from the doctrine of demons. . . . I will pray for the dead. I will invoke all the saints to my assistance. . . . And all the holy men who have quitted this life, retaining their charity toward those whom they left behind, we may be allowed to say that they are anxious for their salvation, and that they assist them with their prayers."

St. Ambrose, in a funeral oration over the two emperors, Valentinians, exclaims: "Blessed shall you both be if my prayers can avail anything. No day shall pass in which I will not make honorable mention of you; no night in which you shall not partake of my prayers."

St. Epiphanius contends that "there is nothing more opportune, nothing more to be admired, than the rite which directs the names of the dead to be mentioned. They are greatly aided by the prayers that are offered for them."

St. Chrysostom declares that "it is not in vain that oblations and prayers are offered and alms given for the dead. . . . Let us not grow weary, then, in affording aid to the dead by offering prayers for them." So runs the chain of testimony from Hindu, Egyptian, Greek and ecclesiastical history. The latter affords the most indubitable proofs that the doctrines of the ministrations of spirits and prayers for the dead, that is, those in the world of spirits, flourished almost undisputed from the time of the primitive fathers till after the reign of Constantine.

To think kindly toward—to breathe out even a good wish for those psychologically bound for discipline to the lower spheres of spirit-life, is a prayer for the dead. Let us pray for them, then, most sincerely; let us aid them as the dear angels of the heavenly spheres aid us.

It was common in Oriental lands at one period for certain zealous unselfish persons to be baptized for the dead. To this end the Apostle Paul said: "Else what shall they do, which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why, then, are they baptized for the dead?" Do not infer from this passage that Paul was urging the doctrine of baptism by immersion. On the contrary, he thanked God that he "was sent not to baptize" but to "preach the gospel." Water baptism belonged to India and Egypt—to John the Baptist dispensation—rather than to Christ. It is not, and never was, Christian baptism. Jesus Christ baptized with the Holy Ghost; that is to say, with a holy and most excellent spiritual influence. The Greek word here rendered Ghost is *pneuma*, and should read spirit. The spiritual aura around Jesus Christ was refined, pure and heavenly, so much so that those coming within the range of this aerial atmosphere were blessed beyond all blessing. This spiritual aura was the magnetic "virtue" that Jesus "felt go out of him."

The Holy Ghost, biblically considered, was a refined, etherealized spirit-substance that "set upon the disciples," that "filled them," that "fell upon those who heard Peter," and was "poured out upon the Gentiles." It is said of Peter and John in Samaria that "they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost."

It was this holy spiritual influence, this ethereal baptismal aura, together with the great overflowing love-nature of Jesus Christ, that so fitted him to pray for and to preach to the dead—the "spirits in prison." He was also baptized for them—that is, was anointed, illumined and divinely enlightened—that he might aid in redeeming and spiritually enlightening them. The University professor studies, ay, masters the sciences, and becomes learned that he may wisely teach others. So we should study the moral and spiritual constitution of man—should study psychology and the occult forces of nature—should be baptized with the divine aura of the angel spheres—and should become so spiritually illumined that our very presence would benefit the dead in the lower spheres of existence, something as the sunshine touches and turns to gold the purpling clouds of evening.

Life, past, present and future, constitutes one unitive chain. Death severs no conscious link. Our consciousness, our memories and our loves, go with us to the better land. And as our prayers and good wishes help those this side death's peaceful river, so they do those on the thither side. Spiritualism proves that death is no impassable barrier, nor does it in any way prevent the interchange of sweet offices across its tremulous stream. Unseen intelligences, once mortal and bound to us by the tender chords of sympathy, still walk in our midst, stand by our sides, and listen to our echoing voices. And what spiritually benefited them on earth benefits them still. Dr. Hitchman, of Liverpool, one of the most learned Spiritualists in our ranks, says that "dignified conversation with and prayers offered for the souls of the departed is educational, justifiable and highly commendable."

Unhappy earth-bound spirits who led depraved lives while



BY MRS. NELLIE J. T. BRICHAM.

Such, I think, will be found to be the testimony of most of all advanced spirits on the subject of testing physical medi-



**SALEM, JIASS.**—Conference or lectures every Sunday at Hardy Hall, Washington Street, at 3 and 7 1/2 p. m. S. G. Hooley, Secretary.

**SUTTON, S. H.**—Society holds meetings once in two weeks. Chas. A. Fowler, President; James Knowlton, Secretary.

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**Notice.**

The Van Buren Co., Association of Spiritualists and Liberalists will hold its Quarterly Meeting at Foxville, Allega Co., Mich., on the 9th and 10th of November.

(Other Spiritualist papers please copy.)

S. G. SHIFFER, President.

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## New York Advertisements.

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