

PRAYER.

Shall the Next Meeting of the N. S. A. Be Opened with Prayer?

"To him who in the love of Nature,
Holds communion with her visible
forms,
She speaks a various language."

The above quotation put me by the
entertaining editor of that truly pro-
gressive paper, The Progressive Thinker,
is a most peculiar one and difficult
to answer by yes or no. While I have
always been extremely doubtful of the
truth of the doctrine of the orthodox
church, even while yet a member of it,
that the Deity is a "prayer-hearing and
prayer-answering God," I am free to
confess that I have often been made to
feel better spiritually and physically
by having listened to an earnest, sin-
cere, beautiful, honest, non-sectarian,
non-dogmatic invocation addressed to the
unknown whom we call God, whether
delivered in an orthodox pulpit or
upon the Spiritualist's rostrum. I
have heard and read many Spiritualist-
ic invocations which thrilled me
mentally and physically with delight,
gratitude and sublimity. It has only
been occasionally that prayers from an
orthodox pulpit have had this effect
upon me, and upon those few occasions
the orthodoxy of the preachers who ut-
tered them was questionable.

I have no sympathy with the doc-
trine that vice can atone for crimes by
prayer. I once heard my old beloved
instructor, the world-renowned sur-
geon, Prof. S. D. Gross, say when pre-
sented by his class with a bouquet of
flowers, that he could not see how it
was possible for a lover of flowers to
commit a crime.

I have a great admiration for the
prayer of poetry and the poetry of
prayer.

"Spirit that breathest through my lat-
tice,
Thou that coolest the twilight of the
autumn day,
Gratefully flows thy freshness round
my brow."

"He who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky
The feathered flight,
In the long way that must tread
alone,
Will guide our steps aright."

Such are the prayers in which I de-
light—the prayers inspired by nature,
and, it may be, by nature's God.

Our beloved sister, Miss Belle Bush,
so beautifully says:

"There are hearts that open like flow-
ers in June,
There are some like harps that are kept
in tune,
There are still small voices that greet
the ear
At times when no visible forms are
near,
There are echoes that come from a far-
off shore,
There are gleams of light from a noise-
less orb,
That, tracking the sea of humanity,
Is guiding the ship of destiny,
There are frail barkings drifting away to
sea,
With no hand to point where the shoals
may be,
There's the breath of a kiss on brow
and cheek
When the lips that give them we vainly
seek."

Emerson has written somewhere that
"no man ever prayed heartily without
learning something." I think he meant
by "heartily" a thirst for a knowledge
of nature and of nature's laws when
she (nature) is most likely to respond to
such prayer.

Shakespeare makes one of his char-
acters say:

"His error's fault is, that he is given to
prayer; he is
Something peevish that way; but no
body but
Has his fault,—but let that pass."

And so it depends very much upon
how we view the subject of prayer.
That we can have granted to us that
for which we pray is certainly untrue,
as has been so recently demonstrated
when the whole nation prayed for the
recovery and preservation of the life of
our martyred President, Wm. McKin-
ley. The explanation for the failure of
this unanimous prayer of America is that
it was not consistent with God's will.

I never had much confidence in the
orthodox church—

"And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

Surely the saint represented on his
knees by the picture which adorns the
head of your printed question, Brother
Francis, would hardly excite the fear,
envy or malice of "Old Nick," for he
resembles more the assassin of McKin-
ley than a man of God.

"In prayer the lips ne'er act the win-
ning part
Without the sweet concurrence of the
heart."

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,"
but it is very desirable that that desire
however sincere, should be intelligent,
whether there be or not any possibility
or probability of its being granted.

O and state
Of human wretchedness; so weak is
man,
So ignorant and blind, that did not God
Sometimes withhold in mercy what we
ask,
We should be ruined at our own re-
quest."

Now, in regard to the question of
opening the meetings of Spiritualists
with prayer, I think I would leave it
entirely with the "openers." If the
spirit moves them to pray, if they feel
inspired to pray, for heaven's sake let
them pray. I am a good deal of a
Quaker on the subject of prayer. I
have often observed how difficult it
was for the preacher in the pulpit to
"pray"—what an effort it was for him to
breathe out his soul in prayer, while at
the same time the same preacher seems
so grandly inspired that his sentences
flowed as freely and as beautifully as a
river. Preachers' hearts are not always
kept in tune. They are not always "in
the spirit on the Lord's day," and if it
were not the orthodox custom and re-
quirement, prayer would occasionally
be omitted in the pulpit. It is not al-
ways true that the same prayer is
grounded and interceding terms. We
are no more always the same spiritual-
ly than we are always the same physi-
cally. It is only when the preacher or
speaker is on the mountain top of inspi-
ration that he can pray impressively
upon the minds of his hearers.

A grand poem of nature grandly
impressively read or rendered will
often very appropriately take the place
of a prayer or invocation on the rostrum
or in the pulpit. But how few of
our speakers and preachers are good
readers or eloquentists. The "Lord's
Prayer" was never properly rendered
in this country until a Spiritualist, the
renowned star of the stage, Edwin
Booth, recited it at the request of I re-
member correctly, of the Rev. Henry

A POSITIVE NO!

Deduced from the Philoso-
phy of Naturalism.

In answer to the question, "Shall the
coming convention of the N. S. A. be
opened by prayer?" I am pleased to go
on record with a positive No!—an abso-
lute negative from which my reason
can find no cause for appeal. I have
come to this conclusion after what I
believe to be a conscientious effort to
comprehend the definite and unmis-
takeable teachings of the Spiritualist phi-
losophy, or rather that which I choose
to call the philosophy of Naturalism.

I find philosophy defined by eminent
lexicographers as being "The knowl-
edge of phenomena as explained by,
and resolved into, causes and reasons,
powers and laws."

Now, then, in accordance with this
reasonable that after we have resolved
its phenomena into causes and reasons,
powers and principles there can be
found no room for a petty, personal,
prayer-answering God.

Even an approximate comprehension
of causes and reasons, seems to me to
reveal the eternal immutability of the
principles governing the correlated ele-
ments of the universe. Upon the affini-
ties of such correlations depend the
eternal procession of cause and effect;
the grasping harmonies of inherent af-
finities draw together complementary
elements and from their union, new ex-
pressions, energies, and forms are
evolved, thus from the latent energy of
elemental cosmos, does all activity, de-
velopment and progress originate.

Granting the above to be true, then
man the human is, as well as all other
cosmic expressions, but an evolution
from primordial conditions, and as
such an evolution has no ascendancy
over his environment, other than such
as he gains by the use of his special
faculties. The use of his faculties may
enable him through even a limited
knowledge of the principles governing na-
ture, to harmonize his actions with
existing principles and thus accomplish
certain results. However, I do not be-
lieve that definite results can ever be
accomplished by thinking or voicing
prayers or invocations to a postulated
"God, Over Soul, or Infinite Intelli-
gence." Such a method is to misdirect
and waste the energy. As expressed in
the philosophy of the principles govern-
ing nature, prayer to the conscious-
ness of a presumed deity, for such prayers have
no potency in affecting or changing the
potential affinities of cosmic elements,
hence the endless chain of cause and
effect remains undisturbed, consequent-
ly there can be no definite result ac-
complished.

I believe, however, that the human
spirit is possessed of the power of be-
coming self-masterful and with that
ability can through growth arrive at a
position where with the consciousness
of need, one will no longer feel the ne-
cessity of calling to God for aid, but
with the joint agency of love and wis-
dom can of self call into action forces
that shall be capable of satisfying desire
and longing and thus fulfill the office
that has been accredited to prayer.

The N. S. A. has my very best wishes,
and I believe that as time goes by, there
will be evolved from the honest pur-
poses of its supporters that which will
bring a blessing to the world. How-
ever, I should earnestly favor an elimi-
nation of the Infinite Intelligence
clause from the "declaration of prin-
ciples," and only wish that the Associa-
tion could exist without anything in
the nature of a creed at all.

OSCAR A. EDGERLY,
Lima, Ohio.

Ward Beecher. I do not remember of
ever hearing from the pulpit a hymn or
prayer which did not properly and im-
pressively read. The pulpit in this
country is sadly in need of a few les-
sons in eloquence.

Prayer, or that peculiar reaching out
for something as is natural to the hu-
man heart as it is for the bud to bloss-
om and is one of the strongest natu-
ral evidences of the immortality of the
soul. As Prof. John Fiske has so aptly
stated it, "Precisely as in the most em-
bryonic condition the prefigured wing
of the bird or fin of the fish infallibly
indicates the element necessary to its
life, so the whole analogy of evolution
bears us with irresistible momentum to
the conclusion that the religious nature
and craving of mankind are correlated
with an unseen world."

"We do not see Thee, yet when eve's
last sigh
Is breathed o'er vale and hill,
And darkness slowly deepens the sky,
And all the world is still,
Thy vision, dawning on our inward
sight,
Fills all our souls with light."

"We do not hear Thee speak, yet in the
hour
When worldly thoughts arise,
And o'er our souls those brooding shad-
ows loom,
That bid Thee from our eyes
A still small voice, too faint for mortal
ear,
Tells us that Thou art near."

"We cannot touch the hand that ruleth
heaven,
Yet in this vale of tears,
When hope lies shattered, and our
souls are risen
With desolating fears,
We need but ask for comfort and for
grace,
To feel Thy warm embrace."

"Light of our souls, sweet Counsellor
and wise,
Friend in adversity!
Within our hearts can brighter hope
Than to abide with Thee?"
Oh, lead us to Thy home of love and
rest,
And make us truly blessed."

It matters not whether prayer is at
all times intelligent or whether it is
addressed to a God about whom absolute-
ly nothing is known, it is that intense
desire to know something of the Great
First Cause of our existence that
makes prayer so grandly beautiful in
its ignorance, innocence and simplicity.
"Lead me to the Rock that is higher
than I," "Rock of Ages clothe for me,
let me hide myself in Thee," "Nearer, my
God, to thee," "Lead kindly light
amidst the encircling gloom," are pray-
ers which have the tendency to look upon
response from the human heart of
whatever race, color, or creed.

"Who by searching can find out
God?" I don't know, but let us con-
tinue the search anyhow. If prayer is
of the least importance in the search,
by all means let us indulge it. It cer-
tainly can do us no harm and not infre-
quently will make us feel better when
moved by the spirit.

H. V. SWERINGEN.

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SINCERE
DESIRE.Invoke the Aid of the Spirit
World.

Your circular letter of recent date
asking my views on the subject of
prayer in general, and particularly as
regards the opening of the next N. S. A.
Convention, to be held in Washington,
D. C., by prayer, also the propriety of
the almost universal practice among
the Spiritualists of opening their meet-
ings with an invocation or prayer as
you call it, was duly received. Most
assuredly, for one who believes in prayer or
aspiration. Not that it will change the
natural order of events in the slightest.
We live in the domain of laws, and no
prayer of mortals can change that law.
All the prayers of all the world did not
or could not save the life of Lincoln,
Garfield, or William McKinley. Neither
do I think that there is any God in the
universe who could save them from the
bullet. Possibility is a more thorough
knowledge of surgery might have saved
Garfield's or McKinley's life; but that as it may, prayer
certainly did not save them.

I believe there is Intelligence in this
universe far beyond the capacity of
man to fathom, and I care not whether
you call it God or Intelligence. I believe
that the universe is a vast, unending
something here before we was. Don't
ask me to define that something, for I
cannot. We see its manifestations on
every hand, intelligently so. You say
there is a doubt, a very marked one, as
to the efficacy of prayer in influencing
Deity. Of course there is, and I doubt
very much whether there is any con-
siderable number of Spiritualists who
believe there is.

The offering of an invocation at the
opening of our meetings, as practiced
by most of our speakers, is a far differ-
ent matter from the ordinary prayer as
offered in all the sectarian churches of
our land. Judging from what some of
our people write and say, they make no
distinction between the two. While it
seems to me they are as far apart as
the poles, you will ask, then, what is
the use of praying? What good does it
do, if it does not change the purpose of
an Infinite Intelligence, Deity, God or
whatever name? Then what use, I will
tell you, as it appears to my conscience.
It benefits the ones who earnestly ask
for guidance in all the affairs of life,
for knowledge to do the right, for
strength to do our duty, in all the
walks of life. What good does it do,
if it does not make the heart more
to be effectual. You can pray as you
walk the street, or while at your work.
A sincere desire of the soul to be and
do as I have indicated will help anyone
to grow in grace and in the knowledge
of the truth. I believe that an earnest
invocation at the opening of any of our
meetings tends to harmonize the more
or less conflicting elements that might
attend them. We all believe (at least
I do) that the spirit world has a tremen-
dous influence in the affairs of this
world, and it is only proper that we
should invoke their aid. That they can
and do aid and assist us goes without
saying. The old saying that anything
that is not worth the asking is not
worth having, is applicable in this case.
I am well aware that some of our
ablest speakers do not believe in an in-
vocation or prayer, and never indulge
in such foolishness, as they term it.
They seem to think it is a thing of
churches, and that it is only proper
etc., etc. To all such I would say:
Don't pray if you don't feel like it. I
wouldn't. If you think there is no In-
telligence in the universe higher than
your own, that is capable or has the
power to help you, don't ask. I believe
there is, and so I pray.

There were but few persons in these
United States, and for that matter, the
civilized world, who truly earnestly
wished that William McKinley would
recover, but very few really believed
that Deity would aid or stop or
change the action of natural laws.
That wish or desire is what I call
prayer.

I am in favor of opening the National
Convention with an invocation.

I think it best to let H. D. Barrett
as president for the ensuing year. Not
that he is the only one in our ranks
that is capable of filling that position,
but he is far better equipped for that
office than when first elected.

Brethren, let us get together. What
matter whether you believe in Infinite
Intelligence, not "an" Infinite Intelli-
gence, or not? Whether you believe in
prayer or not? We do believe that we
have the best system of prayer, Science
or Religion, call it what you
may, that the world has got or ever
had. So let us stop quibbling over non-
essentials, meet together in Washing-
ton in October, and do all we can to ad-
vance the cause we all hold so dear.

Willoughby, O. E. W. BOND.

Praying to an Unchangeable God
Absurd.

To the Editor:—In response to your
request, I send you the following: Man
is a sympathetic being. In seasons of
sorrow and gloom, he instinctively
turns for sympathy, the expression of
which is a relief to his feelings. Prayer
is the sincere and earnest long-
ing for aid and relief. He realizes his
weakness, and the fact that there is a
balm for sorrow and gloom impels him
to seek it in prayer.

The misconception is the idea of a
"Supreme Being" from whom all bless-
ings flow." This longing for light and
aid makes man receptive and he feels
the impulse to pray. Since this Being
which he conceives, is the same yester-
day, to-day and forever, and in whom
there is no variableness nor the least
shadow of turning, for him to ask that
Being to change his course for the sake
of the asking is absurd.

If it were understood by the audience
that all persons are accountable for
their spirit guides, the fervent and elo-
quent invocation addressed to the in-
visible host attendant on the audience,
those in hearing would be made recep-
tive by it and their guides would be bet-
ter able to impress them. Such prayer
is reasonable and profitable.

Many of our most able and eloquent
speakers are from the ranks of the mi-
nistry. Their training in the use of
words has pervaded them, so that it is dif-
cult, if not impossible to divorce them
selves from the effects of their early
training. In fact, it is so impressed on
them as to become a part of their
mind. The same may be said in re-
gard to many in the ranks of Spiritual-
ism. Others coming from the church,
in their zeal for the new philosophy,
have gone to extremes and look upon
the former class as only partial con-
verts, and indulge in unpleasant feel-
ings toward them. This spirit of in-
tolerance is to be deprecated. Each
one acts as he feels; none should be
praised and none blamed. The most
tolerant feeling is due to all.

With regard to the election of a pres-
ident of the National Spiritualist Associa-
tion, I do not feel competent to
name anyone. Whoever he is, must be
broad in his views, liberal in his senti-
ments and so intellectual in his grasp
as to comprehend every phase of spirit
manifestation and appreciate all char-
acters of mediumship, enterprising and
energetic, and a good organizer.

E. J. SCHILLER.

Work

Must Ever Take the Place
of Lip Service.

To the Editor:—You solicit my opin-
ion of the utility, or futility, of prayer
as an agent in promoting the spiritual
welfare of humanity, and whether, in
my view, the next National Convention
of Spiritualists should be opened by
invoking a real or imaginary Deity?

In response, I would say that the
clearest reasoning of which I am cap-
able prompts this reply: No! Never!!

If this is not definite enough, permit
me to offer further reasons for this de-
cision by asking the following ques-
tions, which, if answered in the affirma-
tive, I desire palpable proof thereof:

Has any man ever seen God? Can
any deliberate body of men demon-
strate the existence of an intelligent
being, or being, existing "out-
lines? If not, to whom shall they pray?
Is this body of intelligent Spiritualists
composing the National Association
possessed of reasoning faculties when
supplicating the throne of an unknown
Deity? Is there a title of wisdom
shown by this august assemblage in en-
tering into such a holy compact before
the altar of the Universe, when every
sentiment expressed is in direct con-
tradiction to the laws governing in the
realm of Nature? To make their prayers
effective, should they not prove to the
unbelievers the existence of In-
finite Intelligence (which is the acme
of all sentient thought and necessarily
endowed with powers of design), or, of
an Infinite Intelligence who is ready
and able to how to the aid of needy
man? Does this unknown "Intelli-
gence" possess ears to hear and a heart
to respond to the complex and im-
passioned language of each individual or
sect imploring aid in accordance with
their idiosyncrasies? Are not the senti-
ments and prayers of the different or-
ganizations or associations directly and
positively antagonistic to the equally
conscious convictions and welfare
of the opposing body as well as to the
ruling of Natural law and the magnetic
force which holds every atom in its
proper equilibrium? If all supplications,
trusting in such an absurd manner at
the throne of a conscious(?) Infinite Power,
were answered in detail, individually
and collectively as desired, is there not
evidence that our little planet would be
thrown into the air, and the scales of jus-
tice unbalanced, and the hand of pol-
ity, and his Satanic Majesty rule su-
preme in the realm of Greed?

The import of these questions defines
fully my position, or opinion, of the
efficacy of prayer as an agent toward
the spiritual unfoldment of the race. I
am convinced that prayers make cov-
ards and beggars of us all, for it can-
not be proven that the world at large
does not invoke an imaginary Deity for
favors which they neither have earned
nor deserve. Therefore, I am compelled
through the light of reason to declare
that the light of reason to declare that
prayers as the "quintessence of ignor-
ance and one of the profoundest farces
imaginable, since they are simply the
expression of meaningless words by
superstitious religiousists, or may-be
Christian Spiritualists, who desire to
obtain divine favors without giving an
equivalent, and is indicative of an ab-
normal condition of the brain force.

Yet, I would not destroy the toy-
house of a child whose mental forces
may be sustained and advanced by the
influence of innocent conceptions of
the unseen, nor do I desire to un-
necessarily wound the feelings of those
who may be temporarily uplifted
through their crude conceptions of the
power of prayer.

Nevertheless, you cannot cheat
Mother Nature, neither will she listen
to your vain entreaties, unless you com-
ply with the laws of life. Work
Work! must ever take the place of lip
service. All should labor with earnest
hearts and spiritually vitalized brains
for the uplifting of the race, where
they may conceive and organize a
brotherhood of souls, based upon the
principles of justice and common sense,
minus all forms or ceremonies.

Thus I appeal to all to give Reason
its unbiased sway. Let it become the
arbiter in the thought-realm, when it
may be enabled to accept all in the
sphere of Spiritual science which it can
properly conceive, and await without
superstitious awe for the unfolding
processes of Nature, which must be-
come the true exponents of the for-
mer's unceasing achievements in the
realm mortal.

Verily, other power than prayer
should be the factor for advancement
in the coming higher civilization. Who
knoweth but the heavens of Intellect-
ual Superiority may not open and bring
forth, not a personal Christ, as now
taught, but an age which shall add a
grandeur light to the theological world,
sweeping away the debris of supersti-
tion, and expand the rays of spiri-
tual knowledge just dawning upon this
Twentieth Century morning!

To promote the spiritual activities of
the National Association, I should say
united effort in purely radical lines
would be essential, and the election of
a president willing to cut loose from all
religious formulas and become an earn-
est leader of the legion of complex
minds, as far as possible, toward the
ever rising pinnacle of Science, versus
religion, and the consequent spiritual
growth and faith. If Moses Hull call
this bill and lead the Christian Spiritu-
alists by the silken string of Love and
Charity to grander heights, he is my
choice.

BURR CHAPPEL.

Waverly, N. Y.

Prayer.

Would I pray? Sometimes. If my
soul felt weak and dependent and
lacked that moral and mental courage
necessary to withstand temptations and
to perform evident duties and honor-
able undertakings; then would I retire
into the privacy of some secluded spot
or chamber and unbend my bosom to
the Great Whole of which I am a part.
Not that there is any great "Infinite
Jove or Zeus, who would take com-
passion on the prayers of the weak and
inert, and reward them with divine in-
terposition of the law-governed un-
iverse undertake, directly or indirectly,
to answer it. But each thought sends
out to the universal ether its own vi-
bration, and the more intense and ear-
nest the thought, the more intense and
more lasting the vibration; and this vi-
bratory movement blends with all oth-
er or thought vibrations in the same key-
accord, and if the wave becomes deep
and strong enough returns to us bear-
ing with it the strength and power nec-
essary to respond to our natural and
laudable desires.

Such prayers are not selfish but are
offered in aid of all who are situated in
like conditions and need like strength
and assistance. Therefore, if anyone
has not cultivated their spiritual
and sensitiveness, may reject the com-
forter when he comes, and thereby lose
all benefits of the subtle currents in
their favor. Ostentatious public prayer
I consider a sacrifice and a delusion,
and but adding more impetus to the al-
ready overwhelming wave of selfish-
ness and pride.

B. F. SLATER.
Kansas City, Mo.

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siderable number of Spiritualists who
believe there is.

The offering of an invocation at the
opening of our meetings, as practiced
by most of our speakers, is a far differ-
ent matter from the ordinary prayer as
offered in all the sectarian churches of
our land. Judging from what some of
our people write and say, they make no
distinction between the two. While it
seems to me they are as far apart as
the poles, you will ask, then, what is
the use of praying? What good does it
do, if it does not change the purpose of
an Infinite Intelligence, Deity, God or
whatever name? Then what use, I will
tell you, as it appears to my conscience.
It benefits the ones who earnestly ask
for guidance in all the affairs of life,
for knowledge to do the right, for
strength to do our duty, in all the
walks of life. What good does it do,
if it does not make the heart more
to be effectual. You can pray as you
walk the street, or while at your work.
A sincere desire of the soul to be and
do as I have indicated will help anyone
to grow in grace and in the knowledge
of the truth. I believe that an earnest
invocation at the opening of any of our
meetings tends to harmonize the more
or less conflicting elements that might
attend them. We all believe (at least
I do) that the spirit world has a tremen-
dous influence in the affairs of this
world, and it is only proper that we
should invoke their aid. That they can
and do aid and assist us goes without
saying. The old saying that anything
that is not worth the asking is not
worth having, is applicable in this case.
I am well aware that some of our
ablest speakers do not believe in an in-
vocation or prayer, and never indulge
in such foolishness, as they term it.
They seem to think it is a thing of
churches, and that it is only proper
etc., etc. To all such I would say:
Don't pray if you don't feel like it. I
wouldn't. If you think there is no In-
telligence in the universe higher than
your own, that is capable or has the
power to help you, don't ask. I believe
there is, and so I pray.

There were but few persons in these
United States, and for that matter, the
civilized world, who truly earnestly
wished that William McKinley would
recover, but very few really believed
that Deity would aid or stop or
change the action of natural laws.
That wish or desire is what I call
prayer.

I am in favor of opening the National
Convention with an invocation.

I think it best to let H. D. Barrett
as president for the ensuing year. Not
that he is the only one in our ranks
that is capable of filling that position,
but he is far better equipped for that
office than when first elected.

Brethren, let us get together. What
matter whether you believe in Infinite
Intelligence, not "an" Infinite Intelli-
gence, or not? Whether you believe in
prayer or not? We do believe that we
have the best system of prayer, Science
or Religion, call

PRAYER.

It Is Negatived by Hudson Tuttle.

Shall the sessions of the National Spiritualist Association be opened by prayer? Is it consistent to have any spiritual meeting opened by prayer?

Let the meaning of the term prayer be distinctly understood in the beginning. It is taken in its purely theological sense, supplication to the Supreme Being; intercession, confession of sins and appeal for forgiveness and divine mercy. It is to change God's plans, to call his attention to us, and have him directly interested in our affairs. If it is not for this purpose it is a failure.

It is replied, "Man is a devotional being, that cannot be denied, and his devotion proves the existence of the object of his devotion." How much of this devotion is hereditary from countless generations, beginning in the utterly mistaken ideas of nature held by savage man; or is it all a result of primary ignorance and education?

The N. S. A. claims to be a religious body, and as such prayers are appropriate. There has been enough of the old religious ideas along to make a few want and many understand the force, for force it is and nothing more. The churches have prayer, and the spiritual societies, dubbed churches, must follow, hoping thereby to gain "respectability." There should be no objection against this. No one is harmed, if no good comes of it; the trick is too transparent. If a lecturer thinks he helps the cause and himself by becoming a "pastor," and soothing his congregation by an invocation beginning with "Oh, thou infinite, boundless, all-powerful, central intelligence, enthroned on the emporium of eternal time and space," and that he brings his hearers into harmony with such words, time will give judgment as to its value. Let him invoke and thus throw a sop to the crowd with his make-believe "religious meeting." But it is laughable, if not so intensely pitiable, to see Spiritualists who believe in the eternal fixedness of law, and the immutability of God, and who are in prayer, to make believe that they are not after all so far removed from the beliefs of orthodox. Oh, the pity of it—the shame of it—the despicable sham of it!

Let us call in the "medicine man" and have him shake his rattling calabash as he invokes the big chief of the sky.

Was a prayer ever answered by God? Is there an educated man in the world who believes the laws of nature were ever changed by direct action of God in the asking of any man? Let him declare himself and he will have immediate calls to exhibit himself in dime museums.

Yet Christians have one virtue, they are never discouraged. They never had a prayer answered, yet they go right on praying as though everything they had asked for had been granted. They prayed for Garfield, for every meeting-house in the land—he died; they had a Sunday of prayer, asking for the life of McKinley; they asked for the people of whole states to go down on their knees to ask God to send rain to the drought-afflicted country—the rain came in its own time; they called fasts and prayers to turn aside the grasshoppers—the hoppers increased and ate the binding of the Bibles on the pulpit desks.

"Oh," it is said, "it is not God who is affected, but the one making the prayer. We pray to get ourselves into a frame of mind, and then we pray for the thing we want." This may be, but it is admitted, why not call it by its right name, and not give occasion to misunderstanding by giving prayer a new and strained meaning?

Public prayer, such as the Christian churches advocate, was distinctly and emphatically condemned by Christ, who commanded all to pray in secret. The public prayer is a mockery, and a senseless form. When man believed in savage gods, he sought to placate their anger by sacrifices and supplication. These gods were jealous, vindictive and blown away like leaves by the advent of knowledge. Why continue the forms we know to be useless? Why perpetuate the misunderstanding of nature by our ancestors?

Spiritualism is the science of life here and hereafter, and as such it would be as appropriate to open a spiritual meeting with prayer, as to begin a session of a scientific association with an invocation, and dismiss it with a benediction. The most persistent of all the forms are religious, and as such beliefs are ways originated in the remote past, when man was ignorant, they are without exception erroneous, and now when we have come to the light of knowledge and understand the worthlessness of all these forms and ceremonies inherited from the night of the past, shall we admit the truth as we understand it, and bravely stand for our conclusions, or shall we attempt the impossible, to ferment our new wine in the old goat-skin bottles furnished by the ancestors?

HUDSON TUTTLE.

The Folly of Public Prayer.

"Prayer is a waste of breath," said Col. Ingersoll, in a brief address before the Secular League, in Washington, D. C.

William Lloyd Garrison, president of the Anti-Slavery Society, was not a believer in prayer. At each anniversary of the society, in deference to those members who wished to have an opening prayer, he would say, "An opportunity is now offered to anyone who may be moved to make an oral prayer." Then some preacher or layman would come forward and pray.

Mr. Garrison was a Freethinker and a Spiritualist. He offended some of his co-workers by advertising "Self-Contradictions of the Bible" in the "Liberator," and by saying editorially that the longevity of interpretation could reconcile most of the contradictions save that which would attempt to prove white to be black and black white.

That was in 1860. Some years earlier I heard him express his belief in Spiritualism and his disbelief in the use of prayer. He said, "Here is a slave and beside it is a crucifix of coal. Now I want a man to get down on his knees and ask God to make it!" Did A. J. Davis ever offer prayer or have one offered as an introduction to one of his lectures? Was there any praying exercise in the Children's Lyceum instituted by him? Are not Spiritualists "unavoidably" offensive to the majority of Spiritualists?

Churchmen violate one of the precepts of their alleged divine Master by maintaining public prayer. Jesus himself never made one, and he denounced praying in the synagogues and at the corners of the streets. Those who call themselves Christian Spiritualists ought to follow this precept of their Master.

"The Kingship of Self-Control." By Wm. George Jordan. It treats of the crimes of the tongue, the Red Tape duty, the supreme charity of the world, the revelation of reserve power, etc. Price 30 cents. For sale at this office.

SHALL WE PRAY?

Bubbling Echoes from the Sea of Rhyme.

Oh, what's the use to quibble over matters that are small?

The world is surely large enough to furnish room for all.

Let each one hold in person his convictions as he may

And the earth will keep revolving in the same eternal way.

Even Anarchy, the lawless and the Godless, has a law.

And the limit to their license is a bone we have to gnaw.

They are organized for murder and they have a kind of creed

That defies the laws of nations with assassination's deed.

If opposes law and order and is organized to kill,

But it offers naught reforming that the place of law will fill.

And just so we have united as reformers of the day,

Of religions and of morals and old superstition's way.

But what have we to offer that is better growing seed

Than the old-time dark religion with its blinding, grinding creed

We're a declaration sprouted, but it isn't what we want,

For it seems to have the functions of the same old Godly ban.

Yes, it hings the charred old carcass of a dead and buried faith

And attempts to link that skeleton to knowledge of a wrath.

It presumes the world is governed by some vast intelligence

But proclaims no affirmation of a knowledge of the "whence."

"We believe" is the foundation of the passing ancient creeds,

And it doesn't seem conducive to harmony or needs

Of the philosophic problems of the thinking world to-day,

As it clings to those old dry bones that the churches own for aye.

"Is a question we must settle; we are standing face to face

With religions of the present that inflame the human race

With a prejudice so narrow and as bitter as can be,

And as honest, wise reformers we must battle for the free.

We must widen with our wisdom and awake from empty dreams;

We must teach unto the people that this world is what it seems;

We must teach the truth and beauty of the world as we have found,

And attempt to raise the standard of the thinking from the ground.

Let us cast off all resemblance to the silly things of old

And adopt what time has proven as just fitted to our mold.

Let us prove the world is better and much brighter since the day

Of the birth of modern knowledge that is brushing creeds away.

When we pray to unknown forces that control the world, we have found

And expect to gain attention to some whim that we may nurse,

We are acting just as silly as the ones we would uplift.

With our knowledge of the future and our higher psychic gift.

Let us strangle all delusions of the superstitious age,

And conduct the ancient ruler in a reasonable cage;

Let us keep in touch with Nature and adhere to what we know,

And the world will soon be coming up to meet us from below.

Let us cease our useless shamming just to catch the other crowd,

And get down to modest reason in the place of boasting loud;

Let us clasp hands with the noble, and be true and broad and grand,

And the world will be the better for our coming to this land.

As to the main proposition in your circular the above poem fully expresses my ideas, and relative to the selection of a president for the N. S. A., I do not assume to even suggest. I am not a member of any society, therefore am not an auxiliary part of the N. S. A. If the organization is prospering, I am glad. If the members see fit to retain the present officers in their positions indefinitely, all well and good. It either speaks well for the officers or poorly for the judgment of the delegates. I am in favor of organization because I think it to be the best interest of Spiritualism and feel that the present N. S. A. is doing good work in bringing Spiritualism before the world in its proper light—organized. I feel confidence in the honesty and integrity of every officer.

Once upon a time I argued the propriety of a change in the officership of the N. S. A. entirely every two or three years for the general good of the association, but upon sober second thought I conclude that I had a business and was prospering, and have no reason for changing my help unless there were those in my employ who were dishonest, obnoxious or inharmonious and otherwise unworthy of my retention. And just so I would be regarding the N. S. A. It is a business proposition and should be treated as such, and there certainly is no inducement in the way of large salaries to make the positions worth contending for.

I was a Spiritualist before there was an organization, or rather before the inception of the N. S. A., and the cause was moving along; there were many local organizations over the land, but the time arrived for a National effort and we got the N. S. A. and it is still in existence with some of the same officials in charge. It will not affect my Spiritualism or have any influence over my duties toward the larger, the whole cause to have the present officials retained in office for another term, or even several terms, and therefore I make no protest.

DR. T. WILKINS.

Prayer Gage.

To the Editor:—I received your Prayer Gage for opening the N. S. A. I am not a member of the Association. I believe in silent aspiration, to grow nearer to truth light and hope. Prayer publicly and before the people is hypocrisy, and of no avail. Let each one silently earnestly and respectfully worship in his way. I am not in favor of public prayers anywhere.

J. H. WHITE.

Port Huron, Mich.

"Historical, Logical and Philosophical Objections to the Dogmas of Reincarnation and Re-Embodiment." By Prof. Wm. Lockwood. A keen and masterly treatise. Paper, 25 cents. For sale at this office.

"The Pantheism of Modern Science." By E. D. Tilton, Barrister, Toronto, Canada. A summary of recent investigations into Life, Force and Substance, and conclusions therefrom. Price 10 cents. For sale at this office.

PRAYER AND THE N. S. A.

Views of President Harrison D. Barrett.

Responding to your very courteous request to contribute to your symposium on the above subject, permit me to say, Mr. Editor, that I have no sympathy whatever with the idea of prayer that has been commonly entertained by our friends of the Christian church in the past. That it can ever change the order of things, or set aside law, no rational man believes to-day. In my public work covering a period of many years, I have found the inspiration I needed for my address in the impress of a poem of a fine spiritual nature, or in the sympathy of my audience, with out resorting to spoken supplication of any kind. The occasion, the subject, and the people have always been the sources of inspiration to the man who loved his cause for its own sake, and when he coupled with these potent factors the help of the angels he needed no other aid.

But how can man best secure the aid of the angels? If the reading of a splendid poem, full of soul and sense will do it, then that is the way for those parties to pursue who thus draw their inspiration from on high to their side at all public functions or private circles. If, by casting aside all material objects for a moment, concentrating the mind upon spiritual things, aspiring for the good, the beautiful and the true, the same result can be obtained, I am certainly not to say nay to that method. This last named means may be and is by some called prayer. It is the soul's attempt to relate itself harmoniously to its child, and helps to attain the mind of the speaker to receive the higher sympathies of the spirit. Montgomery says that "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." If this be true, then the soul's desire for peace, love, harmony, and good-will, cannot fail to bring in a higher inspiration for the one whose aspirations have made him receptive to these elements of the spirit.

The definition of prayer that appeals to my mind as being the best cannot possibly be made in this manner. Making the soul receptive to truth by casting from the mind all things that would detract from the power of the spirit. In other words, it is making conditions, mental and physical, that will enable the spiritual forces to play upon the sensitized natures of the speakers. In my lecture work, I prefer reading a poem to the giving of an invocation of any kind. But I have no objection to the kind of prayer I have defined above, for whatever serves to bring the minds of men into harmony with one another and with the higher spiritual forces, never fails to leave a good effect upon the minds of men. At rare intervals on funeral occasions, I have put into words the impulses of the spirit, and invoked the presence of our unseen angel helpers to sustain and comfort the sorrowing households. I have simply put my aspiration for inspiration into words on those occasions, and the result has never failed to be a spiritual illumination, a mental quickening, a soul uplifting.

I know of no term that can be better applied to such an event than that of prayer. I have not found it necessary to kneel as a supplicant at any imaginary throne, nor to invoke the special intervention of a God or of Gods in my behalf. I have asked for light from spiritual sources, and it has come. I have sought for knowledge and it has been given unto me. I have longed for peace and strength and it has been bestowed upon me. These things are true of hundreds, yea, of thousands of others, and for my part, I would rejoice to see that kind of prayer, or aspiration, or of longing for higher things put into practice in the life of every man, woman and child. Through the exercise of the muscles of the body, we gain physical strength, through the exercise of our soul muscles in prayer for the good and the true, we cannot fail to grow in strength and spiritual discernment. This practice, by the way, of all of synchopancy, neither does it make men and women think meanly of themselves, or crawl as worms of the dust in the baser elements of life. It, on the contrary, makes it easier for them to grow in wisdom and goodness through their constant aspiration to become better and truer in their daily lives. I am, therefore, most heartily in sympathy with that kind of prayer.

I am not to be recorded as being in favor of opening our public meetings with words of invocation, making the kind of prayer I have above defined can be voiced unto the people on such occasions, I feel no hesitancy in saying that I should approve of it. Many invocations to which I have listened are simply petitions to enlarged editions of the persons who uttered them. They have no place in Spiritualism as I understand it. The prayer of the soul requires no spoken words, but seeks rather to grow in power by becoming receptive to wisdom. Telling an Almighty God what he has to do is about as good as wordy petitions to stir the touch of the death angel or to set aside natural law, are practices that never enter into the soul's attempt to perfect itself by true prayer or aspiration. If the delegates to the coming convention of the N. S. A. can be made more harmonious, more receptive to truth, more considerate to one another, and more spiritual in their lives, the occasion of listening to a spoken, or engaging in a silent prayer, it would be perfectly proper and consistent for them to do so, provided the prayer was one of aspiration, and not of mere words.

In regard to strengthening the N. S. A., I can only suggest what I have recommended in my annual report. I believe that Spiritualists should claim their rights as religious people, and defend themselves accordingly when beset by Spiritualism as assailed in the courts of the land. I therefore feel that the coming convention in Washington should make it perfectly clear to the world that Spiritualism is a religion to the Spiritualists there represented, by the adoption of such usages and tenets as will compel the courts to rule accordingly. I feel that the cause can be strengthened by taking a test case to the Supreme Court of the United States of some reputable clairvoyant physician who has been persecuted and punished under the infamous medical laws of the States of our Union. It would also be well to take to the same tribunal the case of some honest medium who has been fined and imprisoned for using his psychic powers for the benefit of his fellow-men. Missionary work should also be undertaken, and engaged in largely for the purpose of enlightening the people, and not so much with the idea of organizing new ones. The history of Spiritualism should be provided for, and the work of responding to all attacks made upon Spiritualism in the secular press undertaken by the N. S. A. All of these efforts would strengthen that body which is the heart of the cause, and cause the opponents of Spiritualism to realize that they now have to deal with a live organization—not with the scattered forces of a heterogeneous people.

INVOCATION.

Concentration of Thought and Aspiration.

To the Editor:—In your communication of September 13, you request my opinion upon two questions, namely: Is it advisable to open with prayer the coming national convention of Spiritualists, which convened at Washington, D. C., October 15 and "Who is your choice for president of the N. S. A. for the ensuing year?"

My reply to the first question is, that I am a Spiritualist who believes in the efficacy of prayer or invocation, but not from an orthodox standpoint, that through our petitioning some imaginary Deity we can have changed some fixed law of nature; but rather, through our concentration of thought and aspiration we can awaken the God principle within our own being, and thus become creative by and through working in direct harmony with the law which governs thought.

I believe man, the ego, to possess in embryo all that exists in the universe. I also believe that we can through prayer set in action the law of correspondence and thus obtain helpful influences from out the great laboratory of nature, and thus it is possible to receive many times direct results from prayer, which is demonstrated by the afflicted sometimes being healed through prayer, and so viewing it from this standpoint, I believe in invoking divine aid or guidance, not with the view of changing any law, but of changing our attitude toward the law and thus come into harmonious relation with that which already exists. I am fully aware that many times the most earnest supplications for divine assistance have failed, which was particularly noticeable in the case of President Garfield, and in our late lamented President, Wm. McKinley, when thousands of men and women all over our land (including orthodox ministers by the score) prayed in vain for their speedy restoration, and the result in that instance would seem sufficient to impress any thinking mind with the erroneous nature of the belief in divine interference. Immutability law rules the universe, and the only wise course is to understand and wisely adjust our lives accordingly; and if we would obtain assistance we must ask through law, and effect will follow cause.

That satisfactory results through prayer have been achieved establishes the law, for it is the success of any experiment which establishes the existence of law. The failures only prove our lack of intelligence in applying the same, and an invocation at the opening of the coming convention, as a means of promoting thought concentration and harmony, might be productive of much good. Therefore I would recommend opening the convention with an invocation.

My choice for president of the N. S. A. for the ensuing year is Harrison D. Barrett. A man who has been identified with the N. S. A. from its inception to the present time and who has unselfishly labored to place the philosophy of Spiritualism before the world in its true light, free from error. Let him, may he be kept at the head of our movement for another year, that the good work which he by nature is so well adapted to perform may continue and Spiritualism in its purity as represented by the principles of the N. S. A. be bequeathed to the coming races of men.

DR. E. H. DENSLOW.

Sturgis, Mich.

Absolute Freedom Favored.

To the Editor:—I desire to thank you for the generous opportunity given me to all to express through your worthy paper their candid opinions upon subjects that are of vital interest to us as Spiritualists, Liberalists and Progressionists of the world.

I firmly believe that there should be no dictation from the National, or any other body, of how the meetings of varied Spiritualist associations, societies and temples should be opened; that each society and its speaker should have absolute freedom to open their meetings as they see fit. No dictation, no reading of poems, or beautiful thoughts from others, or the spiritual invocation of the hour. Whatever the people feel is best for them should be that which is given to them. If an audience is uplifted into a more receptive condition by beautiful and harmonious words that are uttered from the soul of immortal or mortal beings before the services, I see no injury or harm to the listener. But to take up the forms and ceremonies of being to any special established creed, for which we are placing a limitation upon the progressive spirit of the age.

Many of our most brilliant speakers do not use an invocation to open their meetings. It has always been our custom to have either an improvised poem or inspirational invocation, because it places us in greater harmony for our work and seems to fill us with that peace that comes from the higher realms of light. Not in the sense of submission, but in the great sense of harmony.

I feel that every society, in the United States especially, desires to be broad and liberal, and we should not allow prejudice against the methods of others in any way to curtail our own inclinations. That is, if we desire to pray, let us not say we will not because our Methodist or Baptist friends pray. If we desire to open our meetings without prayer, let us not feel that we must open them with an invocation because some one else opens theirs that way. The absolute independence of the individual association should be the criterion of each and all. As a matter of fact, for the National to attend to, I think this is quite outside its jurisdiction, and it seems to me that it would be far better for it to spend its valuable time in seeing what we can do against laws and methods of suppressing our rights in other directions.

I am most respectfully yours for the broadest liberality and the highest rights of the people.

JENNIE HAGAN BROWN.

Other measures might with profit be considered, especially the work of the Children's Lyceum in favor of which too much cannot be said. Let the N. S. A. be held to these and to other wisely conservative lines of work, and it will surely become a tower of strength to Spiritualism. As for the president of the N. S. A., the delegates have elected that officer in the past, and I am content to have them do so at this time. I shall cheerfully abide by their decision and continue to do what I can for the N. S. A., whatever the outcome.

HARRISON D. BARRETT.

Keokuk, Iowa.

BRILLIANT.

Don't miss the brilliant debate between Moses Hull and W. F. Jamieson, which took place in the City of New York, on the 1st of June. Put your name on our list and the names of a dozen of your friends. The good will more than balance the expense. Let us convince the world.

YES, PRAY!

But, People Sometimes Pray Amiss.

To the Editor:—To your questions, Shall we all unite in prayer? Shall the coming N. S. A. convention be opened with prayer? I would answer, Yes; I believe in prayer.

Pure, earnest prayer uplifts and spiritualizes the supplicant and is a means to harmonize inharmonious conditions and elements.

If all the Spiritualists were to unite unselfishly in pure desire for the common weal of humanity and for the strengthening and success of the organized movement, great good would certainly result from such a union and concentration of desire and expressed thought. Pure, unselfish desire for humanity's weal goes direct to the throne of God, or, to the highest circle of intelligence and if what the petition implies would be for the best good, it is stamped with the seal of approval by that high authority and all powers beneath it are then bound to honor that petition by giving their best aid for its results. When, however, what is implied in such petition would not be for the best good, it is a greater beneficence that it be denied.

Many petitions in these days, pray to their spirit friends, which, though for a season may bring results as desired, is not well, because there is a law transgressed which sooner or later brings perplexities that are most undesirable.

It is no criterion for or against the efficacy of prayer, that many eloquent and erudite speakers never pray. Eloquent intellectually and true spiritually are different attainments and are, therefore, differently expressed.

That prayer may be a failure in protecting the life of our grand, immortal President Lincoln and for the restoration to health of our noble and beloved President Garfield, and now again in our present national bereavement of one of the world's grandest and best of men, our beloved President McKinley, for whom, as in the former tragedies, a nation's heart throbbed in sympathy and pure desire for his restoration to health and active life, there is but one conclusion, and that is, a nation was praying amiss. It could not see nor understand the divine purpose to work out through these sad bereavements greater national good and glory than have been possible otherwise.

Surely at such times as we, as a nation have passed through now for the third time in so very short a period of time, the sympathetic streams are swollen to their very limit. There is a national and international welding of sympathy, and those who would dare suggest that such a time, such a mingling of sympathy would not bring grand and good results for all people. It also serves as a spur to those in authority to deal as it meets with the causes producing these deplorable and grievous tragedies.

That malignant diseases, disasters, etc., are not healed and prohibited by prayer, is proof that an All-wise Providence intends that people shall learn the laws of life and live in harmony with God's laws. If we do not, the things are serving well as disciplinary purposes. If all that mortals bring upon themselves could be relieved by simply praying, it is my opinion that self-willed people would be worse instead of better than they are under their present realizations.

Should there be a change in the office of president of the N. S. A.? It is my humble opinion that a change would be good. The present incumbent has served well, and filled his place with credit to himself and to the cause. His services are appreciated, but we are up to a crisis, and conditionally a change for that office is marked.

It were therefore well to make it.

Van Wert, O. MRS. M. KLEIN.

Prayer a "Maternal Instinct."

To the Editor:—Replying to your favor soliciting my opinion in regard to opening the next meeting of the N. S. A. with prayer, would say if we wish to keep the churches, we must pray. As we only know things by actual experience, and as I never prayed, I do not know as I would be a competent judge in so grave a matter as sending petitions to the Infinite mind, or God. Henry Ward Beecher once said that ministers of the gospel did not pray to be heard of God, but to tickle the ears of their congregation. If the universe is governed by inexorable laws, then Henry was right. To me praying is the man trying to lift himself over the fence by his bootstraps, he could accomplish nothing except to gain strength in his superstition. Yet I have known some very intelligent people who believed in prayer and often indulged that maternal instinct.

I call it "maternal instinct" because ignorant children ask their "ma" to gratify every selfish desire or whim they may have. Ministers and chaplains and those who pray are only ignorant children grown large.

Prayers are usually the quintessence of selfishness. My wife and I once had rooms in the house of a one-legged Jeweler who usually spent from half to three-quarters of an hour in asking God to grant him every imaginary whim the mind of man can conceive of. He would ask for gold and silver, for sunshine and shower, for more work and better customers, for health and happiness, etc., and would close with "O Lord, thou knowest best, give us whatever thou thinkest we need, and we will try to be satisfied." And so it is with all who pray.

While we do not believe in the efficacy of prayer in curing bubonic plague and snake bites, we do believe in its influencing governments, for the heads of most governments believe in prayer or pretend to. When the pious people of Missouri prayed to their governor to appoint a day of fasting and prayer, that governor sent up their petition for rain to the throne of grace, it was either not heard or else not heeded. Pastures parched and baked, cattle famished for water, the people became frightened. But "God heard not, neither did he hear."

I cannot understand how a person with a philosophical mind can believe in the efficacy of prayer. I am opposed to employing chaplains in the army and halls of Congress, therefore am not in favor of opening any convention with prayer.

As I am a delegate to the N. S. A., appointed by the great Mississippi Valley Spiritualist Association, I do not feel at liberty to commit myself at this time in a choice for president. I might want a man that indulges in long prayers.

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SYMPHONIOUS

Thoughts on the Prayer Question.

If prayer causes such agony as is expressed in the countenance of the man in the picture, I should certainly say: No! don't pray!

I have wondered whether said picture was a kodak snapshot of Edouard Frantz, his most devotional mood.

It is said in the old hymn:

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

Jesus told his disciples they should not pray in public, but enter into their closet and pray in secret. There is no account of his ever praying in public or in the synagogues where he went to teach.

Nowadays, men go to church and pray on Sunday—and pray at the other days of the week.

The reader has probably heard of the man who met a bear in his path, and prayed: "O God, you know I never have asked a favor of you before, and if you will hear me this time I'll give you good security I'll never trouble you again. I want you to remove that bear. If you don't there will be one of the—fights you ever saw or heard of."

There was a combination of prayer and grit that ought to accomplish success.

Another illustration of prayer and bear was afforded in the case of some half-dozen fishermen in a boat, when Bruin suddenly appeared and climbed into the boat, gnashing his teeth savagely whenever any move was made by the fishermen to extricate themselves from their dilemma. Things were coming to a dangerous point, and there seemed no way of escape from death. Then a bright thought struck their leader. Said he:

"Bob, can you pray?"

"No."

"Jake, can you pray?"

The Progressive Thinker.
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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1901.

OUR SYMPOSIUM.

Our readers are treated to a bill of fare in the present issue of The Progressive Thinker, that is unique as well as instructive. In the diversity of views, and the various methods of their presentation, each reader will be sure to find the pabulum that will please his mental appetite. If one writer's sentiments grate unpleasantly on a reader's sensitive palate, he will find in the next article that which will mollify and please. All will find something to their liking.

The unpleasant articles of one writer will operate as a sort of condiment—pepper, salt, mustard, pepper sauce, etc.—taken with the more agreeable and assimilable portions of the intellectual menu.

Wide divergence of opinions was to have been expected from Spiritualists—who are the most independent and really free-thinking people in the world. But however widely differing in opinions, let us remember we are Spiritualists all. We may well and wisely apply to ourselves the counsel of Paul: "Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind" as to what is truth; and let each freely accord to each other the right to form and hold his own opinions and not judge harshly because of variant opposing views. In this way we shall show to the world an example of brotherly feeling, demonstrating that beneath the waves of outward apparent discord, there exists a deep sea of spiritual accord, undisturbed by the lashing winds and waves of the surface; and it is the deep sea of spiritual truth beneath, of which we all partake, and not the froth and foam of the surface, that makes us Spiritualists.

It is not our views on prayer, or on "Infinite Intelligence," or any one or more of a dozen mooted questions, that constitutes us Spiritualists; we may freely entertain any opinions that seem to us reasonable and just, concerning these points, and however variant our views thereon, we may be Spiritualists all the same. And a consideration of this truth will lead us to the real essence of Spiritualism—as the science of life here and hereafter.

THE CANDIDATES.

Speaking from the outside and for the good of the whole Spiritualist, it is not good policy for the N. S. A. to retain its officers permanently. It sets a poor precedent for all future time, and appears too much like ownership. Among the available and well qualified leaders of Spiritualism, we are pleased to announce to the convention the name of Dr. Geo. B. Warner, of Chicago. He is now the president of the Illinois State Association, and in that capacity has put up a grand fight against fraud and in favor of truth. He is the genuine medium's friend; is a cool, calm, clear-headed and fearless executive and thoroughly acquainted with parliamentary rules. He is eminently capable, possesses a keen business ability, and would doubtless raise the N. S. A. out of its stupor and into a condition of financial and spiritual activity; infuse a little of the western life into it. We are pleased to place his name before the convention as a candidate for president of the N. S. A.

Mr. Barrett will be a candidate, of course, and his qualification for the position is well known.

Moses Hull has been mentioned as a candidate. He is a splendid orator, knows how to influence the public with his mastery of eloquence, and is adroit in making friends and holding them.

E. W. Sprague is another candidate. He is certainly a most excellent man; and combines the intellectual and spiritual to a high degree. We have heard excellent reports from his lectures during the past summer, and he possesses any amount of endurance, and is able to do a grand work.

G. W. Kates' name has been mentioned also. He understands thoroughly the wants of Spiritualism in its various aspects. He is certainly a master of the situation as far as the status of Spiritualism is concerned, and is an honor to our cause.

Dr. A. B. Spiny would make an excellent president. He is a hard worker, a fine speaker, and an excellent man throughout.

Either Moses Hull, E. W. Sprague, Mr. Kates, Dr. Spiny or Dr. Warner possesses pre-eminently the ability required to manage the affairs of the N. S. A. If elected to take the place of Mr. Barrett, we believe that any one of the number would be able to infuse new life into the hundreds of chartered societies that are now dead or dying, and place our cause on a higher plane.

A GREAT PAPER.

The Progressive Thinker is a great paper this week; in fact it is great all the time, overflowing with something with which all Spiritualists should be familiar. This fall and winter, it will be especially brilliant, and those who don't read it will miss a rare treat. If you can't afford a dollar, send 25 cents for three months.

OUR PREMIUMS.

Everyone who subscribes for The Progressive Thinker can get that remarkable book, "A Wanderer in the Spirit Lands," for 25 cents. Paper one year and book, \$1.25. This is our regular yearly premium. This book is elegantly bound in cloth, is printed in the highest style of the printer's art, and is sold to the trade for 60 cents. It is formerly sold for \$1.50. It is one of the most interesting books ever published. It will interest you deeply. It will do you good. Address all orders to J. R. Francis, 40 Loomis Street, Chicago, Ill.

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THE MAN UP A TREE.

And His Views Cogently Expressed.

The scramble for office in the N. S. A. does not resemble scrambled eggs by a long shot.

Before the delegates of the N. S. A. sit down on any candidate for President, several air cushions should be secured in order that the act may be conducted on humane principles.

The Presidential Pie of the N. S. A. has not, as far as tried, rendered any one despatch. On the contrary, Mr. Barrett cries for more. Glorious annual Pie!

If no man but Mr. Barrett is fitted for the Presidency of the N. S. A., I am extremely sorry that I didn't commence raising children forty years ago, and thus enrich our ranks.

Water is not the only thing that boils—several of the delegates to the N. S. A. will boil completely over when the result is made known.

Prayer does not resemble hash because this paper contains a mixture of opinions in regard to it.

On account of its spice, this paper will keep for a long time.

I am happy; I don't want an office, and an office doesn't want me. This is a sublime case where extremes meet, and peacefully blend.

If any one finds fault with this number of The Progressive Thinker, they are not a good judge of hash, and better keep silent.

If after reading what we have to say here, you break forth with the ejaculation, Nonsense! we shall consider it a great compliment, and regard you as an everlasting friend.

Some of the candidates at the N. S. A. will suddenly become tired and want to go home. Candidates generally are afflicted this way. It is not dangerous, for we have passed through the ordeal several times.

This paper will need no band of music to precede it to the N. S. A. convention. It will create music enough when each one reads it—pro and con.

In case any one notices a vacuum at the N. S. A. convention, it may be because I am not there.

Mr. Pro and Mr. Con have expressed themselves ably on the prayer question. Thanks, gentlemen.

Mr. Rice, Mr. Mayer, Mr. Barrett and The Man Up a Tree propose to meet after the convention, and embrace each other, and smoke the pipe of peace. Their everything will be lovely, while waiting for the next N. S. A. convention.

After writing these items, to go to the N. S. A. convention would be extremely dangerous; I might be turned into a lion, or spanked as a dunce—which?

As I bend over the desk writing these items I have a severe pain in the stomach; but I get consolation when I think of the pain that arises in the heart when defeated for office.

Kindly read Mr. Barrett's editorial in the Banner of September 14, on the Vice-President of the United States, the fitness for office, etc., and then read his views on prayer, taking a spontaneous case of "Mayerism." This is a beautiful example of before and after taking on the patent medicine bottles.

No one should find fault with those on the outside for expressing their views on the N. S. A. question. The Man Up a Tree has his vista extended and can see the condition of the country much better than those who are on the ground floor.

To say that there is only one man capable of being President of the N. S. A., is simply poking fun at the 10,000,000 of Spiritualists of the United States. It is a travesty on common sense, and a hint to all the other candidates to go home and apply Mother Goose's oliment to their heads, and a porous plaster to their Central Nervous System, if they know where it is.

None of these thoughts are original; they are simply "caught on the fly" and caged.

The great difficulty in the way of electing Aguinaldo as the President of the N. S. A., he would still have an organ in the Banner, and Brother Mayer would object.

The N. S. A. Pie has for eight mortal years been monopolized by Mr. Barrett, yet he pretends to be opposed to monopoly.

Is not the N. S. A. favoring a trust when they trust the N. S. A. Pie exclusively to Mr. Barrett, while others, equally as capable in every respect, can't have a nibble of it?

If the delegates at the N. S. A. can't see equally as good a man as Mr. Barrett for President in all our ranks, they had better consult an expert oculist at once and have their eyes reared.

Mr. Barrett is my personal friend, but I have numerous other personal friends that I would like to have a try at parliamentary rules, and see if they get their feet so tangled therein that they can't kick out.

When the office seeks the man, and not the man the office, then a monopoly in the N. S. A. Pie will run its course in about two years.

Nothing so bad in the world as lukewarmness. As scores of chartered societies have already dropped out of the N. S. A., more will surely follow when it is shown the delegates are foolish enough to favor monopoly.

If Mr. Barrett is not laid on the shelf this year for a rest, many prominent Spiritualists may take a rest by laying themselves on a shelf.

In case Mr. Barrett still monopolizes the Presidency, the defeated candidates had better be consoled by being appointed wardens over the cemeteries that contain the corpses of so many dead chartered societies.

It is possible that The Man Up a Tree may support Mr. Barrett for president next year. He will surely do so if the one elected to succeed him makes a mess of the affairs of the N. S. A.

These items are written, I wish it distinctly understood, not because I like Mr. Barrett any the less, but because there are several others I like equally as well as I do him, and who should have an opportunity to get their feet tangled in the meshes of parliamentary law. Besides I don't want a monopoly of the N. S. A. Pie. Mr. Barrett has eaten enough of it.

Yours Truly,
THE MAN UP A TREE.

Crowded Out.

All items in connection with various societies, workers, etc., are crowded out this week to give place to the Symposium on Prayer. Several articles intended for this issue will appear next week.

"Heliocentric Astrology or Essentials of Astrology and Solar Mentality, with Tables of Ephemeris from 1830 to 1910." By Yarnio Vedra. For sale at this office. Price \$1.00.

Mayer Vs. Barrett.

Two Sides to an Important Question.

To the Editor:—You evidently realized that Treasurer Mayer's attack upon President Barrett would arouse contention among Spiritualists. It certainly ought to, for such an unblinking attempt to interfere with the N. S. A. should find the righteous indignation of every broad-minded, tolerant Spiritualist.

It is true that Mr. Mayer's very liberal contribution to the N. S. A. entitles him to a hearing, but I for one deny that it entitles him to plead any man's political views as a bar to office in the N. S. A., or to offer the fact of his own liberal contribution as a reason for dictating the policy of the N. S. A. or its official roster.

Had Mr. Mayer contented himself with advancing Mr. Barrett's editorship as his reason for opposing Mr. B's re-election, the argument would be entitled to the thoughtful consideration; but even then Mr. Mayer would be inconsistent, since Mr. Barrett was editor of the Banner when he received Mr. Mayer's support for the office.

It would, therefore, be incumbent upon Mr. Mayer to show that Mr. Barrett has used his official position as president of the N. S. A., to further his private interests as editor. This he has not shown, nor do I believe it can be shown.

My acquaintance and association with Mr. Barrett have demonstrated to me his entire freedom from selfishness of this kind. He has invariably given other Spiritualist papers the same preference over his own, the dissemination of N. S. A. news, and has gone out of his way to do this, giving other papers preference at times so as to avoid any charge of partiality. I confidently assert my opinion that no editor of a Spiritualist paper will make a charge of this kind against Mr. Barrett.

As an individual Spiritualist, I rise in protest against Mr. Mayer's real reason for opposing Mr. Barrett's re-election. This is a narrow, bigoted and bigoted reason that every Spiritualist who loves freedom of thought and expression should resent this effort to introduce politics into the N. S. A., and to use the general sorrow at the death of President McKinley as a lever to control the election of N. S. A. officials.

As for myself, I have frequently stated that the great obligation of the N. S. A. to one man would rise to plague the Association sooner or later. Mr. Mayer assures us that he has no axe to grind, but in the same paragraph he points to his liberality and plainly intimates that for that reason his wishes should prevail. Out upon "generosity" which claims thus to have purchased the right to dictate the policy and action of many thousands of liberal-minded Spiritualists.

Who cares for the gift which carries such an obligation and which is to be flaunted in our eyes to blind them to our principles of individual liberty of opinion, expression and action? The Spiritualists of America cannot afford to rest under this obligation, and I now propose that a sinking fund be started to repay Mr. Mayer's contribution, based upon an appraisal of his gift by competent, unbiased judges. I will give fifty dollars to this fund as soon as details can be arranged and suitable persons placed in charge of the movement.

Let us be free! ERVIN A. RICE, Chicago, Ill.

REMARKS BY THE EDITOR.

Our good Brother Rice seems to be excessively amazed that Mr. Mayer

DOUBTFUL

Of the Value and Merit in Prayer.

The unsettled question relative to the efficacy of prayer would require much space in your columns, where faith in prayer could be viewed side by side with fact, the product of nature cause and effect.

The deep seated effects of long continued faith in the result of prayer has become so firmly fixed in the mental stratum of mankind, that it now forms a seemingly vital principle without which humanity would be bereft of hope here and hereafter.

All grades of intelligence, all shades of religious teaching, all classes of the human family, appeal to some unseen Force or personage through the medium of prayer. Though it may be in the depths of "The heart's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed," still it is prayer.

And not only so, but the petition is always directed to what the petitioner deems to be Supreme, or that which represents absolute power.

Prayer is a natural characteristic of the human soul, which always manifests a tendency to rely upon some source of help higher and more responsive than the natural and social environments.

But, alas for humanity! Through the cunning manipulations of the ancient priesthood, ages remote from us, prayer, gifts and offerings, were the medium of communication with the gods.

Doubtless it served a good purpose in molding the general mind to submission to law and order, out of which has evolved a better civilization.

The age of "Faith" is fast drawing to a close. The age of Facts dawned in March, 1848.

Those facts, stupendous and marvelous, came to a people whose souls were steeped in the essence of superstitions. Faith. The petitioner was led to believe that the potency of the name of Jesus was a sufficient credential to admit him into the presence of the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and once there, he could demand all things by the exercise of faith.

The idea that sacred books or Bibles, or the heroes of those records opens the way to the throne of the Most High is theoretical—not based upon fact.

The closest observer, and the most crucial tests of the promises held out to faith by infallible records, have proved to be signal failures.

Has prayer in its wide field of operation ever arrested the ravages of the wolves of famine? Did prayer ever stay the rapid strides of overbearing pestilence, or sheath the dripping sword of war?

When did prayer bring food and clothing to the shivering orphan; or home, friends and shelter to the lonely widow?

Who has seen the hand of Deity manifested in answer to prayer?

Surely, when a nation, a Christian nation, bows the head and burdened soul, and in the name of Jesus Christ

should come forth, expressing his candid opinion in connection with the presidency of the N. S. A. Mr. Mayer is one of the most candid and tolerant of men; he is flowing over with benevolence; he is a light in dark places; he is a natural born financier; and his philanthropic nature has lightened the burden of many poor souls. He has supported Mr. Barrett time and again for the presidency of the N. S. A., and now because he makes his objection to him known publicly, he has excited adverse criticism on the part of Mr. Rice because of his "unblinking attempt to interfere with the N. S. A."

Mr. Rice has evidently got seriously tangled in his meditations or he would not have made that unblinking statement.

Mr. Mayer is strenuously attempting to prevent the introduction of politics into the N. S. A., and finds fault with the President for so doing. Anyone who reads his article, carefully and critically cannot fail to realize that his whole aim and intent is to do that very thing—prevent the introduction of politics into the N. S. A.

As is well known, the Banner is the recognized organ of the N. S. A. Mr. Barrett was selected by Mr. Rice to take charge of the paper solely on the account not only of his pre-eminence ability, but because he was President of the N. S. A. The Banner had been losing money right along for many years; it had lost the prestige that it formerly occupied among Spiritualists, and Mr. Barrett acted wisely in selecting Mr. Barrett to try his hand at the helm, and see if a young and spirited man, backed by the potent prestige imparted by the N. S. A. could not place the paper in the very front ranks of Spiritualist publications.

It was a superb diplomacy on the part of Mr. Rice to do as he did, although the gain achieved thereby did not prove a success financially to the extent he desired, hence the paper passed out of his hands. Now it is solely Mr. Barrett's paper to control, and Spiritualists everywhere regarded it as the organ of the N. S. A. And how could it be considered otherwise? We have advertised for it free; we have contributed towards its support financially, and we don't intend to take a back seat when it comes to the publication of official proceedings; if we publish them at all, it will not be after they have special opportunity to appear in the organ of the N. S. A. first.

The proposition of Mr. Rice to return to Mr. Mayer his princely gift because he expressed his candid opinion, is unworthy of the writer, and was simply intended probably as a joke. Spiritualists without a single charitable institution; with no home for mediums where they can spend their declining years without suffering the pangs of hunger; with no hospital for the sick; with no refuge for the insane; with nothing whatever to indicate that they possess the least philanthropic spirit, have at last gained a home—given outright by Mr. Mayer to the N. S. A. Every Spiritualist should honor Mr. Mayer for the grand and noble spirit he has manifested, and his name will go down in history as the one person who has done as much to secure a home for Spiritualists in Washington as any other person.

Mr. Mayer has given the N. S. A. a beautiful homestead in Washington. Without that generous donation it would today be without a roof to cover its head, and be in a most lamentable financial condition.

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and under no circumstances has Mr. Mayer ever intimated, directly or indirectly, that his gift entitled him, as Mr. Rice asserts, "to have purchased the right to dictate the policy and action of thousands of liberal-minded Spiritualists." This unblinking thrust at Mr. Mayer will be regarded by all who have known him as decidedly cruel and uncalled for, and without one particle of foundation.

Mr. Rice says, in regard to Mr. Barrett:

"He has universally given other Spiritualist papers the same privileges of his own, in the dissemination of N. S. A. news, and has gone out of his way to do this, giving other papers preference at times so as to avoid any charge of partiality."

Our talented and versatile friend has stated his opinion clearly and now we will give ours. Mr. Barrett was selected by Mr. Rice, the then owner of the Banner, as the editor of that paper because of the prestige it would gain thereby. It has most certainly given the Banner, acting as the organ of the N. S. A., prestige over every other Spiritualist paper. Traveling around the country at the expense of the N. S. A., he has been able to pick up hundreds of subscribers which he never would otherwise have been able to obtain. It is worth to any editor at least 1,000 additional subscribers each year to act as President of the N. S. A. The Banner has enjoyed that prestige for a long time, a golden opportunity surely.

Then again as to "news." Last year we did a great deal of energetic kicking because Mr. Barrett did not send to this office his annual report so that it could appear in The Progressive Thinker simultaneously with the Banner of Light. Being kicking did no good whatever—the report came again too late this year—it had to appear in the official organ of the N. S. A. first. For several years in succession this has been played upon us notwithstanding our protest. Unless the present N. S. A. Convention act upon this matter, we hereby instruct the Secretary and President that it may elect, to never send another line to this office for publication. We have extended every courtesy to Mr. N. S. A. and have advertised for it free; we have contributed towards its support financially, and we don't intend to take a back seat when it comes to the publication of official proceedings; if we publish them at all, it will not be after they have special opportunity to appear in the organ of the N. S. A. first.

The proposition of Mr. Rice to return to Mr. Mayer his princely gift because he expressed his candid opinion, is unworthy of the writer, and was simply intended probably as a joke. Spiritualists without a single charitable institution; with no home for mediums where they can spend their declining years without suffering the pangs of hunger; with no hospital for the sick; with no refuge for the insane; with nothing whatever to indicate that they possess the least philanthropic spirit, have at last gained a home—given outright by Mr. Mayer to the N. S. A. Every Spiritualist should honor Mr. Mayer for the grand and noble spirit he has manifested, and his name will go down in history as the one person who has done as much to secure a home for Spiritualists in Washington as any other person.

Mr. Mayer has given the N. S. A. a beautiful homestead in Washington. Without that generous donation it would today be without a roof to cover its head, and be in a most lamentable financial condition.

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EMPHATIC ASSENT.

Should the N. S. A. Convention Open with Prayer?

I must confess to some degree of surprise that with the narrow definition and meaning ascribed by the editor to the term prayer, he should invite a discussion of the above question in the columns of his paper.

If the old and well known obsolete concept of prayer as an effort to reverse the order of nature and prevail upon an Almighty and Omnipotent God to change his mind and plans to please weak, ignorant and feeble man is to prevail, there is surely no ground for prayer, nor for such discussion among Spiritualists. The very proposition is absurd, and if considered seriously would expose the disputants to the deserved ridicule of all intelligent and progressive people. There are large numbers of Spiritualists who believe in and practice prayer, but if the editor knows any who regard prayer in the light in which he puts it he has the advantage of me, and he is acquainted with the class of Spiritualists he is by no means limited.

If I accepted the definition of prayer as set forth by the editor of The Progressive Thinker and the fossils of the orthodox church, I should not waste time in discussing the above proposition, but as I refuse to be tied down to the concepts of the Middle Ages, I understand it, would be a most excellent method of opening the meetings of not only the N. S. A. but all other religious or deliberative bodies.

I go further and say that, in my opinion, the omission of this spiritual and moral exercise has been one of the chief causes of weakness and inharmonious in our gatherings, because prayer, rightly understood and practiced, is the greatest source of moral and spiritual growth and strength—except it be the doing of good deeds, and the latter is only prayer carried into visible action.

Prayer is not a loaded derring-dog with which the supplicant "holds up" a god and bids him "stand and deliver." It is not the plea of the beggar who exposes his sores and his rags to excite compassion and alms; neither is it a supplicant or larval which the pleader hurries out into the invisible heavens to capture a blessing and drag it down to earth.

Prayer is the wings of the soul upon which it soars to more celestial heights. It is the aspiration of the heart which lifts the mortal nature to higher planes of being. It is in prayer that the individual climbs to the skies; the alpenstock by which we scale the spiritual Alps.

Prayer does not drag virtue and goodness down to our own level; it lifts us to the planes of virtue and goodness. It does not bribe a god to show us his back; it opens up the spiritual nature and permits the God within to manifest itself. There is no miracle about it, no miraculous intervention of any outside power or over-seer; it is in perfect accord with the laws of nature. What we long for and aspire to be, that we can attain more or less, and the degree of success will be in exact ratio to the power and persistency with which we pray.

No one can sincerely aspire toward goodness without being made better thereby, for he not only opens up his nature to the influx of moral and spiritual forces, but he reaches the higher plane of vibration which invite and enable higher spiritual beings to come en rapport with his life and aims and thus aid and encourage him in his upward journey.

And this is not all. Every intelligent soul has its ideal, a supreme concept, a principle or being which is the epitome or embodiment of all good, all truth, all power. This concept is not a name, but a name, but essentially the same however titled. Toward this ideal he lifts his longing eyes; to it he goes out his aspirations, his prayers; it is the goal he yearns to attain; it is the beacon by which he strives to guide his moral course; the Sun of Righteousness in whose beams he longs to bathe his soul.

This longing, this soul-absorbing yearning as felt in their better moments by all earth's children, found expression in that noble hymn sung by a voice of grief and pain and people who voted for our stricken chief as the death angel hovered above his couch, "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

Ah, what a majestic outgoing was that. How the pomp and power of official position fades and shrivels beside that sublime transition. How the grandeur and pageantry of his inauguration as President of the Republic pales beside the grandeur of his association with life immortal. Politics, parties, petty differences, how completely they disappear in the shadow of this national sorrow as the American people bowed as one man beside the couch of the patient sufferer. Hard indeed the heart that was not touched, bitter the skeptical sneer that was not banished by the tender faith of those dying words, "Gods will be done, not ours."

I would rather be able to utter those words in such a spirit of reality than to wield the scepter of an empire.

God's will? Even so. The divine, omnipotent, omniscient, benign, all-loving will wrought out through fixed, immutable, changeless but beneficent Law. Laws which are themselves the witness of infinite intelligence and wisdom.

May the dying prayer of William McKinley find an echo in every heart and lift men's thoughts from the mounds of earth to the enduring treasures of the Spirit and the realization of the immanence of the Divine in all souls.

If an individual can be benefited by prayer, why not a congregation of individuals? If in unity is strength, why will not a unity of purpose, of aspiration, of prayer exercised at the same moment multiply the forces and increase the benefits?

The prayers need not be uttered orally. Indeed, a few moments silent invocation is far more impressive than the most eloquent oral prayer, for when one prays aloud the tendency and temptation is "to be heard of men," but when one enters into the silence the prayer is from the heart and will have all the merit of sincerity.

The doubt expressed by the editor as to the efficacy of prayer in the cure of disease is surprising in view of modern instances. For two or three years my society has followed the practice of devoting a few minutes at each meeting to silent prayer for the sick whose names may be presented. Numerous instances of well-attested benefit have resulted, among them two cases that border upon the marvelous. One case so remarkable as to have found its way into the daily papers was that of a prominent lady speaker and medium who was lying in the state of coma which precedes dissolution, was brought back to life and consciousness almost at the very moment of the exercise of this power, though miles distant, and is to-day in better health than for years. The other case was that of an infant dying with diphtheria, whose recovery was equally marked and perfect. I cite these cases because neither

TWO SIDES

To Two Important Questions

To the Editor:—In answer to your recent letter in which you question the efficacy of prayer, I will say that I have always been in the habit of opening our gatherings with prayer, and upon receiving your communication I asked myself seriously why do I do so, and my reply is this:

Knowing that the universe is governed by fixed laws, my one duty could not cause them to diverge from their allotted course one hair's breadth; therefore, judging hastily, I would seem more than useless folly to importune an immutable law. So I looked closely within and found this: When I give my invocation, inspirationally, I feel that I am appealing to the best in my audience, that they may with me go out in thought to the highest inspiration of which their natures are capable, and when I feel a responsive vibration, then I can do my best work. I appeal to all the God, or good, I know—the God in humanity. We know there is great good resulting from arousing a high spiritual vibration in a human soul, and whatever means will lead to that end I believe in using.

If the National Convention is to be opened by one who believes in personality in God, it should say, by all means, no; but if by a grand luminary soul who loves all mankind and speaks out that love to all his hearers, I am sure they will feel strengthened and cheered for the coming work, and more in unity, realizing that the same pulse beats in all humanity. At the Syracuse Grove Camp, at Los Angeles, Cal., Mrs. Lowe Watson gave an hour of prayer, and the result was a beautiful spiritual invocation.

To those who are carried back to their blue-bound days by an uttered prayer, no good can result; so, as usual, there are two sides to the question.

Who would be my choice for the next president if I speak only from a personal standpoint, I should say I should like to see "Our Moses" at the helm, and carrying by experience that organ of prayer, and malignant diseases have also yielded to suggestions, to bread pills, incantations, to sorcery and to faith." Incantations and sorcery require spirit help. It is true there are spirits of darkness or earth-bound spirits, or possibly elementaries; but if spirits of a very low sphere, or so-called evil spirits, whose help someone invokes, can answer prayer, how much better can good spirits or the spirits of light, help us in answer our prayer. Suggestions and bread pills or even dirt pills or magnetized paper will cure most any ordinary disease, provided the party who makes the suggestion or gives the pills is, either consciously or unconsciously, a healing medium, or a magnetic healer. With his or her wish or prayer to cure, a certain magnetic power or essence goes out from him or her to the patient, and the spirit friends who are in the healer's atmosphere will use to heal the sick person.

Yes, I certainly believe in prayer. I do not mean just a recitation of words, but a sincere, earnest prayer. And why not? It seems natural to pray. Everything in nature prays. The smallest seed that drops on the moist bosom of the earth prays for growth. The tiniest blade of grass prays for sunshine. The little brook that starts at the mountain side, gathers strength as it descends into the valley, sings and prays as it ripples merrily on in its path to the sea. The roaring of the mighty ocean is a prayer. The sighing of the wind is a prayer. The bird prays as it spreads its little wings and rises high in the air, or sitting on a branch of shrub or tree, pours forth its sweet notes of devotion and praise. The little cricket on the hearth prays as it chirps its evening song. All animate beings in creation pray. Only some men, in their ignorance or their intellectual conceit, believe themselves too great to pray. And yet, while on certain occasions they may not use a prayer when commencing a lecture or meeting of any kind, still, unconsciously, they throw out their thought or wish that the lecture may be a success, that the words they speak may be deeply imbedded in the hearts of the audience and bear fruit; and as the All-Mind is everywhere his wish or prayer is heard.

Some men may refuse to pray, yet when suddenly stricken with disease, or if they should be out on the angry ocean in a frail little craft, fearing to be buried in the trough of the sea, or if they should be lost in a sandy desert without water or food, or if their child should be laid on the floor, or if they should be building with apparently no means, or if they were in terrible bodily agony—Oh, how quickly would they pray to God or to any Infinite Intelligence, to some Deity or Supreme Ruler of the universe. It is the same with man as with many children—when they have everything plentiful around them they readily forget their benefactor. Many men and women surrounded by everything that the world can give, and yet they forget God; but let them be smitten hard, how quickly will they call on him for help.

Yes, let us open the next convention of the National Association of Spiritualists with prayer. Let us invoke the All-Mind to so impress the delegates that they will select the best leaders from their ranks. Let us pray that the Association, now but a little tree, may grow until in the course of a few years, thousands of societies may find shelter under its broad and productive branches. Let us pray that it may become a beacon light, not only for the United States but for the whole world.

As regards the question in your circular, Mr. Editor, concerning my choice of a candidate for president at the next convention, I have already strongly expressed my opinion in a letter forwarded to you and to other Spiritualists, and I need not repeat here my most emphatic endorsement of Mr. E. W. Sprague for that office.

THEODORE J. MAYER.
Washington, D. C.

IT IS NATURAL.

Everything in Nature Prays.

To the Editor:—In reply to your circular letter asking the question whether the coming convention of the National Spiritualists' Association shall open its session with prayer, or not, I answer most emphatically Yes. To pray is as natural to the ordinary human being as it is to breathe. The whole life—from the moment we are able to think and speak until we die is a prayer, and who is it that has not wished (or prayed) for something every hour of the day from childhood to ripe old age. The child wishes or asks or prays to the mother or father, sister or brother, nurse or playmate, for something constantly—so does the boy or girl, and it is only in matured years, when reason is stronger, that we turn to a higher power for help, and pray to God or to the All-Mind, or to the Creator, or to the Father of Love and Wisdom, or to Jehovah, or to the higher angels, for help. The child cannot understand God; mankind, in mature years, can possibly conceive of the All-Mind which permeates everything, and knows that whenever we offer a prayer we will receive what we ask for, provided the All-Mind thinks it is good for us. Many times we ask for something, pray for something, that, if granted, would be our ruin.

Does the child, when asking the mother for a beautiful but poisonous flower or fruit, get it? Do we give the boy a loaded pistol or a stick of dynamite because he pleads for it? Do we give the child a shining, red-hot stove because it looks pretty in the dark and he asks for it? So it is with God and his messengers, the angels; they see how often we men and women long for something which would, if granted, be detrimental and even destructive to us, therefore they refuse our prayers. The ways of God are not our ways, and his messengers, the angels, can see and know what is good for our well-being better than we do.

You state that "diseases have also, at times, disappeared under the influence of prayer, and malignant diseases have also yielded to suggestions, to bread pills, incantations, to sorcery and to faith." Incantations and sorcery require spirit help. It is true there are spirits of darkness or earth-bound spirits, or possibly elementaries; but if spirits of a very low sphere, or so-called evil spirits, whose help someone invokes, can answer prayer, how much better can good spirits or the spirits of light, help us in answer our prayer. Suggestions and bread pills or even dirt pills or magnetized paper will cure most any ordinary disease, provided the party who makes the suggestion or gives the pills is, either consciously or unconsciously, a healing medium, or a magnetic healer. With his or her wish or prayer to cure, a certain magnetic power or essence goes out from him or her to the patient, and the spirit friends who are in the healer's atmosphere will use to heal the sick person.

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THEODORE J. MAYER.
Washington, D. C.

SCIENTIFIC

And Philosophically Religious Association.

To the Editor:—In regard to opening the N. S. A. convention with invocation, I wish to say that inasmuch as the convention is a Scientific and Philosophically Religious Association, and not a secular institution for the upper and lower houses of Congress or the public school, I do not think it would detract from the importance of the N. S. A. by opening the same with an invocation to the spirit-world for its co-operation. I do not wish to be understood as wanting to saddle the labor and responsibility upon the spirits, nor do I want to diminish the importance of individual effort. When I go to a city or town to take charge of a society, I go around and call on the Spiritualists and invite them to come and help me in my work, hence, I judge that as the Spiritualists feel as a result of my invitation that they are at liberty to do their part in the work to be carried on by the society, I think that the spirit friends look at it in the same light as do the Spiritualists.

Suffice it to say that I am in favor of inviting the spirits (not God) to take part in the N. S. A. convention. I have always said that if a spirit could not use my hand in writing or my brain in constructing thought, and my articulation in girdling that thought with words, better than I, they could do me no greater favor than permit me to do the best I can without their power or control.

Now with regard to my choice for president of the N. S. A., and with due appreciation of the work accomplished by our worthy Brother Barrett, I am of the opinion that Moses Hull would make the best all-around man for that place, and in case that he is the successor of our worthy present incumbent, Mr. Stouffer performed the astonishing feat of hypnotizing Mr. Cunningham of Pueblo, Col., at a distance of several blocks. He also hypnotized an aged gentleman and had him run through the streets shouting "Red-hot peanuts for sale." Mr. Stouffer says it is indispensable to one's business success.

Rev. Paul Weller says that every minister and every mother should understand hypnotism for the benefit they can be to those with whom they are brought in daily contact.

In speaking of this marvelous power, President Eliot, of Harvard College, said to the graduates: "Young gentlemen, there is a subtle power lying latent in each of you, which few of you have developed, but which when developed might make a man irresistible. It is called Personal Magnetism or Hypnotism. I advise you to master it."

The New York Institute of Science has just issued 10,000 copies of a book which fully explains all the secrets of this marvelous power and gives explicit directions for becoming a practical hypnotist, so that you can employ the force without the knowledge of any one. Anybody can learn. Success is guaranteed.

The book also contains a full report of the members of the committee. It will be sent absolutely free to any one who is interested. A postal card will bring it. Write to-day.



STRANGE MENTAL POWERS.

HOW PEOPLE ARE INFLUENCED.

Startling Words from the Committee Appointed to Investigate Hypnotism for the Benefit of Journal Readers.

Hypnotism is no longer a myth, a fanciful creation of the mind, but a reality, a most potent power, capable of producing infinite good. For the purpose of ascertaining the exact value of this much-talked-of power a committee, composed of a physician, a well-known jurist, a prominent minister and a leading railroad man, was appointed to investigate Hypnotism.

The committee carried on a series of investigations in regard to the power of hypnotism to influence the actions and deeds of people in the everyday walks of life.

The first step taken by the members of the committee was to master the science in every detail, so that they might state from personal experience the good or evil this strange power might produce. They wrote the New York Institute of Science, of Rochester, N. Y., the greatest school of Hypnotism and Occult Sciences in the world, and received full and complete instructions in regard to how hypnotism may be used to influence people in business, how to use it in treating diseases, etc., etc. In a few days they mastered these instructions and were fully equipped in hypnotism.

It was clearly demonstrated that hypnotism may be employed so that the person operated upon is entirely unconscious of the fact that he is being influenced; and, all things considered, the committee regard it as the most valuable discovery of modern times. A knowledge of it is essential to one's success in life and well being in society.

Dr. Lincoln says, after a thorough investigation, that he considers it the most marvelous therapeutic or curative agent of modern times.

Judge Schaffer, although a legal light, turned his attention to healing the sick, and in a few treatments he completely cured John L. Myers, of Flemington, N. J., of a strange malady that had kept him bedfast for nine years, and which the doctors said must surely kill him. Judge Schaffer's fame spread for miles around, and hundreds of people applied to him for treatment.

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Address New York Institute of Science, Dept. MK 4, Rochester, N. Y.

PRAYER THE QUESTION: INSTRUCTION

Indicated by Man's Spiritual Nature. To Pray, or Not to Pray? In the Matter and Form of Public Invocations.

There seems to be a wide divergence of opinion regarding this, which to some seems an all-important question. Personally I am in favor of leaving the matter entirely to the individual who prays or who does not pray, as the case may be. For myself, I have never seen the desirability or utility of invocations on our rostrum.

If the universe is governed by law (and I firmly believe it is), then no amount of praying can change the existing order of things. To call upon a God to change the divine order, to ask him to draw near to us or to sing "Nearer, My God, to Thee," when all the invisible powers that make for righteousness are at all times and under all circumstances as near as they possibly can be (depending upon the life, the unfoldment and aspirations of the individual), seems like a waste of effort, and fruitless. We surely know that any amount of praying will not bring rain unless the wind is in the right direction, no amount of praying will relieve the distress of our fellow men, give them shelter, food or clothing; as it always requires the coin of the realm to accomplish this, which can be done without recourse to prayer. In the case of our assassinated Presidents, we all know that praying was of no avail, that this being nobly true in the case of Garfield, for whom prayers were ascending from every church and ecclesiastical body in the land, and which did no more good toward saving his life than would the blowing of a horn up a chimney; while the probabilities are, that had the surgeons in charge understood their business he might have been saved.

Some of our speakers declare that invocations tend to harmonize their audiences, and that in this way they can better get their conditions of speaking, while others can do the same by reading a suitable poem.

Let every one act their own pleasure in the matter, and let the N. S. A. open their sessions with prayer if they desire to. I do, however, believe in that silent aspiration of the soul for all that is good, true and elevating, and that such aspiration is always answered by Inspiration.

To deliver invocations before public assemblies simply because it is the fashion and because it is time to pray, places us in the class described in the New Testament who love to pray on the corners of the streets and in the synagogues, to be seen of men, and whom Jesus of Nazareth plainly declared were hypocrites. For my part, I would be glad to see all church forms and ceremonies, and the singing of church hymns and tunes, and the ministrations of the Spirit, followed by Christian orators should be observed.

If the preacher be of an uncommon presence, let him remain behind his desk and preferably upon his knees. But in case he has a manly physique and just proportions, let him stand in the middle of the platform near the footlights. He should then raise both hands upward with the palms in front, at about the altitude of the forehead. The blood will then flow downward and give the hands that white, delicate hue so pleasing to the pious sisterhood. When his mouth is opened due attention should be paid to the rules of elocution. lofty sentiments should never be spoken in low bass, nor should reference be made to high cantana. Make the voice as musical as possible without breaking into song, but impart solemnity by opening the larynx from time to time and uttering supernal tones.

During the entire prayer the eyes must be closed and dismal effects secured by extending the longitude of the face without impairing its symmetry.

By adhering closely to these rules, answers to prayers may reasonably be expected from the audience, by a well-laid contribution box, and justification be given to Mrs. Brown's statement, that "Elder Jones addressed the congregation by way of prayer."

My first choice for President is Lyman C. Howe.

J. CLEMENT SMITH.
Topeka, Kansas.

"Human Culture and Cure. Part First. The Philosophy of Cure. (Including Methods and Instruments.)" By E. D. Babbitt, M. D., LL. D. A very instructive and valuable work. It should have a wide circulation, as it will furnish the basis of a new title. For sale at this office. Price 75 cents.

"Longley's Beautiful Songs." Fourteen beautiful, soul-inspiring songs, with Music, by C. Payson Longley. Price by mail, 15 cents. For sale at this office.

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OUT OF PLACE

OUT OF PLACE.

Shall We All Unite in Prayer?

We find before us a printed letter, the import of which is set forth by the title I have chosen. In the first place I would say, it is not my custom to preface my lectures by oral prayer; it seems to me "out of place,"—yet from infancy I have prayed. Why? In the first place, I was taught to pray, and in the second place, I sense about me something that leads me to pray. I do not, however, think to change any of the laws of the universe by praying. I sense natural laws governing all the phenomena of nature's material aspects, consequently it would be to waste energy, to say the least, if I implored any Deity to interrupt the cosmic operations by which all things in nature are.

But on the other hand, do we find anything in our customs as a race that does not have both a reason and a justification for what is commonly called a "religious act"? Superstitions of course we know cluster around every truth of soul in man, and too, they often take upon themselves all the authority of truth itself, and hold that authority until some bold thinker dares to defy; then the superstition crumbles, and eventually disappears, leaving only truth, for truth is an eternal principle, and cannot be overthrown.

The ancients discovered a power of intelligence influencing them strangely; they called it "Od,"—a queer or strange; it is the word "God" in English, in (hau-odd) that in the transmutations of (hau-odd) is now spelled god, with a big G. It was an unknown power, and like all unknown powers of mind, in fact in all nature, it was worshiped superstitiously—and ignorantly—and to it was ascribed all powers. There was the great mistake, for no one power of mind or of matter has all power. But ignorance

does not know this fact, and hence the world of man who became worshippers of the unknown power was indignant if anyone called this God-power or mind in question, or even attempted to account for it—it was "super-natural!" We do not understand, however, that nowhere there where there is there exist a supernatural thing, or being of life; everything is some kind of a part of nature, even though it has no intelligence, such as we accord to life.

I am no worshiper of the "unknown;" nor have I any reverence for the word "unknowable;" such is my faith in hu-

manly as a whole, that it offends me if one says of any phenomenon, it is unknowable; for we will find it out, give us time—we will conquer every secret of nature, in time. Our Fathers of India were content at first with their notice of effects; the cause of the effects they were not able to tell, hence they prayed to the Od-Unknown for centuries, and ascribed to all power. The sages of Egypt, though, were not con-

gent. Investigation at last satisfied them that this Od-power of mind that impressed them was a spirit-power (to use our present phraseology), and they taught the people that "God" was a prince or priest of the land, who governed by his will, their human affairs. So, too, they gave rise to the conceit that every household was pervaded by a "hy" ("one of the house"); that is, by a spirit who was once their relative. So they had their national Gods, and their household Gods—set up idols to personate them; or act as the machine of their worship. "Od" was then known, at

least in part, and a prayer for help, for wisdom or for healing, was not unreasonable, even though they ignorantly asked for unreasonable things.

But in time superstition seized upon this now apparent truth of the Od, and all the dread consequences of superstition were. We may not allow Reason to bow before Superstition and expect uplift; no, the very truth we hold ignorantly, eventually becomes a stone to drag us down. An effort was made,

however, to elevate religion without exposing God (or spirits) to the people, by one of the Egyptian priesthood. One who at one time was the principal medium of their mysteries; and in the interest of truth alone, I write this of Moses, the so-called Law-giver of Israel. To give him credit, I would acknowledge him to be one of the best men of his times, notwithstanding the fact that to-day we would not follow him, much less endorse his methods of instruction: though perhaps we should

him for what was taught in his name after his decease. But to him I owe this truth discovered, that our "spirits" are not all of them divine—I, a. Intelligent enough, or good enough to guide us, though they may help us—sometimes. He taught spirituality, but hid personality, and there was his great mistake; for had he taught personality to the people, as well as spirituality, Od, or God, would not have become again the unknown—but as the un-

known was revived superstition as of old, and the ascription of "All Power;" whereas we know, as I said, no one or one body of men (or spirits) has or ever can have all-power, even in the realm of mind or control of matters; hence foolish prayers are everywhere, and, too, even the knowledge of the Egyptians is ignored, and people pray for rain, pray for miracle! Yes, and we call their praying religious! I have no use for such praying; nor for public prayers: for these, public prayers in

distinctly resuscitate the superstitious idea of Od (or God) that held to the all-power thought of Deity. I say this thoughtfully, for I know that until that idea is eradicated from the mind of the people, we will find them foolishly praying to the unknown God-power, and of course to their own hurt, for when one believes in miracles to do for him, he neglects self-help and loses more than he gains, even if at times he has a gain.

But we of this National Association

of Spiritualists, do we not know that our friends live in spirit forms? Were they in physical forms, we would ask them to help us in time of need—and if so, why not ask them now? I do not see the unreasonableness of this, if it is unreasonable! Besides, I own to faith in them, that they often do help, by inspiring our fellow-mortals to do for us; or in response to our asking they enlighten us, so that we can better do for ourselves; so when I would pray, I enter into silent rapport. I am a child

—then go forward as best I can. But my prayer is not for rain, not for miracle, it is as one talketh face to face with his friend, his present helper. Pardon me, if I hurt you, when, O churchman, I exposed your idol's trappings, for you will not be by me deprived of prayer's solace—I pray; I personally all spirit forces by the old name or God (or Od rather, for that is the root word), but I do not pray to any un-

known Deity, nor would I lead you to Seek to know; to understand for yourself, as I did. Let us put away public prayers, prayers of ceremony; but none the less, let us pray!

It was suggested in this letter to which I referred, that I name a person for president of the N. S. A. I have no name to give—our present president has served long and well; if he retires, choose one well known and honored by the people, as he has been, and I am satisfied.

DR. J. D. M. HEWITT

