

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
FIRST CONVENTION
OF
PROGRESSIVE SPIRITUALISTS
IN GREAT BRITAIN,

(Secretary—Dr M'Leod, Newcastle-on-Tyne,)

HELD AT DARLINGTON,

ON WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY, JULY 26 AND 27, 1865.

Comprising the Speeches delivered, Papers read, the Discussion which followed thereon, with many Facts and Illustrations of Spiritual Communion; together with a series of suggestions, embodying the chief points of belief entertained by Progressive Spiritualists.

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PREFACE.

THE Association of Progressive Spiritualists of Great Britain regards the publication of this Report as its first act after organisation. All who are interested in the movement of which it has assumed the defence and promotion, are earnestly invited to aid in the circulation of this little publication. Hitherto there has been no organisation of the kind in this country, or declaration of principles and opinions on which the distinctive teachings of Progressive Spiritualists are based. The Association, however, has no fixed creed. Each individual is responsible for his or her own statements, as herein given; and they may be renounced, changed, or enlarged at any time, according to the degree of light and truth that may dawn on the individual's mind tending to alter conviction. Nothing, therefore, put forth in the following pages is to be received as final or authoritative, except in so far as the reader may be conscious of its truth. The object of the Association is to set individual minds on the work of finding the truth for themselves, and the members merely give their experience and convictions as guides and landmarks to those who may follow them. The reader is therefore left at entire liberty to reject the whole, modify a part, or adopt as his or her mind shall be prepared.

The Association attaches not a little importance to the article in reference to the rights, capacities, and power of woman; and it was the pleasure of the members that she should take her place among the office-bearers as an equal.

This work has been commenced in faith, and thus far carried forward in love, with the hope that it may be conducted in wisdom. This Association demands no declaration of belief or conduct from any person desirous of co-operating with it. The central inspiration of its members is a Love of Truth and Humanity, with an undying determination to discover the former, and apply it to the development and happiness of the latter, which they consider is their duty to God. Surely this is a platform on which all good and true men and women can assemble and calmly discuss the great and momentous questions that underly all reform, and man's acknowledged need of it. Hatred or hostility is not entertained against individuals or bodies of men personally, but only towards the hereditary ignorance, blind and mistaken motives, that in so far constitute them the

enemies of human progress and happiness. This Association is, therefore, not the enemy of true religion, but the champion of it, desiring it to be disclosed from the clouds of ignorance and superstition that obscure it, and to place it on a firm and scientific basis, demonstrable to all, in proportion to their mental capacity.

This Association is impressed with the conviction, that the present is an opportune time for inaugurating a new dispensation of thought and action, when so many minds of the first rank in intelligence, morals, and religious feeling can no longer find companionship and instruction in popular forms and institutions.

Without pledging itself to any definite programme, this Association will be most happy to avail itself of all suggestions, from whatever quarter they may emanate, that will aid in the work before it. As circumstances favour them, all agencies will be put into operation that can be of use in disseminating the great truths it has embraced. The formation and holding of other conventions and meetings will be encouraged, and delegates may be secured who will attend and aid in carrying out the purposes of such meetings; agents may be employed; books and tracts produced and circulated, periodicals established, and mediums, lecturers, and teachers or missionaries encouraged. Association and encouragement is all that is wanted to secure the services of many gifted minds to the cause of humanity, and to all such the warm hand of fraternal affection and co-operation is offered.

This young Association wish it to be understood, that its efforts will not be local and sectional, but that it aims to rise above local prejudices and nationalisms, has nothing to do with partyism and sectism, but seeks to aid the cause of humanity not only throughout Great Britain, but in every part of the habitable globe.

Communications are freely invited from all who are interested in this work. Such will receive prompt and full acknowledgment from the Secretary, Dr M'Leod, Newcastle-on-Tyne, who will receive any subscriptions that may be at the disposal of friends; or they may be more properly forwarded to the Treasurers, Mr and Mrs Joseph Dixon, Broadgate, Darlington.

This Report of the Proceedings is not sent out with claims to literary merit, but as a simple statement of arguments and convictions; and is, with the consciousness of many imperfections, addressed to the heart and judgment of progressive philanthropists, and not to the conventional tastes and professional oddities of literary critics.

J. B.

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS.

THE series of meetings constituting this Convention were held in the Mechanics' Institution, Darlington, on Wednesday and Thursday, July 26 and 27, 1865. Seeing that those present were called together by special invitation, the public not being admitted, the attendance was highly gratifying and satisfactory to its promoters. The following names of those who were present and took part at the various sessions have been recorded: Mr John Hodge and Mrs Hodge, Prospect Place; Mr Joseph Dixon and Mrs Dixon, Bondgate; Mr Thomas Watson and Mrs Watson, Mr D. Richmond, and Miss Emma Vasey, all of Darlington; Rev. J. M. Spear and Mrs Spear, 146 Albany Street, and Mr J. Burns, Progressive Library, London; Mr M. Heslop, phonographic reporter to Mr L. N. Fowler, professor of Phrenology; Mr A. Gardner and Miss Gardner, Seaham Street; Dr M'Leod, 4 Brunswick Place, and James Carpenter, Newcastle-on-Tyne; Mr King, York; Mr George Armitage, Richmond, Yorkshire; Mr N. Morgan, lecturer and practical mesmerist, Charles Street, Monkwearmouth; Mr John Cowley and Mrs Cowley, 7 Robinson Street, West Hartlepool; Mr G. R. Robinson, Sunderland; Mr Armstrong, Newcastle; Mr Wise, Gilling.

Letters of sympathy with the objects of the Convention, and regret at inability to be present, were received by Mr Hodge and other friends, some of which were read before the meeting. Amongst those who expressed themselves in this manner may be named the Rev. A. K. M'Sorley; Mr J. Chapman and Mr Houghton, of Huddersfield; A. Leighton, Esq., Richard Bewly, Esq., and J. Wason, Esq., solicitor, Liverpool; A. Glendinning, Esq., Port-Glasgow; J. Scott, Esq., Belfast; Mr E. B. Craddock, Mold.

THE FIRST SESSION

Assembled shortly after ten o'clock on Wednesday morning. The proceedings were opened by Mr Hodge being called to the Chair, and Messrs Burns and Heslop being appointed Secretaries. Mr Hodge,

on taking the chair, referred to the call in the hands of all present, and which was as follows :

" The call for this meeting is designed to meet one of the real wants of society. Earnest and thinking minds are scattered through our community, whose aspirations for truth and freedom have destroyed their affinity for the proscriptive spirit of popular religious organisations : such minds feel the want of congenial communion in an atmosphere of freedom, and need such awakening as only the association of kindred minds can inspire.

" You are invited to meet with us and fully reason on any subject that pertains to human happiness. Satisfied that we have long enough been taught the essential wickedness of human nature, we are equally satisfied that the time has now come when we should meet, at least for once, to exchange the truths which the infinite within us has taught, and to read in each other's hearts the grand reality that human nature is essentially good. So shall we consecrate the time and place, while we aid each other in the good work of attaining a higher, better, and more harmonious life.

" The claims of Spiritualism and its practical application to human improvement, will furnish an ample field for remark in the meeting. All speakers will be invited freely to express their views, so far as time and proper rules of order will admit. Speakers who desire to address the Convention at length on any subject or specific topic within the general scope of its purposes, are requested to apprise the Secretary in advance, in order that a suitable time may be assigned them.

" Let none come expecting to witness spirit manifestations, but rather let all endeavour to manifest the spirit of charity, toleration, and earnest devotion to practical truth and human good. The time for wonder and barren speculation has passed ; the hour for action is at hand.

" It is not the intention of the callers of this Convention that any should be admitted who are known to be strangers to the commonwealth of truth and progress ; it is therefore necessary for you and all expecting to be present to report the same to me (or any of the friends whom you know), at least one week before the time.

" The annexed subjects have been suggested as being appropriate for consideration and discussion, by conditional and unconditional speakers. Our platform, however, being broad and free, nothing can be determined upon until the assembling of the Convention, when each will have the utmost freedom of speech on every subject brought forward, each speaker alone being responsible for his remarks, and not the Convention.

" Yours fraternally,

JOHN HODGE."

THE HISTORY OF THE CONVENTION.

The Chairman in his succeeding remarks gave a history of the causes which led to the present Convention. A few friends at Darlington had been looking into Spiritualism and kindred subjects for some time. They felt a want of more knowledge and association with other minds similarly engaged, but their acquaintance amongst progressive reformers was exceedingly limited. A circular was issued suggesting a social gathering of friends, which, falling into the hands of a few active souls, got widely circulated, and excited considerable interest. The Darlington friends found that there were many

throughout the country in the church and higher walks of life, in the professions and in business, whose minds entertained similar ideas, but who wanted some precedent to call them out. The present meeting was therefore called as an experiment and starting-point for other meetings of the same kind throughout the land. Considering the numerous responses he had received from professional and business men, some from great distances and who could not be present, he thought the attendance at the Convention was an element of success, and beyond the most sanguine expectations of its promoters. He felt that the principles taught and entertained by Spiritualists were naturally true, and recommended themselves to the intuitions and reason of every developed mind, but freedom of thought and expression were restrained by the sectarian spirit of persecution which existed in British society. He thought the present meeting would have a moral influence on their brethren in other places, who might be induced to follow in their steps, till the spirit of opposition was destroyed, and every man was free to act and express his appreciation of truth as in America. Mr Hodge then called on Mr Spear to deliver the inaugural address, which had been suggested and prepared under spiritual impression.

THE FIRST SPIRITUAL CONVENTION.

Mr Spear, on rising, begged to preface his address by a few remarks of a historical nature. He had the pleasure of stating that he suggested the first Spiritual Convention held in America or in the world, and his pleasure was increased by being present at the first held in this country. The speaker gave an interesting account of the first public teachings of Spiritualists in America. A minister was asked to preach a sermon in favour of it, which he did from the text, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy," which was listened to by an interested audience. Then the first Convention was held in Boston, Mass. The hall was filled with strangers, but they did not know how to begin, so undisciplined and devoid of purpose were they at that early stage. The eccentric antics of a medium amused some and astonished others, and thus the work began. A paper was started, and other meetings were held, at one of which the speaker had his first experiences of spirit influence. The cause had been spreading and gathering strength ever since. A most successful national Convention had just been held, at which the most advanced political and humanitarian views were advocated. The movement in America now included the wisest heads in the land, those who by pen and tongue were labouring most earnestly and successfully for the promotion of human happiness. When he came to this country he asked if any conventions were held, but no

one understood what he meant, as such gatherings were unknown. He wanted to get up one in London, but could not. He was glad when he heard of the present one. He wished it had been more in the centre, near London; but he believed that every good movement originated in the North, and he hoped they would send the result of their experience out into other parts of the kingdom. Mr Spear then proceeded to deliver

THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

Assembled to consider subjects deemed important, we improve this opportunity to state our faith, purposes, and expectations. We denominate ourselves Spiritualists and the Friends of Progress.

We regard Spiritualism as a power that will lead us into fields which, if not wholly new, will quicken us to divine and useful lives. Ours is not merely a receptive state; we have learned both to wait and to labour. Each state has its place, each labour its time. The quiet shepherds received the glad tidings that the Christ was born, and they journeyed to the lowly manger to verify the message. Driven by the iron hand of persecution from Thessalonica, the apostles reached Berea, and it is recorded that the Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonians, because they "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures to see if the things were so." We would imitate these noble souls, and

" Seek for truth where'er it may be found,
On Christian or on heathen ground."

If the Heathen, Hebrew, or Christian scriptures have within them important forms of thought, or seeds of unelaborated truth, we accept them with joy. It is our faith that a communication is opened with the spiritual worlds. Clear demonstrations have been afforded us that our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, as well as Moses and Elias, live, and that they can and do commune with us. Their messages we much value, affording us, as they do, satisfactory evidence of a future, immortal, and progressive life. Some of us have had serious doubts of an existence beyond the grave, and not a few have had fearful apprehensions that if they did live, they might be for ever tormented in flames unextinguishable. From those gloomy doubts and horrid fears we have been emancipated, and we now hold that God is our Father, man our brother, immortality our destiny. Besides, our hearts have been made glad by numerous assurances that the wonders recorded in the Jewish and Christian scriptures are not mere myths, but are narratives of sober, solid facts. And we now religiously believe that the sick men were healed, the blind made to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, that prisons

were opened and captives were liberated, that Joseph was warned in a dream to flee into Egypt with the young child and its mother, that Cornelius and Peter by spirit ministrations were brought together, and that through them light was given to the Gentiles, which before had shone only upon the Jews. We therefore commend the modern manifestations to all the world as being exceedingly useful in confirming us in the faith of many of the ancient revelations. Moreover, we have much reason to expect that many, and perhaps all the sacred gifts known to the ancient prophets, apostles, and early Christians, may be bestowed upon us; that we may also cast out devils, heal the sick, help the lame to walk, and, if we do not literally, yet spiritually, we hope to raise the dead. Spiritualists are the friends of perpetual progress, of impartial freedom, eternal justice, and universal peace; basing rights on capacity rather than on wealth, sex, clime, age, or complexion; seeking to abolish all vindictive punishments, substituting therefor reformatory institutions, they would teach the world that

“ God loves the erring as a shepherd loves
The wandering sheep. No mother hates her child,
But, crusted o’er with evil, sin-defiled,
Cradles him in her bosom. All the world
May curse him, but it matters not to her,
She loves him better for his agonies.
God owns no power mightier than Himself,
God owns no power equal to Himself,
He never formed a soul He could not save.”

Spiritualism has been much promoted by woman. Its best mediums have been of the finer, more sensitive, intuitional, and receptive sex. It will be the aim of intelligent Spiritualists to secure to her, in all the departments of life, the rights which she feels she can in love and wisdom use. On committees and councils she will hold important positions. “ If we would know the political as well as the moral condition of a people,” says De Tocqueville, “ we must know the place which woman occupies. Where virtue reigns her influence is felt at every stage of man’s existence. It awakens his earliest and tenderest emotions, and leaves upon his mind impressions which a long life cannot destroy.” When Pythagoras passed into Italy to preach the supremacy of reason and the necessity of exercising control over the passions to secure true happiness, he selected woman as his fellow-worker in his glorious mission. His wife, his daughters, and fifteen noble females, accompanied him to Crotona, where he opened his schools. The success which attended his teaching and that of his noble coadjutors, in reforming the morals and the lives of the inhabitants of the principal towns of Greece, Sicily, and Italy, was looked upon as little less than miraculous. In

ancient Rome woman held the highest position. The importance attached to the responses of the sybils, the sacredness with which the priestesses of Vesta were invested, and which placed them above the law, mark the importance attached to female organisation by that distinguished people. Nor was modern Rome less remarkable for the influences from time to time exercised by the female mind.

Lady Morgan has said, that while Constantine founded the empire of a church, in which he did not believe, upon the ruins of a religion to which he was superstitiously devoted, his mother Helena, with true feminine earnestness of purpose and intensity of affection, made use of her influence, her power, and her wealth, to give permanence to the teaching of Christianity, by founding temples exceeding in splendour, if not in beauty, those of Pagan worship, crowning all by the erection of the first church in the new capital of the world, dedicated to Divine Wisdom, clothed in a female form, and placed under the guardianship of Saint Sophia.

When Columbus had lost all hopes of obtaining further means to discover the New World, Isabella gave him her jewels. Joan of Arc saved France; and when all the men forsook the Son of God and fled, the devout women who had anointed and bathed his feet with their tears and wiped them with the hairs of their head, remained by his side, followed him to the Cross, and were earliest at the sepulchre.

That the human mind, heart, and conscience may with the greatest ease receive the highest moral, religious, social, and spiritual thoughts, education should be thorough, equal, and universal. To-day, in this great kingdom, there are millions who have never heard of Spiritualism, much less do they comprehend what is meant by rational liberty, useful conservatism, or intelligent progress. One of the first things that an enlightened Spiritualism will undertake, will be to open the best avenues to knowledge for the people. It will then have educated minds that it can address with hope of success. Millions in America are Spiritualists who would not have heard its glad notes had not the free common schools been opened to all the people. It is the lever by which the masses can and will be lifted up, in the Old as in the New World. A somewhat new class of persons are now in course of education called mediums. Some are healers of the sick, others are seers, not a few are teachers, and some are commissioned to travel from place to place and from nation to nation. Intelligent Spiritualists seek to aid this class of persons. They require tender care, education, food, garments, shelter. Whoever would build a home, or establish a school for the education and development of useful mediumistic persons, would deserve the gratitude of his kind, and would much assist in the promotion of our

blessed work. The circulation of books, periodicals, tracts, the holding of circles, and the calling of meetings and conventions, all aid in the right direction. It is hoped that the phenomenalism of Spiritualism will yet take its place among the recognised facts of science with electricity and magnetism, and that it will be seen that man is a spiritual, as he is also a material being.

It is to be borne in mind that this is a convention of Spiritualists and Progressionists. We study the past with profit, contemplate the future with hope. Our hearts having been much comforted and made glad by the modern revelations. We would do what we can to assist and educate others. We therefore have called this Convention, and invited such as would to come and hear, inquire and reason with us; and to the absent we send this our testimony. We desire to say with Alexander Pope—

“ If I am right, Thy grace impart
Still in the right to stay;
If I am wrong, O teach my heart
To find the better way.”

While we are mindful of the new light which has come to us from above, we wish not to overlook the things which pertain to this present life. Our Convention is open to all who are seekers for truth, and in these investigations each is privileged to use such instrumentalities as are at his or her command; and we trust it may be felt to have been good that we have met together, formed acquaintances, and interchanged opinions and feelings. It would be desirable that some efforts be made to form a simple, easy working organisation, that annually, or oftener, the Spiritualists and Progressionists of Great Britain might assemble, as does the British Social Science Association, to consider the various questions in which they might be specially interested. We noticed with sorrow last year that the justly honoured president of that useful body (Lord Brougham) took occasion to speak with some feeling against Spiritualism. We trust the time will come when we shall have a fair and candid hearing in that and similar bodies. In the future, when more advanced in wisdom and knowledge than now, the Spiritualists of this and other nations may form powerful organisations, after the pattern of the societary heavens, which shall develop and foster an equitable and beneficent commerce, build a broad, rational, and progressive church, establish schools and colleges, and construct a divine and ever-unfolding government, the laws of which shall be in harmony with pure love, its “ officers peace, its walls salvation, and its gates praise.” At this moment our thoughts are not generally welcomed by the Church. We trust she will yet see, that her everlasting salvation rests upon the revealed fact of the reappearing

of the Head of the Church, and on it is based the hope that as he lives, so shall his followers live also. And we trust the intelligent and earnest secularist will see, that without the essential elements of our faith and hope, he cannot move the world to noble deeds, or inspire to a useful life.

This Convention has no fixed, settled creed; feeling, however, that in some particulars its members are agreed, with all due respect to the opinions of others, the following is presented for consideration, with the thought that it may hereafter, in whole or in part, be adopted:—

Declaration of Opinions, Facts, and Purposes.

I. That the source of all wisdom, power, and goodness is God, in whom are all the elements of paternal and maternal love, which elements perpetually flow to all creatures, through all things and all dispensations.

II. That there are spiritual worlds in which living intelligences dwell, some or all of whom have inhabited mortal bodies in this or some material sphere.

III. That some of those spiritual beings have communed with us in the past, and do continue to commune with us in the present, for purposes of a useful, beneficent, and broadly redemptive character.

IV. That this communion has given us a firmer and more intelligent faith in the realities of the immortal life than we had before enjoyed, has comforted us in our numerous afflictions, labours, and trials, and has rendered us more mindful and considerate of our kind everywhere.

V. That through the aid of these modern manifestations and communings, there has been generated an earnest and interior desire, so to live, that when the summons comes to leave this mortal form, we may be ready to depart in peace with man, having hope of an immortal and ever unfolding life.

VI. That with a view to a more speedy extension of our faith, we hold this Convention, and recommend the holding of similar assemblages in other places, also the distribution of useful publications, the encouragement and support of able teachers, lecturers, and mediums; and we shall rejoice to co-operate with all who share these convictions in promulgating them throughout this land.

VII. We also earnestly invite the co-operation of all persons in practical efforts for the moral, social, religious, and spiritual elevation of our race, without prescribing any limit of thought or opinion to others; for believing in progress, and hoping to grow in wisdom and knowledge ourselves, we make no pledges that our opinions will be to-morrow precisely what they are to-day; and it is our conviction, that the spiritual beings who commune with us, will give us a better understanding of the law of development, and that they too are becoming wiser and better from age to age.

In conclusion it may be added, that as means are at its disposal, the association will find great pleasure in sending out missionaries, in developing and sustaining useful mediums, issuing publications, calling conventions, building halls and chapels, and engaging in such other labour as may aid in the reformation of the vicious, to the enlightening of the benighted, to the comfort of the sorrowing, tending to the complete redemption of the human race, preparing the way for Him who said, "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in

God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

Mr Spear having concluded speaking, the Convention went into a consideration of the principles embodied in the foregoing address and declaration. At a subsequent session it was discussed whether the Convention should adopt a series of resolutions, or "declaration of opinions and purposes," the same or similar to those read by Mr Spear, when it was recommended that they should be printed in the Report, in connection with his address, as a guide to inquirers, emanating from Mr Spear as an individual spiritualist; but that it would not be expedient to publish any such declaration purporting to come from the Convention, as a basis of belief adopted by all. In such a form it might be regarded as a fixed or settled creed, and trammel some minds with obligations to it, thereby retarding freedom of thought and individual search for truth.

The Convention then adjourned till the afternoon, when it was arranged that Dr M'Leod would open the proceedings by reading a paper.

SECOND SESSION.

The Convention again assembled at 2 o'clock p.m., Wednesday, July 26—Mr Hodge in the chair, who at once called upon Dr M'Leod to deliver his prepared address.

Dr M'Leod rose and said—Mr Chairman and Ladies and Gentlemen, I am happy to make one of this company, and thankful to Almighty God, that he has been pleased to open my eyes to the great truths which Spiritualism teaches, and that I am called upon to bear my testimony to their cheering and redeeming influences this day.

From the time when my father and mother first taught me to say my prayers, and I listened in rapture and fear to the ghost stories that were poured into my youthful ear, I have been an ardent student in the literature of the divine mysteries—anxious, wistful, trustful, doubtful, scorning betimes in regard to the stories that were told me, and the books I had read, from "Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp" to those more pretentious and gigantic tomes that fill the shelves of our British Museum. I have no desire to impose upon your patience my personal history in any detail; on the contrary, I only desire to do something practical for the diffusion of Spiritualism as it is understood by us here present, and as, I hope, it

will soon be understood by all men, peoples, nations, kindreds, and tongues.

First, then, men ask us what we mean by spirits and Spiritualism—at least; whenever I broach the subject at home, I am requested to say what I mean—what I am—what my faith, belief, opinions, and principles. Am I orthodox or heterodox? Is the “Church in danger” from my belief? and so forth. As the minutes of this Convention will be given to the public, I wish to give every one who shall read them “a reason for the faith that is in me.” And as other members of this Convention will express themselves more or less to the same end, the public will have a good line to go by in forming a judgment upon us and our novel and interesting movement. If it is desirable to get at the details of the process whereby we have become Spiritualists, we beg to refer inquirers to the published literature of Spiritualism. Let them honestly investigate its phenomena, in the presence of an acknowledged medium of character, and the work is done at once. Let them go, as I did, to a Foster or the Marshalls. Let them do as I did. Go to, for example, Mrs Marshall, *incog.*; tell no one your errand; and when, at your entrance, a piece of furniture, without the aid of a human hand, rises to meet you and greets you by name, as it did me, then laugh at such manifestations if you can. In Mrs Marshall’s presence I conversed for hours with my father, mother, and other relatives, and matters were told me that I knew not of previously, so that there could not have been “cerebral sympathy” or “-brain-reading” in my case. It was told me then that I would, at no very distant date, become a great medium and spiritual teacher; and I have already had indications of a fulfilment of this assurance. The chamber in which I sleep has been illuminated by a peculiar kind of light; a bell was rung close to my head in the dead of the night, and loud enough to have been heard in the adjoining house, no material bell being near at the time; knockings are common all over the house; spirits are seen by my wife, in form and shape as palpable as anything in the flesh. When all is still and a-bed, blows, as if by a sledge hammer, fall upon the wall or floor. Mediums have told me that I am constantly surrounded by spirits, who aver that they are my guides and protectors.

And what to me has been the consequence of all this? Why, I now have what I may say I had never before, viz., a full and certain faith in God Almighty, the Author and Giver of life, the Origin and Source, the Pater and Mater of all things, visible and invisible, conceivable and inconceivable. I worship him in my soul and body which are his; and the love I bear to him I can no more express, than I can describe his attributes or dimensions. I also believe in

Jesus Christ (remember, I am not speaking for other* Spiritualists, I am but declaring myself) the Great Teacher, that he died in defence of God's truth; and in this sense only can I understand that he shed his blood for me and all men. I have established him, in my affections, as the greatest of all mankind; and I look upon him as, *par excellence*, the Great Medium between God and man, and entitled, next to God, to my highest love and admiration. I believe in eternal motion, continual change, human progress in truth, love, faith, happiness, and glory; and in the life everlasting. I believe in and desire my life always to be characterised by charity, in its widest sense, temperance, chastity, benevolence, mercy, and honesty of purpose. My motto shall ever be—Progress in every good thing, progress in all but sin, which is death; and I know that all men, of only moderate intelligence, are constantly impressed with the right, though they may be tempted to do wrong. Thus, then, I give my sole allegiance to God my Maker, praying him and Jesus and all good spirits to deliver and keep me from all evil. And as a Spiritualist, I here proclaim my firm belief in spirits. I not only believe that the spirits of the so-called dead do hold communication with the so-called living, but I believe that we are constantly surrounded by them, in various degrees of progression, who witness and can influence our conduct, according to our disposition; and that we should be constantly on our guard against the evil communications of spirits, as of men. In contradistinction to this belief, which is not to halt here remember, I may also tell you that I do not believe in the so-called Christian Churches as at present constituted, nor in the doctrines, for the most part, which they teach; and though it may appear unkind to express myself in such a manner, I protest that it is most unaccountable to me how an educated mind can be reconciled to the monstrosities which these Churches preach and teach. I do not believe (because I cannot understand how) that Jesus Christ is God, or that his blood was shed to appease the anger of a god, or as a sacrifice for sin, as preached. I do not believe in a personal or any other kind of devil, who, we are told, “goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.” Neither do I believe in a “bottomless pit filled with fire and brimstone,” more commonly called “hell,” where the souls of the erring are sent to weep and wail and gnash their teeth for ever and ever. Nor do I believe that the good Jesus ever preached or taught such horrible doctrine. And as I do not believe in this Bible hell, neither do I believe in a Bible heaven, with a golden floor and gates of crystal, where the blessed are inconvenienced with the sole occupation of song-singing, *sans* intermission, to all eternity. Finally, my friends,

* There were members of various churches (one Roman Catholic) present.

I do not believe in the "King of Terrors," called Death. I believe that when my heart and flesh shall fail, and my mortality shall be laid in the tomb, that I shall only "die"—

"As sets the morning star, which goes
Not down behind the darken'd west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven!"

Well, knowing and being quite certain about these good things, this religion of life eternal, I am anxious in my heart that the whole world should not only share in my belief, but in the blessings which it brings, and to that end I am here to-day to take a part in this great work. Our opponents, or rather the opponents of Spiritualism, treat our mediums as conjurors, and proclaim to the world that we are students of a "black art." Can that art be black, which cheers the human soul with incontestable manifestations and proofs of its immortality? Can that profession be black, which teaches me that my happiness and progression in the summer-land hereafter, depends entirely upon my usefulness, truthfulness, and purity here?—that in proportion as I am less sensual, less envious, less gluttonous, less earthly here, I shall be more spiritual, more lovely and loving, more divine and heavenly there? Is it to be called a black business which aims at the formation of a great spiritual association of practical philanthropists? Let our opponents answer, for such are the motives for our assembling here to-day. Let the world know unmistakably what Spiritualism teaches. It teaches that man should fear none but God—and perfect love casteth out fear—that we should, bravely and sincerely, bear our testimony to the glorious truths that have been revealed to us, even at the risk of our personal safety. Fear not them who can kill the body, but flee from what would soil or endanger the happiness of your soul's future; and let our constant prayer to God Almighty be that he, in his great goodness, may be pleased to guide our immortal spirits in the way of all truth. Amen.

Finally, brethren, I would entreat you all to go to work with a will, and to have great hope for the future. Remember it is but some four or five years ago, only, that Spiritualism began to receive a share of the public attention. Now we have a monthly magazine, which, however, to my astonishment, has no representative here to-day; and a weekly paper called the *Spiritual Times*, in the same situation, I am sorry to say. Five or six years ago the press of England treated Spiritualism with silent contemptuousness; now, they have condescended, for the most part, to censure us, but also to discuss our principles, and this is a great gain. We can now rank, on our side the names of such men as Professor De Morgan, William Howitt, and a phalanx of talent beside; and who can tell

the great progress we shall have made when we assemble our second Convention in 1866? Remember, "Truth is mighty and will prevail," and Spiritualism is but the persistence of God's providence in immemorial ways, and the greatest step yet taken in the education and salvation of the human race.

Mr Gardner spoke in appreciation of Dr M'Leod's address, and remarked on some of the doctor's wonderful experiences as a medium.

Dr M'Leod favoured the Convention with a few examples of spirit intercourse of a very remarkable and incontestable nature, proving to a demonstration that they came from loving and intelligent beings, the spirits of the individuals whom they represented themselves to be; if the limits of this report admitted of it, nothing could be more interesting than these experiences.

DISCUSSION—MESMERISM v. SPIRITUALISM.

Mr Morgan interposed an objection to the conclusions of Spiritualists respecting the source of their manifestations. He thought that Mesmerism and Spiritualism were two distinct things, and that the phenomena ought to be classified, not confounded. He could thus account for Mr Foster's phenomena on clairvoyant and mesmeric principles. He described the mode of writing on the pellets of paper, and said it indeed seemed marvellous how they could be read by the medium; but he could narrate a similar instance quoted from Dr Ashburner in the "Zoist," vol. 6, showing that Major Buckley in his experiments, could make clairvoyants, while wide awake, read the mottoes in nuts by merely passing his hands over the objects. Forty-two clairvoyants could by this means read the mottoes simultaneously. This, he thought, was more wonderful than Mr Foster's experiments, which he concluded were mesmeric and not spiritualistic. Mr Morgan continued by giving some cases from his own experience. On one occasion he was ill, and asked a boy whom he was in the habit of mesmerising, to describe his physical condition. The clairvoyant proceeded, and gave a perfectly accurate anatomical description of the internal viscera, though he was entirely ignorant of the structure of the body—pointed out a black congested mark as from a bruise, and said there were two others in the brain, over causality—gave the causes of them as proceeding from reading and "making things." Mr Morgan thought this a blunder, as he had been engaged in no mechanical operations. The boy said it was "what lights the streets," meaning gas, and Mr Morgan at once recollected, that he had been giving much attention to some chemical experiments. The boy then described the whole of the apparatus used, and the room in which it was done, and when taken into it afterwards at once recognised it. The boy said he saw all the circumstances described, pho-

tographed as it were, on Mr Morgan's brain. Mr Morgan, therefore, contended that Mr Foster might do likewise, and that it was clairvoyance and not spiritualism.

Dr M'Leod said that the experience of spiritualists went further than that. When he visited Mrs Marshall's, he got information on subjects of which he was not at the time cognisant, so that neither the spirits nor the medium could obtain the information from reading his brain.

Mr Burns contended that mesmeric phenomena and spiritual phenomena were identical, only that mesmerism was performed by spirits in the flesh, while the spiritual manifestations were performed by disembodied spirits. In both cases they were psychological, and in accordance with the same psychological laws, therefore, though similar manifestations were produced by what are called mesmerism and spiritualism, yet it was no proof that mesmerism was a fact and spiritualism a myth, but rather that spiritualism was the great fact of which mesmerism was a branch. Man was now a spiritual being or he never could be one, and from his spiritual nature all forces and phenomena proceeded. Mere facts and instances could never settle the question: the investigation required to be based on a knowledge of principles. It was a well-known fact that disembodied spirits could control subjects and produce all the phenomena of the mesmerist. Though we were spirits now, yet our condition of consciousness was a physical one—hence we were not cognisant of our spiritual existence; but under mesmeric or spiritual manipulations, the state of spiritual consciousness or clairvoyance could be induced, so that Mr Morgan's objection fell to the ground. Those who were subjects for the manipulation of spirits were called mediums. Mr Burns then described the operations of writing and drawing mediums as they had been presented to his experience; how pictures of six or seven colours had been executed with crayons or paints by mediums who knew nothing of art; how valuable information in philosophy and morals had been given; also advice in regard to health and medical prescriptions. He narrated the case of a lady who was rendered sleepless for several days and nights with a violent attack of pleuralgia. She was nearly worn out with pain when she thought of her spirit friends. In less than an hour her sister, who is a writing medium, and had not been acquainted with the action of her mind towards the spirits, went up stairs with the following prescription, written automatically, by the spirits controlling the action of her arm:—"Lie on your back, and inflate your lungs forty times, even though it cause you much pain, then move into a darkened room and sit fifteen minutes." The lady did so, and while in the darkened room felt the influence, as it were, of mesmeric passes over

the affected part, which removed nearly all trace of pain, and next day she was quite restored. Mr Burns gave other instances of medical care and guardianship which clearly demonstrated the certainty, beneficence, and utility of spirit intercourse. He also gave a case of the spirits throwing a young woman, a medium, into the trance state, similar to what a mesmeric operator would, and against which she for a certain time resisted. In this state she not only went through the ordinary phenomena of clairvoyance, describing persons and places she had never seen, but talked with spirits, beheld spiritual states and societies, and got promise of many instances of spirit intercourse which have since come to pass. On another occasion she traced a robbery by the same means. These mediums are often conscious of the influence of the spirits. It falls on the head at the top, over the phrenological organ of Spirituality, and proceeds down the muscles of the arm, giving a volition not of their own, and causing them to write, draw, and do other unpremeditated acts. Mere mesmeric experience could never settle the question. Mediumship, and the intercourse of living beings with spirits, was a privilege and function of the human soul, and to understand it required a deep knowledge of anthropology and investigation of the spiritual nature of man. It would yet be seen that spiritualism would explain mesmerism, instead of mesmerism explaining spiritualism. Mr Morgan had quoted Dr Ashburner, but the doctor was now a spiritualist as well as Dr Elliotson ; and both now declare that their acquaintance with spiritualism has thrown a flood of light on their former investigations, and entirely reversed their convictions in many respects. It ought to be remembered, also, that the late accomplished and lamented Professor Gregory of Edinburgh was an intelligent spiritualist. Mr Burns also referred to the writings of Professor Brittan of New York, one of the most experienced psychologists, and to Dr Dods, an experimental and healing mesmerist, who, after many years of resistance to the truth, at last acknowledged that he was in great part a medium for the operations of beneficent spirits.

MR SPEAR'S EXPERIENCE.

Mr Spear gave his experience, as evidence in favour of the hypothesis, that the phenomena under consideration was the work of spirits. He gave an historical description of the phenomena in America, from the first rude knockings to the table-tipping, rapping, impersonating, writing, impressional, and other forms of mediumship up to the present time. He could not account for his own experience on any other hypothesis than that of the Spiritualists. At an early stage of the manifestations in his native country, he was asked at a *seance* if he had a sister in the spirit world. He replied he had

not. He was then informed that a spirit purported to be present who assumed to be his sister, and gave the name of Frances. It proved to be his sister-in-law, who had a few months before passed into the spirit world. Mr Spear said he was perplexed to know how that name could be given. He had not thought of her while at the table, and no one of the company present knew her. Sometime after that Mr Spear was alone, with no medium near him. He was made to write with his own hand, that he must go on a certain day to the town of Abington, situated twenty miles from where he wrote, and see one David Vining. He did not know of the existence of a personage of that name in that town. He showed the strange message to some of his friends, and was counselled by them to make the journey. He did so, and found Mr Vining very sick: he had been in much agony for ten days and nights, during which time he had not slept. Mr Spear was moved to point his hand toward him, yet did not touch him; and the poor man was so relieved that he soon fell into a sweet sleep, and when he awoke said he had experienced a delightful dream, in which an angel had visited him. By this and similar strange and unexpected experiences, Mr Spear said he saw with much clearness two things: first, Intelligence, that could make him write the name and assist him to find a person of whom he knew nothing; second, Beneficence—he had been sent upon a mission of mercy. These were to him evidences of great weight, whatever others might think of them. Subsequently he had in like manner been sent to a woman who had been struck with lightning, and his presence immediately relieved her. At a further stage he had been in the habit of describing cases of disease, many of them of the most critical and intricate description; and though he was no doctor, yet physicians had repeatedly testified to the scientific accuracy of the descriptions. It was his conviction that it was now rendered quite clear and certain, that a communication of a useful nature is open with the spirit world. He thought there was the highest good to be obtained from these communings. The sick were healed, definite ideas of immortality and the state of the departed were given, and the certainty of a never-ending existence of progression was established, all of which were good uses, removing and ameliorating physical and moral evils, the greatest that afflict mankind. Under the guidance of this mysterious power he had travelled nearly two hundred thousand miles. He came to this country by spirit direction, knowing no one, and without a single letter of introduction. Since his arrival he had done in faith what the spirit world desired. He had made many journeys over England, had been in Paris three times in eighteen months, had opened up a valuable correspondence with Spiritualists and others in England,

Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Russia, and Mexico, as well as in various sections of the United States. Such men as Theodore Parker, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others, had said this power was all in Mr Spear. To such he replied, then there was more in him than he knew of.

At the present time the power was given him to read the character, describe and prescribe for diseases, or give the physical peculiarities of persons, by a lock of their hair, or by their letters. To do so he held them in his left or receptive hand, sometimes placed them on his tongue, and lastly pressed them to his forehead; and it was usually allowed that the things he was influenced to write or to speak were wonderfully accurate.* This power Mr Spear attributed to spirits, who were often seen by clairvoyants to be about him when doing these wonders. Mr Spear also stated that he had been assisted to give important dissertations on electricity, magnetism, geology, and kindred themes, of which he knew nothing. He had been sent to a college in New York to give a course of twelve lectures on geology, of which he had no previous knowledge. These were attended by a professor of that science, who, though not a spiritualist, spoke of them in commendatory terms, asserting that while they did not contradict what he was accustomed to teach, they opened up finer and more critical points, some of which he should teach his classes, without stating how he had learned them.† Others might explain these experiences differently, but to him (Mr Spear) they were spiritual facts, and as such he presented them for the consideration of the Convention.

Mr Morgan insisted on the classification of phenomena, and thought it was not well to ascribe these things to supernatural influences if they could be attributed to natural causes.

Mr Burns explained that all causes were spiritual, and that all conditions were natural. No line could be drawn between the natural and supernatural, which latter term had no existence except

* Several members of the Convention were favoured with these spiritual delineations of mind and character, some by Mr Spear taking hold of their hand and passing into the trance state, when he would dictate the description to Mrs Spear; and others from letters received before Mr Spear had seen the writers. These descriptions are truly wonderful, as well as suggestive and useful. The direction, mode of action, and peculiarities of mind are philosophically detailed, and in some instances the ancestors are described. At a private meeting Mr Spear was seen to do these things before various members of the Convention.
—J. B.

+ The results of Mr Spear's scientific mediumship have been committed to paper, and a portion of it published in a goodly volume, entitled "The Educator." Mr Spear has written several other works by the assistance of spirits.
—J. B.

in a certain class of minds. That the spiritual hypothesis was not a fanatical belief to supersede science, but was the very essence of science itself, bringing down to scientific demonstration subjects that had hitherto been considered supernatural and visionary, on account of the ignorance of mankind, but which, by the light Spiritualism had thrown on them, could be satisfactorily and scientifically explained. At a certain stage of human development it was as natural for man to commune with spirits as it was to breathe; and instead of being rebutted as supernatural, it ought to be received gratefully, as extending the field for scientific investigation.

Mrs Spear thought that though it was important to know all that was knowable of material laws, yet there was a spiritual creation, governed by spiritual laws; and although these might be better comprehended, perhaps, through a knowledge of the former, yet they were not a continuation of them, nor could they be found by digging ever so deeply into the mud. She believed we were as much spirits now as we ever should be, though no doubt what was called *death* would remove many obstacles to the pure manifestation of spirit. Now, the question seemed to be, how much of the power exhibited belonged to the person visible to outer sight, and how much to some invisible person. She had herself been suddenly made strong, physically so, and enabled to carry heavy weights. She knew that this power was not her own by virtue of strong muscle, which growth was always gradual, and believed it to come from invisible persons, yet she could not draw the line where her power stopped and theirs began. She would have persons as careful and wishful to discern spirit power as the so-called forces of nature or material forces.

Mr Richmond, who had formerly lived in a community of spiritualists called "Shakers," in America, read a paper on the "Circles of God," after which the Convention adjourned.

THIRD SESSION.

At six o'clock the Convention again resumed business, reinforced by several friends from a distance who had not been able to attend the previous sessions. According to arrangement, Mrs Spear's paper on "Woman" was fixed to be the leading feature of the meeting, and the ladies mustered in considerable proportion. As the topic under consideration was "Woman," it was considered appropriate that a representative of her sex should preside on that occasion, when Miss Emma Vasey was unanimously called to the

in a certain class of minds. That the spiritual hypothesis was not a fanatical belief to supersede science, but was the very essence of science itself, bringing down to scientific demonstration subjects that had hitherto been considered supernatural and visionary, on account of the ignorance of mankind, but which, by the light Spiritualism had thrown on them, could be satisfactorily and scientifically explained. At a certain stage of human development it was as natural for man to commune with spirits as it was to breathe; and instead of being rebutted as supernatural, it ought to be received gratefully, as extending the field for scientific investigation.

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chair. The stand which the Convention thus took on the "Woman" question was heartily received by the members assembled, and acknowledged as a truly progressive step in man's social and spiritual history. And the result of the meeting fully corroborated the warmest anticipation.

Miss Vasey having resumed the presidency, called upon Mrs Spear to read her paper.

Mrs Spear arose and spoke as follows:—

WOMAN'S POSITION IN THE WORLD

Is a subject before us, as persons desirous of breaking every yoke of custom or superstition that holds any human being in bondage. Good sense, it seems to me, would say that the test of *capacity*, and none other should be applied whenever a place is to be filled, be it by man or woman. *Fitness* should everywhere be studied, that means may be adapted to ends. The fitness of a person for a post is *originally* determined, I think, by the individual taste or desire; for what a person loves to do is well done. Secondly, by the ability to command the necessary means to perform well its duties and assume its responsibilities. How is it that we find woman to-day outside of nearly all places of emolument, honour, or profit, living without great and unselfish aims—thoughtless of her individual responsibility to God, and of her glorious destiny as a being but little lower than the angels—the height of her ambition being to appear well in society and not live an old maid? The chief cause of this lies, I believe, in her want of a true education. The limit of education should be fixed, not by some arbitrary idea of how much a woman ought to know, or how much it is safe to teach without spoiling her as a good housekeeper and a faithful drudge—the principle on which the education or no education of the slave is conducted; but the limits of female education should be fixed as of man's—by the capacity of the individual scholar and the external means within reach. We say to the boy or young man, "Make the best of yourself; there is no danger of your learning too much; read, study, think for the sake of gaining maturity of judgment and a well-disciplined mind. Lose no opportunity of attaining knowledge, whether it promises to be of immediate use or not. It is good for its own sake. Its acquisition will strengthen the mind as exercise strengthens the body." We advise him to educate himself by all the means within his reach, not only, nor chiefly, that he may become a more successful merchant or eminent lawyer, but because education is in itself good. It takes him out from the littlenesses of mind and nature, and interests him in the great things of life, virtue, truth, honour, beauty, religion. It makes him independent to a

great degree of external circumstances, and frees him from the necessity of riches, which the uneducated feel, by giving him inward and inexhaustible wealth. But why is this not as true of woman as of man? If she is a rational being, why not treat her as such? Why should she not be made to feel from the days of girlhood that it is her duty and high privilege to develop her whole mind in the proper use of all her faculties? Why should she feel, as she often does, that the whole uses of education are attained if she appears well in society and avoids those mistakes which betray ignorance of fashionable rules? Why should manners be regarded so highly, and the substance of a cultivated mind of so little worth?—thus reducing everything to outside appearances—making the cultivation of the mind wait on the prettiness of the body—her education less important than the appearance of it—preventing her from seeing the real excellence of knowledge, the essential value of intellectual improvement—taught to respect herself not for what she is, but for what she can appear to be. Is it possible to conceive a system more degrading to everything that constitutes true womanhood? One can hardly credit the fact that what I have said is true, and yet attention given the matter will show any one that female education is often conducted, both in school and afterwards, as if the chief end in woman was to be married, and the chief object of education to secure a good establishment. Whatever will conduce to that end by rendering her attractive, by making her an object of admiration is valued; but the education needed to make her think, to teach her self-respect and self-reliance, to despise the gloss or covering that conceals untruth; in short, the education needed to make a woman of her is comparatively neglected. This is the great error by which, more than by anything else, woman is prevented from taking her right position in society, and from exerting her full influence. She is not educated for her own individual sake, but with reference to a certain effect to be produced on those around her and a certain result to be attained. She is not taught to enjoy study—is not supplied with those intellectual resources which would make her independent of praise or blame. Her ideas of usefulness and happiness are associated with her establishment in life as a married woman, and she does not prepare herself by self-education and self-discipline to be useful and happy through the force of her own character and a cultivated mind in whatever position she may be placed. I admit that marriage is honourable, and that both man and woman should look forward to it with hope and joyful expectation. It is unquestionably, to my mind, needed to our highest usefulness and best happiness. Without it our nature is but half developed, and we are in great danger of becoming selfish and

narrow-minded. It is the appointment of Providence, the gift of divine love, and if evaded or refused no complete compensation for the loss can be found. Under ordinary circumstances, therefore, I believe it is a serious misfortune to either sex to remain in what is called single, in opposition, I suppose, to the two-fold blessedness. If anything, however, I believe this is more true of man; for his nature being more rough and harsh, stands in greater need of the softening, purifying influences of the family circle.

How often do we see amongst the gentlest and loveliest of women, everywhere welcome and honoured, those who have accounted the prize of matrimony not great enough for their acceptance! They are often the most important members of the family, the consolers of grief, the unwearied attendants in the chamber of sickness, the visitors of the poor; finding in the exercise of all beautiful charities and kindly affections, if not the full happiness of which they are capable, yet enough to make their lives a continual expression of gratitude to God, and themselves a blessing to all around. We may know many such, and in the excellent disinterestedness of their lives, they are numbered among the saints of the earth. But do we often find parallel instances among men? Notwithstanding all the flippant jests upon the subject, my observation leads me to think that a single life is much more fatal to man's happiness and usefulness than to woman's. But for all this, one would not think of making the boy's education turn chiefly upon this consideration, knowing that the way to make him a good husband is by developing his manhood, calling out every God-given faculty into healthy exercise. So woman's education should be conducted primarily with a view to make her a thoughtful, intelligent, well-educated person. However much a good establishment in life may increase her happiness, she should have resources of mind and character such as to secure her happiness at all events. Until this is done, man is cheated of his just rights—an intelligent wife, a true counsellor, a loving companion—one fit to mould the character of his children in those early stages, when every feeling, thought, and aspiration even make impressions that a lifetime cannot efface; and woman is robbed of her birthright—the development of her mind. No man nor woman can afford to be so short-sighted as to longer deny to woman her right to an education for her own individual sake. What, then, is the duty of all who love justice and prize progress, but to use every effort to open to woman the schools and colleges, whereby her mind may be quickened into greater activity, and strengthened for all labours which in the wisdom of God she may desire or be called to engage in.

In the exact ratio that man becomes morally, religiously, and

of their great folly and guilt in perpetuating a system of life which robs one half of the entire human race of the enjoyment coming from the direct exercise of their higher powers of mind and skill, and the whole race of that completeness of thought and action which will ever enable it to solve the great problems of life and human destiny. I may say here that I believe there is a sphere of life in which woman naturally moves and reigns, and the same of man ; and that between them is no conflict, but on the contrary, beautiful interaction—the sweet and healthful influences of each pervading the other, to the production of concord and pure harmony. But only in freedom, entire equality of freedom, can these glorious orbits be discovered. They are not of man's invention, and depend not upon his will ; but exist in the nature and constitution of things, and are by him to be discovered. They are not lines of antagonism, division, and contention, but of true union, co-operation, and harmony—where distinctness, individuality is preserved in its purity—constituting a state of perfect bliss, of which prophets have always foretold and poets sung, and for which every breast of every man and woman has and will ever heave a longing sigh until its consummation.

Mr Burns expressed the great pleasure which he experienced in hearing Mrs Spear's admirable paper. He did not consider that this question was one of mere polemical debate, but one of vital importance for the welfare and advancement of the human race. He referred to the condition of woman in the various states of society and degrees of civilisation throughout the world, and showed that woman was not yet exerting that influence in society which it was her innate capacity and ultimate mission to assume. Look at woman's position in the universe ! She is the favoured instrument whereby the Divine Architect fashions the image of Himself in each succeeding birth. How important, then, that her functions be healthy and that her faculties be elevated and expanded to the highest acme of cultivation ! The mental and physical condition of the mother is photographed—is reproduced in each of her offspring. If we wish to regenerate society and make substantial progress, we must begin at the beginning ; and that is in the education and preparation of women to be mothers. This is the ultimate object to be attained. But to be practical we must not look too far before us, neither need we wait a day nor an hour to begin this work. To gain the advantages arising from woman's existence in the world, she must assume a position from which she can exercise her powers. Supposing she was taught to practice and inculcate the laws of health, disease would at once vanish from the world, and the foundations of a new physical humanity would be laid. No portion of the community suffers more from ill health than women. Therefore,

socially developed, well educated, does he become a respecter of the rights of all of every sex, complexion, and clime. One does not need to study books to know that woman has the same God-given right as man to follow any profession, fill any station, engage in any work that concerns human welfare, that her *ability* will allow. The fear that she will become coarse and unwomanly in the exercise of her faculties, is entirely swept away by a moment's thought of what it is that distinguishes the strong and healthful from the weak and dissipated, the refined from the debased, the civilized from the savage or barbarian, the well bred from the ill bred—what but wide culture, varied thought, and experience? This fear betrays, too, a total lack of faith in the wisdom of God in creation, and wholly fails to recognize the positiveness or reality of the feminine element in life, the apprehension and appreciation of which marks the degree of civilization of any people. The election reports of the last few days show how sadly and greatly woman is needed in the politics of the land. Wherever she is debarred entrance, there is indecency, brutality, and the exercise of the lowest in man. The appalling sight of the gallows, in lands calling themselves Christian, is owing, I believe, to the exclusion of woman from its political councils. A state of society wherein the gratification of revenge rather than the reformation of the guilty is the inspiring spirit, is again owing to the lack of her influence in that department of life.

And who better naturally endowed to fill the place of physician than woman? Her matchless endurance, her self-denial, her natural love for nursing and care-taking, peculiarly fit her for that profession. But I would not point out nor have you decide what profession or employment any individual woman should follow. Every place should be open to free and honourable competition. Her taste and capacity exercised will in no wise outrun God's designs, and will only tend to greater eminence in every department. Much courage may we take when we look over the list of persons who are alive to the wrongs of woman. The best and most enlightened of every land rank there; and it only needs the general demand of woman herself to free her from every shackle imposed by the ignorance of man. Spiritualism in America has proved by actual demonstration that woman has rights and capacities other than those which man or society has accorded to her. Custom, conventionalism, has stood aside for the *living spirit* of to-day, which has taken woman out of her retirement, where she has served only as ornament or drudge, and placed her where she has filled the function of lecturer upon science, literature, and art, of physician, and of religious teacher. This it has accomplished without asking consent of father, brother, or husband, and through this has awaked them to the contemplation

let us pledge ourselves to spreading information in families on physiology and the laws of life. Woman is also the natural teacher, especially in social ethics, moral and spiritual laws; hence her education in matters relating to the constitution of society and man's moral and spiritual nature should be profound. When physical health and mental harmony exist in woman, disease and ignorance will then be banished from the unborn generations. This must yet be the great preventive work of reformers, and one which will make the cure of disease, ignorance, and moral obliquity unnecessary. Woman is also the great instrument through which our intercourse with the angel world is effected. Mr Spear's earnest desire to have institutions to educate and develop good mediums contains more wisdom than at first sight appears. Educate woman; that is, let her be possessor of her own mind and body, to carry out the deep longings and high ambitions of her nature, and we would have a world full of mediums for health, progress, and spiritual enlightenment. No one can know the enthusiasm that pervades the soul in contemplation of this theme, unless he has experienced the invaluable co-operation and companionship of woman when she is an honoured associate, and not a circumscribed drudge. The speaker recommended that woman should count as an individual and have an independent action in all social questions on all committees and in legislation. We regret that our defective notes prevent us from giving all this speech, and the excellent remarks of Mr Spear which followed.

The discussion on the "woman question" was necessarily brief. The newness of the subject left the minds of most present unprepared for the issue. The impression made on the Convention by this portion of the proceedings was deep and hearty, and there seemed to be a conviction that the "woman question" was a more important and fruitful theme than was at first anticipated. For those who would investigate this subject further, one of the speakers referred to the works of Henry C. Wright, "The Empire of the Mother over the Destiny of the Race," &c., and the works of Mrs Farnham, "Woman and her Era," and "The Ideal Attained."

After some conversation as to how business should shape itself,

Mr Gardner, at the request of the Convention, read a paper on "Theology—the Arch-Enemy of True Religious Freedom," in which he combated the popularised Jewish system of theological speculation, and the evil attending the supervision of external authority of books or ecclesiasticisms in matters of theological investigation or belief. He could not fall in with the views of God and his government as handed down in Scriptural traditions, and very warmly denounced the system taught in British churches by its priestly upholders.

Dr M'Leod said that man had from the beginning tried to find out a God worthy of his worship. The present theology had been constructed at a time when there was little light on the subject. It was now undergoing revision, and he hoped the time would come when all sections of the people would have the plain truth taught to them, and when spiritual progress could be unrestrictedly effected. It was lamentable to see men persecuted for an honest opinion, but it was a position which all reformers had to encounter. He however thought that theological reform should be effected as mildly as possible. If we respected Spiritualism, and wished it success, we should exercise all the charity at our command, and be as practical as possible.

Mr Spear suggested some affirmative modes of reasoning with theologians and members of Christian churches, so as to carry conviction in harmony with their own teachings. The more he read the Bible, the more he found in it; and the wider the range of his knowledge and experience, the more profound were the teachings he obtained from the Bible. When Spiritualism came up, he looked in the Bible for it, and there he found a corroboration of the modern phenomena, and the same divine principles at work. By the demonstrations of modern Spiritualism he was in truth and with knowledge enabled to believe that the sick were healed and other wonders wrought, that Stephen and Paul could see into the heavens, that Cornelius could be enabled to send for Peter, that Peter in a trance could see the animals descend from heaven, and discover the coin in the fish's mouth, with many otherwise incomprehensible things narrated in the Scriptures. He instanced the case of an old man who was deaf, who described the spot where a coin with a hole in it was to be found by digging in the earth. According to the old man's instructions, the digging was done, and the coin discovered as foretold. The speaker counselled that these coincidences should be pressed on the attention of church people, who, if they believed the former, would find it very inconvenient to reject the latter; and the presentation of the subject might impel them to look deeper and search for the *cause* of such phenomena. He thought there was great power in this mode of action. Mr Spear gave many instances of guidance from the spirit world, especially of three mediums being impressed to meet simultaneously for a certain purpose, analagous to the case of Cornelius. He also referred to Ann Lee, who was being mobbed, when a gentleman was impressed to ride to her rescue, without any previous knowledge of her, or of the circumstances under which she suffered. Aided by spirits, Ann Lee also saw the future prosperity of her followers in America, and directed them in the accomplishment of their present position, where they are now located,

supporting nineteen social institutions. Mr Spear had himself been sent from place to place for many years by the direction of spirits, and to this country. On his arrival, he did not know a soul, nor had he any introductions; yet a power which he could not resist impelled him to cross the ocean. He said he was as confident in the truth and reality of these instances of spiritual guidance, as he was in the Scripture records of similar cases; and what we wanted was qualified teachers to go and speak these truths in pulpits and halls; and the result would be, that many in the Church would eagerly embrace Spiritualism, and see in it a continuation of the same influences that are recorded in the New Testament. Even many clergymen would join the movement. It wanted some few to take the initiative, as many feared to ruin their worldly interests by espousing unpopular doctrines. Other classes of the community might be got at by negative arguments, but his advice was "to affirm."

The meeting then went into committee, to arrange next day's business, after which a cordial vote of thanks to Miss Vasey, for her conduct in the chair, terminated the day's proceedings.

FOURTH SESSION.

August 27, 1865, 9.30 a.m.—The Convention met one half-hour earlier this morning to allow more time for the consideration of all the topics that might be brought forward. Dr M'Leod was voted to the chair, who, after some preliminary arrangements, called on Mr Gardner to read his paper on "The Literature of Spiritualism; how to Procure it and how to Promote its Sale in this Country."

Mr Gardner spoke as follows:—The Literature of Spiritualism has been suggested to me as a subject of great importance to be brought before the Convention. We are much dependent upon it for the means of bringing our principles before the public, and we should see that our principles are adequately represented by the spiritual press. We do not think the conductors of the spiritual publications are bound to consult our wishes as to what they publish, but probably if we throw a few straws into the water they may see which way the stream is running, and as wise pilots they may steer their barks accordingly. One thing is patent, of which any superficial observer will feel conscious, that there is a great difference between the English and American spiritual publications. We seem content to announce a fact or tell a story; they reduce it to a philosophy, proclaim a principle, and then shape it into a practical

use. The Americans have facts, but they make them speak in tones of eloquence all the progressive principles of the age, and contrive to give them a niche in the temple of science. Our facts are expected to speak for themselves ; but poor dumb things, they have no mouths, they are only good substantial facts, about which people are left to form their own opinions, and it comes to pass that most people are not accustomed to form opinions for themselves, and if anything else occurs, they attach the opinions of our opponents to the facts we have prepared for them. But we are conservative in our spiritual literature, while the Americans are radical. They are not afraid to speak contrary to certain dignities, while we seem only anxious that the same sort of dignities should speak well of us. We think spiritualism looks very well with a creed about its neck, while the spiritualists of America have been pulverising and destroying all the creeds they could lay hold of for the last 16 years. Our spiritual literature is very harmless, and might be swallowed by almost any sect with perfect impunity. Theirs is fatal to orthodoxy wherever it is received. In fact, ours only claims to be a higher kind of Christianity, which is no more than what every other sect claims. But American spiritual literature has gone a long way to prove that Christianity is not the religion of spiritualists, but of sectarians, who deny there is any way to appease the wrath of God but by the death of his Son. Some of our writers affirm that spiritualism is based on Christianity, and others boast that no English spiritualist denies the divine authority of the Bible ; neither of which positions could have been retained by the writers themselves if they had paid any attention to the more advanced literature of America. If spiritualism was based on Christianity, how is it that it existed before its foundation was laid ? If they would content themselves by saying the first Christians were spiritualists, they would save themselves from much inconsistency. And if they would simply affirm, speaking of the Bible, that it contains many accounts of ancient spiritual manifestations, no one could charge them with using duplicity. Now, the consequence of all this bowing and scraping to orthodoxy is obvious. Mediumship is developed in America to an extent we scarcely can conceive of in this country, while hundreds of persons are engaged in lecturing, besides other means of teaching. But alas ! who would attempt to lecture in this country without first obtaining the support of the spiritual press for the reformatory and progressive principles naturally and necessarily connected with spiritualism. I know some people suppose a lecture on spiritualism should consist of a number of anecdotes about floating tables, &c., but you might as well lecture about nothing as a dry fact in spiritualism ; and if the

spiritual press of this country cannot or will not point out the uses, and philosophy, and practical application of spiritualism, we think the time for lecturing is not yet. Some may wonder why the spiritual press of this country is not so decided in its tone and progressive in its tendency as the American literature. Well, I will tell you why it is said to be so. They think if they were to be so radical as to deny the old systems, their publications would be strangled. We think that could be prevented if spiritualists would say it should be; and I think many spiritualists would be glad to support a paper that fully echoed their own principles against the conservatisms of orthodoxy. I don't think strangulation and death would supervene if the whole truth was brought out by our publications. It did not do so in America, and progressive thinkers are always ill at ease with any publication that seems to be on the side of conservatism in theology. We literally don't know our strength in this country, as the nets have not been cast on the right side. Thousands of people have outgrown the churches and would be easily induced to examine the spiritual philosophy if they saw their own rational principles advocated in our publications. Objective raps may bring some to inquire, but ideas rap louder, and produce the most beneficial results. The American spiritual press has taken advantage of the spiritual manifestations to reckon with the theological tyrannies which had usurped the dominion of mind everywhere; and the spirits of the departed have helped them in this great battle. We have had some skirmishing with the press, and no doubt some of our writers have done and said valiant things in defence of abstract spiritualism. Where shall they find weapons and arms to contend with the pulpit? They are all ready in the arsenal of nature, but we cannot do better than see how skillfully our transatlantic friends have used them before us. With very few exceptions, they don't contend for any dogma or form of religion, but have fought their way out of all sectarian bonds. The mysteries of religion have been traced to their source, and we have had abundant proof that many of them existed even before the Hebrew nation. Indeed, we are indebted to rude and barbarous nations who lived before Adam and Eve were thought of, for the dogmas imposed upon the world as the word of God, by the churches of this age. One thing is clear, that spiritualism has made more progress among freethinkers than among Christians, and the reason is plain, seeing freethinkers were more accessible to the truth, having already disposed of their theological errors, and had no objections to oppose to a fair examination of the foundations of religion. It would be impossible to find anything very marvellous connected with the birth and life of Jesus that had not been told of some

other renowned man who had lived hundreds of years before. The best commentary that could be published on the Bible would be the parallel texts taken from the sacred books that existed before the Christian era;—there is the foundation of all we have in the Bible, both as regards marvels and morals. The fundamental doctrines of Christianity are essentially pagan in their origin, and can be traced to the older systems.

Our literature is only defensive; the Americans have been aggressive. They have questioned the soundness of the doctrines taught by their religious opponents; at the same time they have taught a philosophy more rational and scientific. And I am very much satisfied that they have done right, and that we will have to adopt the same method before the world will hear us. The way to meet the case is not to blot out the Bible, but to throw the light of other sacred books upon it, and explain it by a reference to ancient Spiritualism. We discover that God is no respecter of persons and nations, and that the peculiar people was only peculiar bigotry. Colenso and Renan are appreciated in America by spiritualists, and find a place as reformers and co-workers in the cause of human progress; but we seem afraid lest biblical criticism, or a more readable history of Jesus, should militate against the truth. There can be no greater mistake than to ignore honest criticism, for it always implies a desire for progress, and shows that the mind is in search of new truth, and anxious to throw off the incubus of old errors. Spiritualists are not interested in anything but truth, but we have seemed as if we were interested in supporting the Bible, as if our philosophy was to fall whenever it could be shaken. The Americans have no such ideas, but look on every honest critic as a worker in the cause of progress, and give him credit for all the truth he discovers to the age.

Our literature has been much made up with extracts from old historical records, which makes it sometimes interesting to a few men of letters, who are conversant with old authors. But the American spiritualists deal in new clothes, and there is a freshness about their publications which I think we cannot give ourselves credit for. They have always seen something, and done something too, themselves, which they speak of with a spirit you cannot get out of an old book generally. I think these old stories had better be left alone till the transcribers of them agree upon a philosophical interpretation of them; for if they cannot do so, how are the sceptics, as they call them, to understand. I believe they are generally misconstrued, when not doubted altogether. There is no way to gain the key of spiritual mysteries but by practical Spiritualism. I should have no objection to see an old book quoted, if it would

illustrate a law or principle of spiritual science better than the manifestations which are of daily occurrence now among mediums. If the thousands of spiritualists in this country have no experience worth receiving, then may there be some excuse for going abroad to fish for stories wherewith to fill the columns of spiritual publications. The truth is, men do not like to say much unless they can give a reason why; and our reasons why don't suit the spiritual press. Now, I will just say what I think spiritual literature should consist of. The elementary writings should be explanatory of the arts of clairvoyance, clairaudience, automatic writing and drawing, and such like rudimentary experiences as we never fail to see developed in young persons who are disposed to pay attention to our instruction. I have not yet seen a book exactly to my mind, suited as a guide to young mediums; but I have no doubt many will be much pleased with a recent publication of Mr Bertolacci's. When Spiritualism begins to be taught as an art or a science, the spiritual press of this country will do justice to such books; but we are only making books for the public here, and Bertolacci made his for spiritualists, who in general don't want systematic development, being more engrossed in satisfying the organ of Wonder than in watching the evolution of laws and principles. Educational literature is very much needed in this country; and if some of our talented friends, as William Howitt, Thomas Brevior, and others, would turn their attention to this much neglected field of labour, I think they would be doing a service to the cause of Spiritualism they will not perform by wrangling with the press. They don't need to harness themselves like gladiators for mortal combat in the performance of this duty; they only need study the best known methods of development, deriving their information not only from their own experience, but from all they can, who have had any practice in teaching spiritual development. The subject seems lying in chaos for want of some master hands to put the whole into order, and show that every phenomenon is subject to law. The very way the subject is treated in our publications, increases rather than otherwise the difficulty to all but those well instructed. The generality of readers see nothing but an incongruous and heterogenous mass of crude matter, or to them unlikely stories, which they attribute to superstition or anything else. Such a book as Adin Ballou's is very much suited for persons who are merely seeking conviction, without personal development. Judge Edmond's Tracts are still better adapted for such as are seeking information respecting mediumship. But those who can appreciate Andrew Jackson Davis will be most instructed by following him in the course of his own personal development, by reading his "Magic Staff," or autobiography, with his numerous other writings, as they become

capable of understanding them. Hudson Tuttle's "Arcana of Nature" meets the men of science on their own ground, and probably we have no better book for the careful perusal of such.

Spiritualism, in all the arts and sciences, will work a revolution in the minds of men of education such as the world never knew in any age. Spiritualism is the guardian angel of all the refining arts, and the perfect guide to all who study science. But science is not confined to the crude materials of the earth alone: the impouderable substances of the invisible world are also its legitimate domain; and boundaries are not to be set to the mind by the scientific dogmatist any more than by the teacher of theology. The arts and sciences are necessary for our progress and welfare in this life, and therefore elementary books on Spiritualism should contain instructions for their acquirement. That is the true way of instructing mediums. It is folly to expect that the spirits will undertake to cultivate the minds of young mediums, if we do not give them all possible aid from the books we publish. There are cases where the spirits have done much without external help, but they are exceptions. Physical mediumship calls the attention of many to the subject of Spiritualism, and so may ghost stories; but a higher class of mediumship can only be attained through educational means. The nearer mediums can come up to the capacity of the communicating spirit, the better in all respects. The mere mechanical medium is likelier to blunder and misconstrue the manifestations, than one whose intuitions are trained and whose understanding is enlightened.

Our spiritual literature has not yet taken up the idea that Spiritualism is intended to promote a thorough education, beginning with the rudiments of external knowledge, and leading the mind on by degrees to the interior, and to communication with the invisible guides to knowledge. Hence, as a matter of course, we have no Lyceums for the young; and no effort seems to be made to deliver them from the bonds of sectarian Sunday schools. So that when such youths are by any chance mediumized, they are more or less unfitted for spiritual mediumship through being full of the deadly poison of false theology, and very seldom instructed in anything else. We have no literature in this country adapted to the minds of youth, except what is impregnated with theological poison; and I question whether they might not as well remain ignorant of religion altogether, as to imbibe such Lethcean draughts as are obtained through Sunday-school books and teaching. Many a time have we been told the object of Spiritualism is to convince sceptics of a future state, and all our literature seems to be constructed on this principle. But that is only the commencement of its career, for its object is to destroy all errors, to elevate man to

the communion of angels in the present life, and thus establish the kingdom of heaven on earth.

There are many speakers and writers whose letters, essays, and books contain the cream and essence of spiritual literature in America, whose principles are never named in this country. George Stearns, Professor Denton, the anonymous writer C. M. P., are among the most talented and even profoundly learned men of the age, and such men are never found grovelling after one idea, but, each in his own way, presents you with the most advanced ideas of this progressive movement. Lizzy Doten, Ascha C. Sprague, Emma Hardinge, Cora Wilburn, and some scores besides, pour forth torrents of inspired poetry, and their magnificent prose writings should have been better known in this country among spiritualists. We have not begun at the right end of the work: we have begun to convince sceptics, instead of developing mediums. Another reason is this, the spiritualists of this country are not represented in the literature, only a few are, and they are not a fair sample. But that is not all; there is always manifest a decided hostility to rationalism, and as much dread of science as the theologian has. The creed of our literature seems to be this, spiritualism is true, and we must appear to be Christians, and the world will believe us; or if it does not, we will contend with it on Scriptural ground, and not sacrifice an inch of our own respectability. But if ever we should go further east, we will say there is one God, and Mahomet is his prophet. The truth is, we have had no principles announced in this country having a progressive tendency, and it is very much to be feared we never will, unless we take up the matter of publication for ourselves, by forming a Limited Liability Company, and then we should be able to command both capital and all the talent required for a first-class paper. There is no doing great things by small means, and capital to a large extent can be raised on the associative principle without danger to any one's individual interest. The most gigantic undertakings in manufactures and commerce are carried out with success on this principle, when no other means would accomplish the results. There are other reasons for publishing a paper on the associative principle, besides the accumulation of capital sufficient for a large undertaking. It would interest a larger number of individuals, who would assist in promoting its sale and contributing to its columns. It would represent a larger number of progressive men, who would say what they meant by Spiritualism, and not be bound to repeat other people's ideas, lest they should be condemned to silence. A large paper would sell better. Spiritualism is cosmopolitan, and we want to know what is doing all over the world. We could then show to the English

people that the gospel of Spiritualism has been prevalent in India and other fields of missionary labour for ages bygone, and that the Hindoos do to this day more marvellous things than is said to have been done by the first apostles of Christianity. The spiritualists on the Continent are publishing a number of papers, and we would be able to keep our readers well up in whatever was of particular interest in France, Germany, Italy, and other countries, by extracts from their papers. Such news is nothing but necessary to the man who believes that Spiritualism is a universal principle, and that it cannot be limited to any sect or country. But is it practicable? Well, I don't know. It is not impossible, and I should not think it even difficult, if a few men were to agree to set the subject clearly before the spiritualists of this country. Would there be any objections made to such a plan of publishing spiritual papers? I think there would; and it is most likely that the proposition would be treated by many with an ominous silence more significant than any words of disapprobation, signifying a dislike to co-operation as being too plebeian and democratic. Much has been said about organisation among spiritualists; we have not arrived at anything more definite than co-operation for special objects. We have no central organisation, and perhaps we never shall, but we are in circumstances to see the necessity of united effort whenever any special object is to be sought. What we want to secure to all is perfect independent individuality, while we do not lose any of the benefits of union so much valued by all the sects of religion. We are not a religious sect, in my idea, for that limits Spiritualism, which is universal, but we are not the less capable of co-operation and union for the performance of any great office required in promoting the progress of the world. The *Spiritual Times*, of June 10th, has an editorial article on organisation, in which a very strong appeal is made to spiritualists. We think that the *Spiritual Times* would be willing to take up any suggestion this Convention might make in the way of devising a plan of co-operative publishing. Mr Cooper, proprietor of the *Spiritual Times* has done much as an individual, but I believe he would prefer to be relieved from a part of his responsibility, especially if he saw a greater good could be effected by any other plan. I have got a plan, but some one else may have got a dozen, and may be very anxious to try them, so we had better have as many plans brought forward as possible, and then we will have the means of judging which is most suitable for our purpose. Simplicity is an attribute to be aimed at, and there is nothing more simple than a Limited Liability Company, which can be legally established by a hundred or a thousand co-operators at so much per share.

DISCUSSION ON LITERATURE.

Mr Spear remarked on the relative merits of English and American spiritual literature. This was the mother country, and the movements were more slow and thorough; whilst the Americans, being the offspring, got the new ideas and went ahead at greater speed. He referred to the various classes of writers—the philosophical tone of Davis, the religious, devotional spirit of Harris, &c. He believed that in this country the practical adaptation of the truths of Spiritualism would be carried out. Davis was an enunciator of truths and principles, but it required a few comprehensive minds to deduce practical uses and present a new order of things adapted to the wants of society. He thought the joint action of the English and American mind would yet effect this, and that it was well a distinction existed, instead of them being similar. He thought a good weekly publication would be more useful than a monthly; the former kept the subject fresh in the minds of its readers without interruption, whilst the latter gave too much opportunity for other interests to interpose. He hoped they would not overlook the services of the human voice in public lectures, in their earnestness for publications. In America they both worked together for good. The usefulness of publications was much enhanced by the interest created by public lectures.

Mr Burns said his connection with the literature of Spiritualism might excuse him for making a few remarks. The American books had a greater circulation in this country than even the English ones, and the interest they created was of a far more deep and progressive tendency. English spiritualists, like their books, were so barren of principles that each successive relay of "facts," in the shape of rappings and ghost stories, set up a new discussion founded on like stories of a traditionary nature. Why not go to Nature at once—that infallible revelation of God, and see the unalterable course of things as there manifested. But no. Some chose to look into old books and misrepresented incidents for their information, and tried to make the living facts of to-day and the wisdom they teach, coincide with the mystic stories and superstitious speculations of the past. This was neither Spiritualism nor progress, but priestcraft—the blind puppets of a modern sectarianism taking advantage of the existence of Spiritualism, to show that their bag of wonders was all in all, and that it was neither safe nor necessary to look beyond. This is an issue which Spiritualism must prevent if it has any power for good at all. The new dispensation must not be based on credulity, but intelligence. Hence, the facts which enlighten the mind respecting man's inner nature and its relationships are not the specula-

tions of the past, but the ever present verities as laid down in man's spiritual nature, and accessible by experiment and scientific research. Matters pertaining to man's eternal well-being and future are not theological dogmas supported by miracles, but great natural and scientific truths made apparent by reason and experiment. The speaker rejoiced that the books that most fully and rigidly interrogated nature were the most extensively read and had the most influence.

Mr Burns then referred to the schemes for supplying the spiritualists with a periodical. He said that the cause was not at all served by what already existed. There was no free press or popular organ; those in existence did not serve the people, but wanted the people to serve them; they were not the organs of truth or investigation, but of a sect. The speaker deprecated that anonymous journalism which put a sheet of printed paper before you as if from the hand of an automaton. This was only the ghost of what a periodical should be, having the advocacy of a great truth at stake, and enjoying the co-operation of hearty, earnest men. But what do these papers care for the truth? Why, the first question with them all is, their paltry individual existence. The good will of their subscribers is of more importance to them than the greatest law or principle that ever emanated from the Divine mind. They dare not even advertise a book that is accredited to advocate a sentiment ahead of the old-womanisms that pass current with their constituents; and their declared policy is to exclude all articles tending to explode theological errors—the roots of sectarian tyrannies. And does such a miserable system pay financially? No. The publications already in existence in this country subsist on charity; not one of them earn their bread. An out and out progressive broadsheet could not fare worse. Such an organ is wanted and living real men that are not ashamed of being its editors or publishers. It is rather an incongruity to be laughed at for being a spiritualist and have to defend its facts and principles every time you go to buy its books at these business publishers. Even their trade terms are stiff and illiberal, showing that it is a matter of no consequence to them whether the books have a chance or not. A lady came to this country from California; she had a great desire to meet with some spiritualists; she called at the office of the *Spiritual Magazine*, to find out the editor, but beyond a polite, cold business reply she got nothing; and no wonder! It is not such a publisher's work to "believe in Spiritualism," but to earn his 10 per cent. on sales. But if we would succeed, the will and the deed must go together. This lady found that the editor was a myth, and she would have found out other "spiritual" unsubstantialities if she had gone further. It must be a poor chance

for a cause when those connected with it and its literature dare not avow such connection outside of their own clique.

The speaker did not mean to imply that the existing periodicals had not been of some service, yet he contended that they were open to the objections he had stated. They might even be useful in promoting a "respectable" form of "Christian Spiritualism;" but when the object contended for was truth and progress, and not foregone conclusions and the "powers that be," it would be seen that they were worthless. He knew that the promoters of these journals were gentlemen of honour and respectability; he made no personal allusion to them, but to the periodicals as they were. He thought that such a criticism was healthy and was wanted. Candour and honesty was a better policy than selfish conservatism—the quality which he found fault with in those papers, which would rather sacrifice the truth than their own success or reputation. He was a friend of politeness, suavity, and fraternity, and had experienced much kindness from the promoters of these journals; but he considered it cowardly and a desertion of duty to cry "Peace, peace, when there was no peace," and in the end was neither kindness nor justice.

When the speaker first became a spiritualist, and had schemes for popularising the literature, he humbly presented himself to a celebrated pioneer connected with things as they are. He was received very suspiciously, and was asked if he wished to make money by it. From all these facts and evidences, the speaker inferred that neither the Convention nor the cause had much to hope for from the present institutions. He, however, saw no clear way for the present, but threw out these suggestions with the hope that they might stir up to effort at some future day. Co-operation he declared to be a spiritual and progressive mode of action; and whenever the friends of mankind became spiritual and progressive enough, they would adopt it, in the form of a joint-stock company or otherwise, for the purpose of diffusing progressive literature; but for the present he had no practical suggestions on that point, and as an individual would do all he could, till some one occupied the field and did it better.

Mr Hodge stated that he had written to the managers of both the *Spiritual Magazine* and the *Spiritual Times*, requesting them to insert an advertisement of the Convention, for payment at the usual scale of charges; but no notice was taken of his communications.* He thought this contrasted curiously with America, where there

* It is quite likely that Mr Hodge's communications never reached the proper quarters. The *Magazine* gave a friendly announcement of the Convention, and *The Times* published the Call, free, as news, though the editor never received the copy sent officially by Mr Hodge.—J. B.

were a number of papers devoted to progress, and to the aid of those who were making such efforts.

After a general conversation on the subject of printing and publishing, which was merely an exchange of thought and information, Mr Burns was called upon to read the paper which he had prepared, and which he entitled

MAN'S NATURAL POSITION IN RESPECT TO THEOLOGY, RELIGION, AND
IMMORTALITY.

The subjects of our discourse are as old as the mental history of the human race. The earliest legacy of our forefathers is their experience in theology and religion. In every age these have been the topics of thought and research, and the cause of much contention and bloodshed. Every nation and tribe has distinguished itself by the peculiar views of its members on these universal themes. Our land is studded with institutions for the perpetuation and diffusion of them, and their paid teachers absorb an incredible amount of the industry of the people. Notwithstanding these evidences, many affirm that neither theology, religion, nor immortality really exist; that the first is a wretched bugbear, keeping the human mind in abject slavery; the second, a mere arbitrary system of beliefs and ceremonies; and the latter, an indefinite myth and delusion. The incoherence, uncertainty, and vagueness surrounding these subjects, as popularly taught, have no doubt militated against their acceptance by many logical and powerful minds. Progress and investigation has been denied in this department of thought. Dogmatic authority has taken the place of reason and the teachings of nature derived from experience. The thoughts of the past alone have been consulted, whilst the great realities to which these topics refer have been left uninterrogated. We mean to adopt a perfectly free and independent course on this occasion, and refer all our facts and arguments to the reason and experience of our auditors.

Theology Defined.

The subject, taken as a whole, may be divided into three self-evident and comprehensible parts. Theology may be termed a knowledge of the causes or sources of life; Religion, the conduct of life; and Immortality, the ultimate object or destiny of life. Theology is a knowledge of causes, and it ought to explain the origin, nature, and relations of all things, and the principles which regulate all manifestations of life and existence. In other words, there is only one science, and that is Theology; only one universal object of investigation, and that is Life.

Science has hitherto dealt mostly with external phenomena and transitory circumstances, but the human mind demands a disclosure

of the arcana of causes, that operate eternally to the production of endless and diverse series of effects and phenomena.

As to a First Cause, the mind of man cannot conceive of anything as such, because we cannot conceive of a beginning. If causation and the medium matter through which it operates have been eternal, there is an ETERNAL cause, but no *first* cause.

The first cause and the last cause are one and the same; for if there was not an omnipotent and eternally omnipresent cause ceaselessly operating, then Chaos would at once draw her sable mantle over the whole universe of formation, and there would be nothing to observe, and no one to observe it. A preceding effect cannot be the cause of a succeeding one. John's parents were not the cause of his existence—themselves being an effect, but an instrumentality by means of which the eternal cause again operated.

The universe is in every part alive, and has been living and thriving ever and ever. Everything in it is alive, and all members and portions of it are ceaselessly and industriously, hand in hand, with one aim and purpose, developing forms of life, life, life. There is no dead matter: all is animated with a great, intelligent, self-regulating soul; and we cannot imagine a time when this state of things did not exist, when ideas from this interior intelligent fountain were not being incarnated in forms and perpetuating an independent individual existence—types of the great original. Granting, then, this eternity of being to be a fact—that the illimitable, intelligent, vital, and divine vortex of all that forms, animates, and energises has flowed on for ever through matter, its external body or receptive principle—then we have an incessant series of vital forms, the result of the conjoined action of Father God, the positive or male principle, and Mother Nature, the receptive or female principle.

But though the human soul has been in course of organisation and existence on worlds and spheres in central portions of the universe from all eternity, yet there must have been a time when the formation of man commenced in this recent portion of Nature's domains. Cosmogony and geology show that all minor forms existed before man, that forms of life could not exist without sufficient instrumentalities and conditions to produce them, and that man is the inevitable result of the Eternal Cause in its operations to individualise its inherent principles in material organisations. The divine soul or life of the universe, inherent in our planet as a member of the body universal, could not at once manifest all its qualities and principles in forms of life. For countless ages its efforts were limited to simple motion. In course of time the association of atoms secreted from the general mass under diverse circumstances, produced a variety of substances or products, partaking more or less of the general pro-

perties of the whole. It may be said that at first there was only one substance, and that destitute of properties; but the diversified forms of this substance, gradually produced, eliminated various properties of matter, and hence a diversity of substances, which in turn were conditions for higher manifestations of the inherent life principle. Thus elementary substances were gradually developed, producing a certain state of water, atmosphere, light, and heat; and from these conditions emanated the first forms of organised life. As these conditions improved, the products of life became more perfect, until animals endowed with complicated organisms and much intelligence prevailed. Every stage was a triumph, and each addition was a step toward humanity. No line can be drawn to show the place in the scale where the efforts of creative power culminated in the production of man. Races and countless generations of semi-human beings have existed and been swept away, with whom we could have no fraternal sympathy, but rather antagonism. Within the memory of history, many tribes have been blotted out, without any seeming cause; while mixtures and alliances of nations and tribes have produced higher and more vigorous types of humanity. The race is yet in an unfinished state of development; and types of men now in the womb of the future, will realise possibilities of which, on our highest summit of thought, we cannot conceive. All things are as good as their conditions and circumstances will allow them to be.

Let man explain his own origin. He is called the microcosm—the little world, a type of the great harmonious universe. Observe the conditions that bring forth the diversified phenomena displayed in human life—is the cause of them all not imbedded deep in the spiritual nature of man? To illustrate: The mammary and uterine apparatus was hidden in the bosom of the female since her first stage of foetal development, but it required time and circumstances to make that unborn infant a nursing mother, and thus manifest the power that lay hidden within the organism.

The little child lies unconsciously smiling on his mother's lap; in future years he becomes the poet, the maker of laws, the discoverer of principles, or the unfold of our spiritual nature, and makes an era in the social life of the globe he inhabits. But were not all these possibilities in the child, yea, in the very germ from which he was produced, though the time had not then come for their manifestation? In like manner, the principles which are the cause of all forms and existences, have been in the nature of things from all eternity; and it will take an eternity of association, progression, and development for these inherent or divine principles to carry out their legitimate work of perfecting forms and individualities.

We now come to a definite idea respecting the nature and personality of God. We behold in him a person whose external figure Nature is, and whose soul is the origin and circulatory process whereby all forms are sustained and developed. The material and spiritual universe is therefore the only true revelation of God, and Reason is the great exponent of that divinely written book. The whole is constructed on principles of pure intelligence, and Reason is the only key to unlock the mystery and lead man to a knowledge of God.

We do not claim that the divine principles which emanate from the great positive Mind are equally represented in all nature. The inorganic world represents these principles in a low degree. In the vegetable creation we find active life added to what existed in the mineral. In the animal, we find sensation added to what existed in the plant, and in the higher forms intelligence also; but in the human soul all the principles and powers constituting the divine mind are individualised and represented. Hence as the divine mind is eternal, so is its counterpart, the human mind. It seems to be the great object of the Universal Intelligence to individualise itself as often as possible, to labour unceasingly for the development of all matter into sentient, thinking, immortal beings.

It has been shown that in the nature and constitution of the human soul the highest and fullest revelation of the divine mind is exhibited; therefore, to know God, we must become acquainted with man. It is a curious historical fact, that the god of all nations is a counterpart of their own state of mental growth; and when once we come to a true and scientific conception of the nature of man, we come to a sure and infallible means of determining the nature of God. In fact, a knowledge of nature, material and spiritual, is a knowledge of God; for it is only through this nature that God can be manifested or can exist. A few practical observations may be deduced from this view of theology.

In the first place, the popular theological beliefs respecting God and his works, except in so far as the teachings of science are followed, are absurd nonsense. Things were not created by an arbitrary act of divine will, but are a necessary consequence of the existence of this divine being. God, therefore, neither plans, condemns, revokes, nor justifies, as all his purposes were formed in the nature of his being from all eternity. It thus follows, that all things are in harmony with these purposes, being the result of them, and that there is no "devil," or contrary principle in the universe, but that all, divinely or absolutely speaking, is good; that God has at no time placed any arbitrary restrictions or injunctions on man, or has revealed himself at any time in the special manner claimed by

priests in their so-called sacred writings ; that he neither judges, rewards, condemns, nor punishes : consequently, he knows no distinction between the good and the evil, the perfect and the imperfect, the clean and the unclean, the saint and the sinner ; has no special love nor any hate, no crowns of gold nor lakes of brimstone. All things, be they good or bad, just or unjust, bask for ever in the effulgent favour and paternal love of God. It is the most despicable ignorance to teach that God is at variance with man, or man at variance with God ; that God is angry at them, punishes them for sin, or manifests to them favour or revenge. Mankind are doing exactly what they were intended to do, and could not do otherwise even if they would. It will be perceived that what is taught by the priests respecting the nature of God, and man's relations to him, are not only false and degrading to man, but ungrateful and blasphemous to the God on whose pretended service they fatten.

Religion Defined.

Religion is the conduct of life, the science of theology reduced to the art of living. Theology is of the intellect—is masculine ; Religion is of the love principle—feminine. Knowledge goes before, with his lamp, and discovers the path ; whilst Love, with her warm admonitions and aspirations, urges forward in the prosecution of it. Their twin influence in harmonious action is wisdom, and the religious life the result.

In this life and throughout eternity, man is and will be surrounded with innumerable relationships, which it will be to his eternal advantage to properly maintain. He has also got a certain journey to pursue and object to achieve, which is the life-work assigned to him. In other words, man possesses a number of powers and faculties, each having a certain definite natural function ; and the proper exercise of these, and their infinite development, constitutes religion and duty. Man, therefore, serves God by serving himself, and helping his brother to do the same. What, then, is our guide in matters of religion ? Why, theology, or a knowledge of man and everything else in the universe, as far as can be ascertained, and of the proper relations that should subsist between man and every thing and condition. The very elements exist religiously or irreligiously, and it will be to man's safety and happiness to maintain a proper relation between one form of matter and another.

But man's knowledge is not perfect, nor is his organisation harmonious ; consequently, he neither knows what is right in all cases, nor has he the desire or power to achieve it. This accounts for man's present religious state. He commenced at the foot of the ladder of human existence. The creative power has been trying to

make man from the time the atoms first congregated themselves into the prophecy of a future world which we now inhabit, and a perfect man has not yet been made. A lower form or manifestation of life preceded a higher, till organisation became adapted to the unfolding of those principles which constitute the human mind. Some of these are only latent now, whilst others monopolise all life's powers and energies. Religion, civilisation, and other forms of mental action are, and have been at all times, in exact harmony with the development of the brain and physical temperaments. The base of the brain was developed first: man lived between his ears and behind his eyes, hence to defend himself, provide for himself, and look out for gratifications and dangers, was all he did, or could be expected of him. But the mental tree grew, in accordance with its inherent capabilities, and in course of time the social nature came into action, the perceptive brain collected and treasured up experiences, the constructive principle manipulated and applied. Rude ornaments were the work of the lateral brain, and thus through many ages and successions of tribes, the steady growth of brain and refinement of texture prepared the way for the religious life long before it was possible for such to exist. The same law holds good at the present day. Man's consciousness of things seen and unseen, and their infinite adaptations, is gradually increasing, and differs in every two individuals. There can be no harmony of action without harmony of organisation, and no happiness either; hence this view of man's religious position not only accounts for the diversities in the religious history of the human race, but offers the highest inducement to a well-regulated and progressive life, and visits with certain penalty every deviation from the normal rule of functional action. There is no vicarious atonement, no mysterious and special means of salvation. If you would improve your spiritual circumstances, you must adopt the means within the reach of all, of improving the conditions upon which a higher life depends. Our religion, then, is one of every-day life; its Argus eyes penetrate deep into the motive and use of every act; it is the effort of the human mind to find out the will of God respecting all things, and the resolute and loving determination to live in accordance therewith.

The angel element in man comes through his coronal brain. When that is well represented, the moral and spiritual elements exist in the man, and he is capable of actions and experiences that constitute the religious life. Man is therefore naturally a moral, spiritual, and religious being; and instead of having fallen from that state, has all the time been approaching nearer to it. Blunders and shortcomings are a necessity in man's existence; it is through these that we by experience improve. Evil is comparative good, and the

greatest good possible under the circumstances. Necessity is the parent of genius. Re-action of animal excess often turns the face of the soul towards repentance, and under the guidance of other faculties. Extremes gradually exhaust themselves, and religion consists in reducing to their proper limits all excesses and perversions, and giving those powers the lead that ensure progress and harmony. True religion must, then, be the death blow to existing rites and ceremonies. True religion is not a mystic rite, but a stern reality, based in science and regulated by intelligence. The human soul can be incarnated and successfully matured, even as the gardener improves his fruits and the farmer develops commendable qualities in his stock. The means of salvation and success are amply within the reach of man, if he had only the wisdom to apply them. This wisdom, and this application of it, constitutes the only redeemer, and the only salvation that can shield the human race from the consequences of disobedience.

But Faith, it will be said, is an element of religion. True, and Hope, her sister also, with Veneration as their chieftain and leader. These are the highest faculties of the mind; and when wedded to intelligence, and cultivated in harmony therewith, constitute the strongest intellect, and give the greatest harmony of life, certain progress and permanent happiness. But look at the uncultivated and perverted action of this portion of the mind. How strongly it manifests itself throughout the whole human family, from the fetish worshipper to the fashionable church-goer. Without intelligence to direct these holy sentiments, their possessors are led to suppose that God desires worship in the form of personal attentions; that faith is a credulous belief in old cabalistic records and traditional stories, and that Hope must, in orthodox fashion, look out for a future inheritance replete with gold-gems and precious stones.

But in spite of man's perversions, the purposes of the Creator have been so far carried out, and this same moral brain has been instrumental in raising man hitherto. Even granting that it originates nothing, yet it gives us a consciousness of what exists. Veneration gives a consciousness of the sacred, the holy, and the superior in position and condition. Under the mellowing influence of this sentiment, the exercise of every function is sacred—all created for holy purposes, and every act is one of worship; the law of use governs the desires and passions, and a deathless aspiration exists for the sacred, holy, and pure; and the cry of the devout soul is, "Nearer, my God, to thee." Through this glorious faculty all men feel the universal fatherhood of God, and through it, the Almighty Parent leads all his children to himself.

And faith is necessary too. The intellect explores the arcana of

the future and firmly lays hold of the eternal principles that satisfy the logical reason; but these are not proved by external evidences; hence, there is a moral eye, which from the faint glimmerings of partially developed truths, waits in trust for the result in the future. How beautiful are the adaptations of man to his spiritual condition, and what sublime causes for gratitude are found, the more deeply the mercies of Divine providence are investigated!

But what of prayer? It has been assumed by the religious world, that constant personal prayer is compatible with man's duty; but from our remarks on theology, it will be perceived, that to make any special effort on any one's behalf, so as to answer prayer, is incompatible with the nature of God. Man has got faculties which enable him to perform prayer after a thousand different fashions, chiefly dictated by his policy, cupidity, and selfishness; and in some temperaments, by a pure desire and aspiration after supreme conditions. It cannot be denied that many minds get into the habit of prayer, and derive pleasure and benefit therefrom, for there is at all times pleasure in the exercise of a faculty; but experience on this and other spheres, affirms that the highest exercise of the spiritual nature, is in the thirsting aspiration for the better things of which it makes the possessor conscious, and a desire to use the right means to accomplish the end. It must be borne in mind that the ignorant and superstitious derive equal satisfaction, comparatively, from their rude and idolatrous worship, with their more cultivated brethren who use a more refined ceremonial; hence, the fact that there is a pleasure in it, is no argument as to its being a normal and ultimate act of the mind. But persons will come forward and declare that prayer has been answered. Yes, truly it has, and let us explain how. These glorious faculties are the "Jacob's ladder" upon which angels ascend and descend to the human soul, and it is through them that all inspirations are received, and communion carried on with the spiritual world and its inhabitants. The action of the spiritual brain is a telegraph message to the inner life, the same as the eyes send a querying glance towards the external world. In families of spiritualists it is quite common for even the unexpressed questionings and desires of individuals to be answered by guardian spirits, through the medium present; and I believe that many noted individuals who have been engaged in benevolent works, and had their prayers answered in furtherance of their aims, were merely instrumentalities carrying out the schemes and purposes of higher intelligences; hence prayer, though directed to God, was a means of communication with them. This higher dome of the living temple of God in the human soul, is the greatest of all blessings vouchsafed by a loving parent to his children; and the greatest and grandest

mission that could be inaugurated amongst men would be to make them conscious of the privileges they thus enjoy, and teach them to use the same aright. May we all as individuals often repair to this upper sanctuary, and ensure that mental harmony and influx of wisdom which is essential to the spiritual growth and well-being of all; and, as a practical suggestion, there is no better method than the old one of two or three meeting together in the name of truth, forming circles of love and wisdom, recipients of blessings from the higher Brotherhoods.

We will dismiss the subject of Religion with a few controversial remarks. Religion is not a bribe whereby to purchase God's favour, as artificial religionists seem to imply, but the legitimate exercise of man's powers for his own development. Man is naturally a religious being, and it is his nature to manifest it more and more. Hence, he is not a child of darkness, wrath, or of "the Devil," but of the Divine Father, and his upward struggles from the beginning prove his pedigree. Man may for a time be lost to his own interests, but when he returns to himself and his own interests, he returns to God. God saves man through man, as each brother and sister is a missionary to the lower grades. Our joint capacity through eternity is that of student and teacher, quick to learn, apt to impart. Self-reliance, or the use of those powers within us, is duty to God and our highest service. Compared with God's simple and efficient method, the monstrous and impudent demands and postulates of priestcraft appear in all their hoary deformity. We need not dwell on a subject the details of which must be exceedingly annoying to our brothers who feed their souls on ashes from the altar of traditions and superstitions. Heaven speed the day when all such misdirected religious effort shall cease, and when humanity will be recognised as one great religious body, with a unity of aim and object, to the encouragement and education of all, and the exclusion of none.

Immortality the End of Existence.

The third division of our subject leads us to a consideration of Man's Immortality. This we may term the end or destiny of existence.

There is a deep purpose running through the whole Creation—there is an object to be attained. During our consideration of the nature and sources of life, we arrived at the result, that as the human inmost is an epitome of eternal and self-existing principles, it is itself eternal and indestructible. Man is therefore, by nature, immortal, because herein consists the object of his existence. The human soul is an organised structure acquired and developed during earth life, and this probationary term might not have been if its fruits were to be ruthlessly squandered. Earth life may be com-

pared to a period of gestation, and the transition to the spiritual life may be designated a birth into man's permanent, true, and normal state. It is to portray the conditions and realities of this sublime superstructure of human existence that Spiritualism is taught and fostered. Spiritualism is that greatest and most important branch of science which teaches us of man's eternal future. How many weary souls there are who would gladly know! How eager the mind is to comprehend these great and abiding truths, and how full of dark despair is many a radiant and intuitive soul because of the shadow that ignorance and superstition have cast over this subject. To the mass of our countrymen it might be said, "O ye of little faith," why do ye distrust the purposes and finished work of the Creator? It is this living faith which the religious nature of man demands, and not a blind credence of historical incident and the dead phantoms of a buried past.

With a joyful faith, then, and overflowing gratitude we assert that when the earthly tabernacle is no longer a healthy and fitting abode for the precious germ within, the event called "death" is God's kindest provision for man. We believe that the soul passes on to a solid, substantial, natural world. (Please bear in mind that the term *supernatural* is not in our vocabulary, so perfect, sublime, and holy are natural arrangements that they cannot be superseded.) The summer land of eternal human existence is, therefore, perfectly natural, and filled with natural, thinking, loving, acting, desiring, aspiring, kind, neighbourly, *real* men, women, and children. No miracle, no mystery. The soul feels at home at once, and comes in contact with objects that gives exercise to its mental faculties. There is internal evidence in the nature of man to prove this. If man is immortal, all his parts and faculties must be. Though there may be considerable change in adaptation, man's faculties adapt him essentially to an objective state of existence inasmuch as he must be eternally an object himself, or be nothing. Therefore, man's existence in the future state must be objective corresponding with this. The great truth is—that God is God in the future even as now, and cannot contradict himself; man is man, and cannot be anything else; and God, man, and the material universe in all worlds, systems, and spheres, are parts and portions of the one great whole, animated by the same soul;—therefore, it follows that God's societary, intellectual, moral, and physical arrangements will be analagous under all circumstances, and adapted to the nature of man. True, there will be a difference—there will be an improvement. The mind will have many objects of contemplation and purposes of action that are more in harmony with it, and which the spiritually minded long for daily here.

But, you will ask, Will the good, bad, and indifferent enjoy equally and all alike? We answer, Do they enjoy equally and all alike here? Every creature in God's universe enjoys to the full extent of his capacity, and by enlarging that capacity he can enjoy wider, deeper, and higher. A holy and happy state, either in this sphere or the next, depends entirely on harmony of development and legitimacy of action of the inherent powers. These are the imps, devils, and angels of darkness that drive souls to misery. Each man's organic, parental, social, and educational circumstances regulate his present and mould his future, irrevocably beyond the anathemas and prayers of priests and moralists.

"But who will judge them to determine their state? Will not the 'righteous Judge' of holy fable arrest them in his fierce anger?" &c. No. Every man is his own infallible judge, and as he sows he must expect to reap. There is no condemnation, except in so far as man breaks his head against the sharp and inflexible edges of natural law. God's commandments cannot be broken; they only cut the hands of him who would misapply them. We have nothing to fear, either in earth or heaven, but our misapplication of those divine institutions that regulate and maintain order in all things. God does not require the services of a legion of devils, with a prime minister that far out-generals the Deity, to tempt poor human beings to commit blunders, so that they may know there is a right and wrong way. These black arts and devilish devices are the inventions of priests, who make a respectable competency by retailing indulgences, atonements, prayers, bread crumbs, drops of water, and sips of alcoholic beverages, administered with a peculiarity of countenance, voice, gesture, and dress, as antidotes to this supposed evil influence. Any intelligent mind who follows out the line of investigation that has been presented above, will be ready to admit that all this is not only absurd and expensive, but also hurtful and degrading to both priests and people, as it keeps society in ignorance of the true cause of the evils that afflict it, and their true remedy, and therefore it is a crime against divine truth and human happiness. This is a deep and settled conviction in the souls of progressive spiritualists, and challenges their warmest efforts for the spread of truth and real knowledge on man's nature and future. No good can come of believing lies and practising falsehoods, but the worst results and the keenest sufferings, which we daily see visited on those whose moral faculties have been perverted by the dogmatisms of mythology.

As to life, enjoyments, and occupations in the "summer land," these are determined by individual attractions. The intellect will survey nature, the aspirations will seek holiness, the affections society, and benevolence to do good; each and all according to the

influence which these departments of mind have upon them as individuals. But notwithstanding the false allegations of commentators and divines, man's natural affinities are to do good and be good, to gain the highest acme of development, and aid his brothers and sisters in the same direction. This, therefore, is the only legitimate employment of the human soul. All others are merely means to the end of existence, whilst this is the end of that existence. It is in connection with this thought that we as spiritualists base our distinctive teachings. We believe and know that the inhabitants from various globes, much more advanced than the inhabitants of ours, mingle in the innumerable societies of the summer land. Their whole aim is to develop man. This world receives a share of their services. No great reform manifests itself amongst men here, but has been discussed and projected from the missionary societies of the upper life. Some men are only instruments—unconscious instruments of the will and purposes of these high committees. Political, moral, religious, and scientific reforms are originated and aided by their influence and counsels. All of us are intended to take an individual and distinctive part in the history of our race. We, each and all, have a mission to mankind as well as to ourselves. This truth is lost sight of by the multitude; but let this great and normal thought take possession of a human soul, and he is at once *en rapport* with the missionary bodies above. His work of love will prosper in his hands far beyond his expectations, and a fountain of original design will spring up within him that will add the purest pleasure to his existence and be an occasion of surprise to himself.

The eyes of love watch over us by day and night. Many of us are conscious of the watchful attendance of these loving guardians. Many families have the advice and warning of these bright bands. This is the true and legitimate function of mediumship. Every human being will yet be a medium to receive influx from higher spheres, and it is a question in how far they are not so now. Mediumship is not for public display, except in so far as it can be of use. Its chief purpose is to derive individual spiritual development from those exalted minds who vouchsafe instruction. In this light it is one of the most powerful elements of education, and enlarges the mind and exalts the feelings in a great degree.

Some one will be ready to ask if all spirits are thus good and humane. Our reason corroborates the statements of seers, that in the other world individuals are pretty much the same as they are here. The change called death does not transform people or alter their identity. "As the tree falls, it lies." The other life is a prolongation of this. There are vindictive spirits as there are vindictive men. Mediums and others who are susceptible to the approach of

spirits are often assailed by rude undeveloped ones, and sometimes suffer much. But these dark spirits can be reclaimed and improved. They have frequently been instructed by conversation at circles, and higher spirits act as missionaries to them. These low spirits are undergoing privations, equivalent to the "hell" of theologians and "punishment" of moralists. Their want of capacity for high enjoyments is a great source of their misery, and their inharmonious conditions are the result of unfavourable circumstances in earth life. There is a great incentive to a righteous life in the fact that no sin is forgiven, that the consequences of every act adhere eternally to the actor, and that all such are only remedied by a proper course of motive and action. The great gain is to endeavour to attain on earth purity of motive, truthfulness of life, and that manly humility that is thankful for further light and instruction.

It is generally understood that the spiritual manifestations are produced by spirits of a very low order, and that no spirit can communicate if more than a degree above the plane of the medium; hence superior intelligences have to use mediums in the spirit world as we do here to enable them to communicate. The messages usually received by undeveloped and bigoted circles are crude in thought, and narrow in conception, and by such circles are too often believed in with an absolute faith, and quoted as final authority, and even the spiritualist papers sometimes outrage common sense by printing them. Relatives often give messages to their friends on earth, all good wishes, religious admonitions, and affectionate regards. The sphere of thought in which the various spirits exist is thus wonderfully represented. Several mediums may be in the same room, and give communications in merits wide apart as the poles. Progressive circles where the love of truth and humanity finds an atmosphere, are visited by spirits of like nature, who aid them in their congenial efforts; whilst the blind and narrow sectarian finds confirmation in his vices by the teaching of his familiar spirits. Those who contend that truth is a matter of authority, find fault with Spiritualism because of the contradictions taught by the communications. But this shows their ignorance of the nature of truth and of the spirit world. Each spirit there as here defines truth according to his conception of it, and the great use of all teaching is to enable us to form an independent conception of our own, and not be led by authority. This will be a warning to all to judge for themselves, and not trust implicitly to the teaching of spirits further than they agree with experience and reason. Many give up a belief in church ceremonies to swallow each word of their favourite medium, than which nothing could be more reprehensible or stamped as superstition. This also explains why men of so many

different shades of thought are embraced by the comprehensive term of "Spiritualism;" but this term, as used here, it will be perceived, means very little; and much more is needed along with it to make it avail much in human development. It has also been observed that believers in creeds and artificial forms of religion are oftenest deceived by spirits, and such individuals are always telling you confidentially how much they are troubled with bad and low spirits, and what fool's errands they send them on; but when the members of such circles get their minds opened up to the truths of nature these unpleasant results disappear. In fact, these ludicrous farces are oftentimes played by friendly spirits, to destroy the weak credulity which keeps the minds of their earth friends in bondage, and precludes all chance of progress.

We would like to speak of the conditions that induce mediumship, and of the mental developments that, phrenologically speaking, give a consciousness of spiritual existences. We have met with many individuals not spiritualists who had the most certain consciousness of the spirit world and its inhabitants, and we have at all times been able to tell them of it from their temperament and the form of their head. We, therefore, hold that intercourse with spiritual beings is a normal act, and natural function of the joint power of minds in this and the spirit world. We believe it to be a high function, the exercise of which, though yet in its infancy, is a great privilege. But though we attach great importance to Spiritualism as such, we believe that its advantages are a thousand times increased by the state of mind called "Progressive." We believe that man's state is eternally progressive, that each epoch in existence is a stage in a never-ending journey towards better things, in which every latent desire of the soul will be satisfied, and every power called into conscious exercise. There are radical minds, standstill minds, conservative minds, liberal minds, bigoted minds, enlightened minds, and advanced minds, and there are now and again in the world "PROGRESSIVE MINDS," and their number increases. This we consider to be the normal state of the human mind, and one that is in harmony with the purposes and destiny of his being. As progressive spiritualists, we incorporate two terms in our designation, and we attribute the preponderance of influence to the first term as the leading feature in all minds who have blessed humanity with the riches of their labours; and the associate of heaven-born Spiritualism, which twain, by a beautiful philosophy, shall yet lead all mankind to see the truth.

The subject is not exhausted, but time will permit of no more being said. We have not spoken authoritatively, nor perhaps in all points accurately, but we hope our remarks will lead to independent

thought and investigation, and thus free the human mind from the thralldom of hereditary dogmas on these most important of all themes, and place them on a firmer and more intelligible footing.

When Mr Burns sat down, it was resolved that there should be no discussion on the many topics brought forward in his paper, but that it should be printed in full, and inserted in the report of proceedings. It being after the hour, the Convention then adjourned for dinner.

THE FIFTH SESSION

Was organised by Dr M'Leod taking the chair, who called on Mr Morgan to read a paper on Thought Reading, or "Cerebral Sympathy," which he asserted was the cause of impressions, dreams, warnings, etc., and not the work of spirits, or of the individual's independent spiritual powers, as, in certain cases, the spiritualists argued. Mr Morgan having finished his paper,

The Chairman made some remarks as to the nature of the impressions which he sometimes had himself, but said they were generally of an impractical nature, and if he followed them at all times would often be misled.

Mr Spear gave his experience. At one period of his life he aided prisoners on trial, and other destitute individuals, in which he had many singular adventures. Amongst others, he related that at one time when he had occasion to frequently pass a certain street, he had an impression that he should find gold at a given spot. He did not understand what it could mean, but one evening a person in a cloak approached him, while crossing the place indicated by the impression, and put something into his hand. When he got home he looked at it, and found it was a golden eagle, and it proved to be of much service at the time. He sometimes prepared himself for these impressions. When planning a journey, he would look on the map, and his attention would be directed to certain places, and often he would mentally see himself going journeys a long time before he thought of starting on them.

Mr Burns wanted to know what Mr Morgan meant by cerebral sympathy. He had favoured the meeting with many very interesting instances of it, but he had omitted to say what it really was. He would like to know what was the *modus operandi*. Was it where two brains sympathised that the act of "cerebral sympathy" was performed? and if the brains did sympathise, how did they do it?

The speaker could not understand how two organised structures at a distance from each other could sympathise, or act on each other at all. To be an argument against the spiritual theory, this would need to be shown. He considered that the term "cerebral sympathy" was a misnomer, and that it was the spirits or minds of individuals that sympathised, and not their brains at all. This was a confirmation of the spiritual hypothesis; and Spiritualism could explain these facts, whereas the materialists failed. Mr Burns adduced many evidences similar to those related by Mr Morgan; also cases of individuals being magnetised at a distance, hearing conversations in other rooms, and mental telegraphy, which showed that there was a spiritual power inherent in the mind which gave a consciousness independent of the senses, and could produce impressions at a distance beyond the reach of the material organs. This was the means whereby spirits did the same thing; by a function appertaining to spirit, especially when disembodied, they could act on others at great distances, and thus produce impressions and other phenomena. He thought that Mr Morgan's facts were evidences in favour of Spiritualism, if properly interpreted.

Mr Morgan explained that cerebral sympathy was impressions, but without entering into detail as to how they were produced.

Mr Hodge thought they were identical, and wished to conciliate those who might hold opposite views on the matter.

Mr Heslop thought it should be called spiritual sympathy, or mental sympathy, as it was the mind or spirit that was the actor, often independent of the brain; in support of which view he referred to numerous instances given in Professor Brittan's celebrated work on Man and his Relations, and quoted the following:

"On the nineteenth day of May, 1854, while a Mr Wilson was employed in writing at his desk, he fell asleep, and dreamed that he was in the city of Hamilton, some forty miles west of Toronto, where he was at the time. After attending to some business, he proceeded in his dream to make a friendly call on Mrs D——s. On arriving at the house he rang the bell, and a servant came to the door, who informed him that her mistress had gone out, and would not return for an hour. The dreamer thereupon left his name and compliments to Mrs D., and started for home. At length awaking from his slumber, Mr Wilson found himself precisely where he had lost himself half an hour before, quietly seated at his writing desk in Toronto.

"Some days after the occurrence of this incident, a lady in the family of Wilson received a letter from Mrs D—— of Hamilton, in which she incidentally mentioned that Mr W. had called at her house a few days before, while she was out. She complained that he did not await her return, and said that on hearing that he had been there, she had visited all the hotels in Hamilton in the hope of finding him.

"On perusing this letter Mr Wilson suggested that his fair friend must be crazy, since he had not been in Hamilton for a month, and that on the particular day and hour mentioned he was at his place of business, and in a deep

sleep. His curiosity, however, was excited, and inviting several of his friends to join him, the party went to Hamilton, and called at the house of Mrs D. The lady herself met them at the door, and they were invited into the parlour. While the party remained, Mrs D., on some plausible pretext, directed her servants to go into the room, and suggested that they should notice the gentlemen present, and tell her if there were any familiar faces among them. *Two of the servants instantly identified Mr Wilson as the person who called ten days before, and in the absence of their mistress left his name, which they remembered and repeated.*"

From this instance and many others, Mr Heslop thought it was clearly established that calling such phenomena "cerebral sympathy" was no explanation at all; for by numerous experiences it was proved that persons could be seen and conversed with, hundreds of miles from their bodies; which went far to indicate that man consists in an essential something, that can exist independent of the body, and that what are called "apparitions" are a natural reality, and neither supernatural manifestations nor the results of a diseased imagination.

The question of organisation was now proposed by Mr Spear. He said that in America there was no national or permanent organisation. There were conventions held, but only for the hour. These took place occasionally, and at various places, where the friends felt disposed to meet. Recently, however, a New England convention had been organised, which had opened offices, employed an agent to open lyceums, collect facts, etc., and would in time send out missionaries, develop mediums, and otherwise forward the work. He thought there was room in England for several large organisations to diffuse information in their respective localities. He thought that without binding themselves to any settled form of belief or action, they might take the initiative by electing officers, have a centre, and be ready to take advantage of circumstances as they might arise. He therefore moved that the Convention proceed to the election of such officers, and thus organise themselves into a regular association, having tangible form and objects.

The Convention then went into committee for the purpose of forming an association, when it was resolved that it should be denominated

"THE ASSOCIATION OF PROGRESSIVE SPIRITUALISTS OF GREAT BRITAIN."

The following ladies* and gentlemen were elected office-bearers for the ensuing year:

* During the election of the office-bearers, it was resolved that each should have a female associate, so that both male and female might be represented in the acts and deliberations of the Association.

PRESIDENTS.

Mr JOHN HODGE and Mrs HODGE, of Darlington.

TREASURERS.

Mr JOSEPH DIXON and Mrs DIXON, of Bondgate, Darlington, (who will be happy to receive all subscriptions for the use of the Association.)

SECRETARIES.

Dr M'LEOD, 4 Brunswick Square, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and
Miss VASEY.

It was also resolved, "That the Minutes of this our first Convention be collected and published in pamphlet form, for sale, by Mr James Burns, of the Progressive Library, Camberwell, London."

It was then arranged that the First Annual Convention be held at Newcastle-on-Tyne, in the last week of July, 1866.

The following proposition was proposed by Dr M'Leod and seconded by Mr Hodge—"Resolved, that the best thanks of the members of this Convention be and are hereby given to those spiritualists, mediums, and teachers who freely and lovingly present and have presented the phenomena of and the blessings which Spiritualism in all its various phases inculcates and lays before all peoples, nations, and tongues, at this present time."

Mr Spear begged to be allowed to remark, that since his arrival in this country he had much questioning in his mind in respect to the accepting of compensation for his services. Many persons honestly thought mediums ought not to be paid. He had so thought himself; but not having at command ample means, and the war having made it difficult to get them from his friends, who otherwise would have cheerfully forwarded him funds, it had become a necessity that he should accept such aid as had been afforded him; and he had had just reason for gratitude to the Great Father that his needs had been met. He said he had come to this country by direct spirit instruction, and he desired to do in faith and love whatever opened before him, that would aid Spiritualism. He had been in England eighteen months, and he could say that he had had his wants met in remarkable ways. He believed in religious trust, in earnest labour, and in devout prayer; and he would urge others to make it a daily practice to look to Heaven for all needed aid.

The resolution was then passed unanimously.

After various complimentary resolutions to Mr Hodge and other Darlington friends, for their share in the labours of the Convention, and to Dr M'Leod for his services in the chair, the members adjourned to a social tea party which had been prepared for them.

THE SIXTH AND LAST SESSION

Was a short one, and met after six o'clock. Dr M'Leod was again called on to preside. Several matters were discussed in detail, the results of which have already been recorded. The Chairman announced that Mr Dixon, the treasurer, would be glad to receive any subscriptions towards the nucleus of funds for the new association, when several amounts at once found their way into the treasury.

At the close of each day's proceedings there was a *seance* of the whole Convention. On the first evening Mr Morgan was strongly influenced, and exhibited some curious muscular phenomena. On the second evening Mr Watson was thrown into the trance state, and influenced to write automatically. He had never sat at a *seance* before, yet the spirits assumed sufficient power over him to enable them to write several communications, which some of those present recognised as being from departed friends.

The general impression was that of satisfaction and enlargement of soul and conception by those who attended this series of meetings. It was felt that such gatherings might become of great importance, in suggesting educational schemes, in strengthening the hands of reformers, and in eliciting facts on matters now very little understood.

NOTE BY THE SECRETARY OF THE ASSOCIATION.

The readers of this Report are earnestly requested to give the matters dwelt upon herein their most serious and calm consideration. The promoters of this Association are actuated by the best and purest motives in bringing these questions before the public for reflection and discussion. The study of Spiritualism leads only to good, happiness, and contentment; her paths are pleasant beyond description. Once fairly on the road to the "summer land," there is no regret, no doubt about being in the right way, no repentance, no turning back again into the literally "beggarly elements" of this world. The light ever shines brighter and nearer, the further we go. O reader, remember that the vulgar belief in gods, devils, heavens, and hells, under whatever name it is known among men, is never the belief of those who have *leisure for reflection*. The vulgar rich and the vulgar poor are immersed in SENSE; the man of reflection strives to emerge from it. To him the things which are seen are only the shadows of the unseen.

"Our religion is Love, 'tis the noblest and purest;
And our temple the Universe, widest and surest."

All communications bearing upon the business of this Association, or other matters contained in this Report, will be entertained and promptly replied to by the Secretary, Dr M'Leod, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Darlington, July 27, 1865.