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## A Prayer for the New Year!

Father! hear me!  
Now to thee my heart would pray,  
Who hast been, through all the past—  
In the sunshine, and the blast,  
To preserve, until this day—  
Ever near me.

Father! teach me  
How to live, enjoy, and love:  
May the lessons of thy word,  
New instructions still afford,  
And, when my affections rove,  
Kindly reach me.

Father! give me  
From thy love's exhaustless stock  
Grace, to feel and speak thy praise—  
Grace, to mark thy wondrous ways:  
In the footsteps of thy flock  
Draw or drive me.

Father! lead me  
Where I best may gather good;  
Or impart what I receive,  
Other's sorrows to relieve:  
With convenient earthly food  
Daily feed me.

Father! save me  
By thy word of truth and power,  
From deceitful lusts and pride,  
All that's of the world beside;  
And in sore temptation's hour  
Never leave me.

Father! spare me  
To recover needful strength,  
All thy will to do or bear;  
Then for those pure mansions, where  
All thy children meet at length—  
O prepare me.

Father! hear me  
While again to thee I pray  
For forgiveness through thy Son,  
What against thy will I've done:  
And let thy good Spirit stay  
Ever near me.

January 1st, 1854.

R. T.

## PHYSIOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL TABLE TIPPING.

BY E. ANDREWS, M.D., ANN ARBOR, MICH.

This veriest humbug that ever exhaled from the caverns of delusion, has brought to light one remarkable physiological truth, viz., the power of other functions of the mind besides the will over the muscles. Physicians should lose no time in investigating it, for another opportunity equally good may not occur in a century. Besides, physicians owe it to society to expose delusions which are based on physiological phenomena, since they alone are competent to do it. They should examine it, therefore, that their exposure may not be the laugh of ignorance, but the piercing sarcasm of men who understand the nature of what they speak.

The Rev. Charles Beecher, of New Jersey at the request of an ecclesiastical association, has written a small work on this subject, in which he takes the ground that the "manifestations" are actually the work of evil spirits. His admission of the spirituality of the performances has had a bad effect in this region. All the tippy tables have tipped with unwonted confidence ever since, and thousands, who held it to be mere nonsense before are now staggered to learn that a Beecher has decided for the spirits.

We shall give this work a brief review, for

two reasons: one is because many physicians who may not see the work, will, nevertheless, have to combat the influence of its name; and the other is, because it is a fine sample of the pranks cut up by the nervous system, which, no longer content to delude hysterical girls, and superstitious old men and women, has in these last days bestrode the pulpit, and made a learned divine, one from a family of ecclesiastical giants, think that there is actually a telegraph from the infernal regions, and that we are in the daily receipt of despatches from the devil.

The treatise in question commences, very necessarily, with a statement of the facts. Now, good reader, what kind of a statement of facts did you suppose was made by this clergyman of mighty name, this Beecher, who was appointed by the New York and Brooklyn Association, to report on spiritual rappings. You who are accustomed to the searching fact sifting of scientific bodies—you possibly imagine that he commences with a careful description of the observations and experiments whereby he determined the phenomena, and with a clear statement of the tests whereby he sifted out the error, and analyzed the whole to the ultimate fact elements. Most learned doctor, you are mistaken. The whole question of facts is contained in a dozen lines. Here it is:—

"The facts which constitute the pneumatic argument arrange themselves in four classes.

"1. Mysterious intelligent sounds and movements.

"2. Involuntary polyglot speaking and writing.

"3. Apparitions.

"4. Doctrines, revelations, poems, prophecies and medical prescriptions, all delivered through the above instrumentalities."

This is all he has to say about the facts. The subsequent pages are learned and eloquent, but to what purpose? In science we are accustomed to require our authors to state, item by item, all the circumstances in which their facts were observed, and all the tests to which they were subjected, because experience has shown that assertions not thus scrutinized are not worth a fig, and all arguments based on them, though they may be very logical, prove no more than a puff of nonsense.

He next proceeds to do battle with two opposing theories, which he handsomely demolishes, for he is good at the sword exercise of argument. He also brings up "od" or "odyle" with the evident approbation, as the means by which evil spirits effect their communications with men, women and tables, upsetting the latter, jerking the elbows of the former, and kicking up a row generally.

This odyle is a name given to a supposed agent or force, by Baron Von Reichenbach, of Vienna. It is supposed to be diffused throughout the universe, and the Baron has written a book of some 400 pages, filled with his observations and experiments upon it. At some future time we may review it for the amusement of our readers, at present suffice it to say that the majority of his phenomena were evidently nothing but the disordered sensations of the "sensitive" and "nervous" subjects upon whom he experimented. The Baron was evidently entirely ignorant of the pathology of the nerves of sensation. Whoever reads his work without understanding physiology will wonder and admire, but a physiologist will wonder and laugh.

The rest of Mr. Beecher's essay is devoted to showing that the tipping and rapping spirits are evil and not good spirits.

We have had some acquaintance with ecclesiastical bodies, and we think we can account for the production of this curious document without any disparagement to that noble profession. Clergymen, as a body, are not

engaged in discovery. Their business is not so much to investigate new truths, as to enforce old ones; hence, in their associations, they assign topics to each other, not so much for the investigation of facts as to develop originality of thought and fire of expression. In all probability the Congregational Association of New York and Brooklyn cared not one fig for the investigation of this humbug, but knowing that Mr. Beecher held some peculiar notions upon it, wished to enliven their meeting by drawing forth his ideas and his eloquence.

But laying him aside, what and how much is there in these "manifestations?" We have taken some pains to investigate the matter, and we affirm, as the result of our observations, that if you reject one half of all the accounts for falsehood, and then two thirds of the remainder for exaggeration and mistake, there will remain the following solid facts:

1st. Disordered innervation, causing delusions of the senses and spasmodic twitching of the muscles in all parts of the body.

2d. Tables, stands, &c., by placing the medium's hands flat upon the upper surface, may be made to move about the room, get upon a sofa, dance to music, and tip out intelligent answers to questions without any consciousness of voluntary exertion by the medium.

3d. The medium may write communications and answers to questions without any voluntary directing of the hand or pencil.

Any one who will seat half a dozen ladies of nervous temperament at a table, and cause them to hold their hands immovably upon it for an hour, may produce the manifestations of twitching and disordered sensation, and a few repetitions will generally suffice to develop the table-moving power.

The character of many of the mediums is such as to leave no doubt that their agency is involuntary, at the same time our investigations have demonstrated the actions of the muscles. They usually suppose that with the hands laid flat upon the smooth top of a table, it is impossible for muscular action to take effect, and we have often seen them raise the hand so as only to touch the table with the ends of their fingers and thumbs—a manœuvre which satisfies most observers that there is no muscular action in the case.

Our first experiment was to see whether this position of the hands was a sufficiently rigid test. To our surprise we found that with merely the tips of our fingers touching the table, we could imitate all the evolutions of the spirits. We caused it to traverse the room in every direction, made it dance to music, and mount upon the sofa, and with the tip of one finger pressed upon the top of it, we could use force enough to cause it to lie slowly down upon its side, and to rise up again. We next took a circular cherry table four feet in diameter, and placing our hands flat upon the top, we forced it to walk up the perpendicular walls of our office, and then, top downward, to walk all about the ceiling. Being thus satisfied that muscular power was competent to the effect, we proceeded to test for its actual existence.

The mediums were confident that the table heaved and moved spontaneously beneath their hands. We placed a sheet of paper beneath their hands, when, lo! the table stood still, while the paper slid all over it. We next placed a book under their hands, and two round wooden pencils under the book as rollers. The book rolled about with great activity, but the indignant table would not budge an inch. We then placed our own hands under those of the medium, when we could distinctly feel the latter pushing and pulling upon our own. It was evident, therefore, that the power was exerted by the medium, not by the table. Lastly, we placed our fingers upon the

tendon of the latissimus dorsi muscle where it crosses the axilla, and having ascertained that it was relaxed, requested the spirits to tip, when we could feel the tightening of the tendon as it drew the arm back. The muscular action was decided.

We next proceeded to test by questions, both vocal and mental, by which we ascertained the following facts:—

1. When the question was vocal and the medium knew what the answer should be, the spirit invariably replied correctly.

2. When the question was such that the medium neither knew the answer, nor could have any possible chance of hitting right by coincidence, the response was invariably wrong.

3. When there was a chance of hitting right by coincidence, as in questions of yes and no, or questions of numbers and some others, the answers were sometimes right and sometimes wrong.

4. If the questions were mental, and no chance of guessing right existed, the answers were always false. If, in addition, the countenance was so guarded as not to show when a mental question was asked, the answers were not only false in substance, but out of time with the question; and answers repeatedly came when no questions had been asked.

The following are our notes of one of these dialogues. It was a writing medium of the most unquestionable integrity. Having ascertained that the spirit could answer questions otherwise than by yes and no, we proceeded both with vocal and mental questions.

Question (vocal). Will the spirits communicate? Spirit Yes.—Q. (vocal) Whose spirit is writing now? S. William Bassett's.—Q. (mental) William, how many brothers has J.—? S. Yes.—Q. (mental) Where does the oldest one live? S. No.—Q. (mental) Are they both married? S. Yes. (This was incorrect.)—Q. (mental) How many sisters has he? S. Yes.—Q. (mental) Who married his sister? S. Yes.—Q. (vocal) Will the table tip? S. Yes.—Q. (vocal) In how many minutes? S. 10. (the spirit used figures).—Q. (vocal) Will the spirit write it in letters? S. Ten. (Here the company went to the table and sat half an hour, but it would not tip.)—Q. (vocal) What has been performing here to-night? (Here the pencil wrote something which was probably meant for "spirits," but it was nearly illegible and looked more like the word "infernal.")

Medium to the Spirit. That isn't good; can't you write a little plainer? The pencil then wrote after the former word very distinctly, S-p-i-r-i-t-s, "spirits;" whereupon we took the slate and read the communication to the company, "Infernal Spirits." It was obvious to those present that the "infernal spirits" did not stand very rigid testing.

Putting together these with other facts, therefore, it was clear that the knowledge of the medium and the chances of conjecture, had some connection with the correctness or incorrectness of the answers; in short, that the communication came from living souls in this world, not from "infernal spirits" of the other. And yet the high and irreproachable character of the mediums compelled us to believe that their actions were not voluntary. The question then remained—Can the mental states express themselves in muscular actions without the intervention of the will?

The table-tippers and spirit-writers have developed one great truth, which, though previously known in special applications, has only recently seemed to receive a full general acknowledgement, and that is this: Not only the will, but every other function of the mind is a natural stimulant to the muscles, competent, when acting with the will, to give it double effect, but also able to act without it and produce intelligent involuntary action.

Undoubtedly the clearest development of