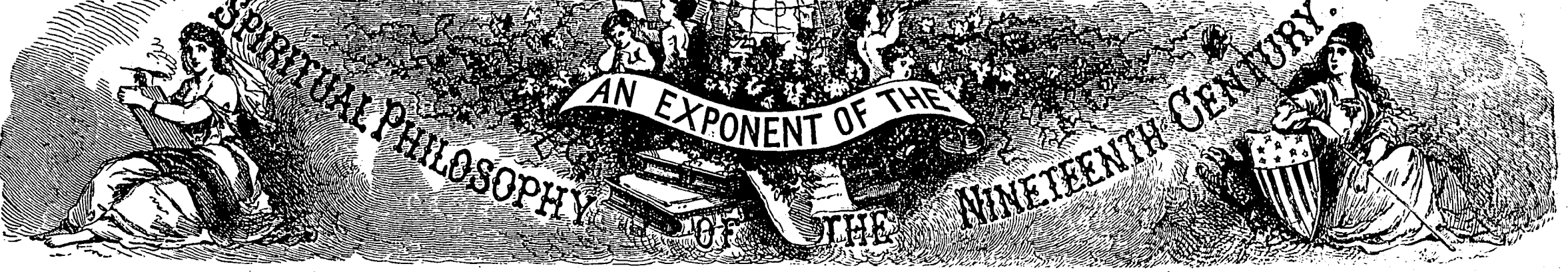


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The Rostrum.

LECTURE BY SPIRIT ROBERT DALE OWEN,
Through the Mediumship of Mrs. Cora L. V. Richmond.
Delivered Sunday Evening, Aug. 12th, 1877, at
Everett Hall, Brooklyn, N. Y.

(Reported for the Banner of Light.)

INVOCATION.

Oh, thou Divine Beneficence, thou Infinite Spirit, we approach thee with thankful hearts, and through lofty meditation and thought of truth we would seek the inspiring power of thy presence; that presence which is forever made manifest; that power which is divine and perfect; that life which, extending through all forms of being, links the atom with the Infinite, and the soul of man with thee. Oh God! thou past and future life, thy soul is summoned to thy Divine control by all forms of nature, and every living thing portrays the perfection of thy law. We would praise that law, the perfection of which fills the soul with admiration and joy; we would praise thy love, which is thy life, and which every soul inherits, and from spheres of immortal blessedness beyond the veil and shadow of time, thy children would draw aside the mist that separates the outer from the inner world, by the subtle law of change men call death; by the power of life which is inherent in the soul; by the transformation of dust into glorious thoughts and images, until the soul aspires to know all of endless life. Oh, let the children of earth, casting aside their fear and terror, enter the vestibule of thy temple of knowledge that leads to eternity; let them behold the laws banding together the visible with the invisible, the inner with the outer world. Let ministering spirits, with soft, appealing voices attend, and linking their lives with the celestial, remind them that life on earth is but the fleeting shadow of a vision compared to the reality. May the utterances of this night be inspired by thy love and thy truth, and may the hearts of those who listen be filled with the knowledge that shall come to them, until the two worlds shall be no longer apart and divided, but all shall be united and all shall name thee our Father and our God.

THE LECTURE.

Mr. Chairman and friends—for I feel that I am not a stranger in your midst, so lately here in person, so truly here to-night. I little thought that the time would be so soon when, having burst the bonds of outward sense, I could speak as one having authority; when, seeing through a glass darkly, I would so soon see face to face the reality of spirit-life, when last conversing with friends on earth we measured our little gleams of the philosophy of life which the certainty of Modern Spiritualism brought to me.

To-night I have been invited to give you an account of my transition from the outer to the inner world, and of my reception in spirit-life. You must bear with me. I am unaccustomed to this kind of control, though it was perfectly familiar to me as an observer when on earth. Up to the last hour of my mortal existence I had as positive knowledge as is given to mortals to have, of the existence upon which I was about to enter. Death came to me no unwelcome visitor; friends on both sides, equally dear, summoned me to both lands, but the time allotted to humanity had already transpired; and my life, as you know, had been right in faith, if not in deed, for many years. That faith which was born of knowledge was no holiday gift, no bestowment of intellectual spasms, and no result of morbid theological fancy. For twenty years I have had knowledge; for fifteen years I have never had a doubt of the existence beyond death, and the possibility of spirits to communicate with mortals. But as the morning gradually dawns upon the earth, as the summer-time constantly approaches in the footsteps of spring, and brings her own peculiar loveliness, that no prophecy of morning or spring can afford, so the transition from knowledge to experience, from observation on your side of life to observation on the spiritual side, is as great as the advent of day after the night. I speak with no hyperbolic language; there is no word to express the change which death brings to the spirit; there is no language to typify the life of which for the first time I became certain that I was the real inheritor. The knowledge which I believed I possessed upon earth was indeed knowledge, so far as the senses could give it; the knowledge which came to me on my departure from earth was the certainty of absolute possession. No moment of the expiring or receding ray of mortal existence was lost to my spiritual consciousness; at no interval of time did I feel that I was going to sleep, or that the power of my individual life was fading from me; at no instant did I feel severed from either world; conscious alike of the ministering power of beloved ones on earth, and gradually becoming more and more conscious of the ministering power of spirit friends, I found my spirit-land all about me. I was not borne through the air; I experienced no sensation of sleep, no interval of time between the outer and the inner consciousness; I saw gradually what I had not seen before—what seemed to fall to my vision as the revelation after a veil had been removed—the people of the spiritual existence near me, as though they had been waiting for me always. I saw that the film fell from my eye as the bodily strength decreased, and I gradually became aware of spiritual existence and spirit scenes, as one standing in a mist among the mountains might suddenly, as the clouds would rise and disappear, become aware of the landscape around him.

My spirit-world was where I died, the friends who had preceded me into spirit existence were there, they smiled upon me as though they had known I was coming for a long time,

they were ready to receive me as if they had been waiting by my side for many a day expecting that I would slip out from my earthly tabernacle, they seemed aware that my sojourn on earth had nearly expired; and there was my father, benign, not in his old age, but in full vigor of manhood, smiling at me as though I were a boy again, and he had come to teach me something new. All this was so familiar and so entirely in keeping with what I expected, that I was not even astonished, not certainly at the presence of my friends, the dearest one of my household, my family, who had preceded me, but there was a surprise. It came in my own consciousness and feeling, it came in the possession of powers of which I was not aware, it came in that transcendent sense of life which I never experienced on earth, not like youth, not like early manhood, not like any intoxication which any draught could give was the sense which came to me of inexpressible life, a feeling of buoyancy as though there had never been a physical bond, as though pain, and dust, and weight, and time, and sense, had all departed. If I could prefigure to you, or convey in one word the term and meaning of that transcendent experience when for the first time the soul feels fetterless, when the freedom of the spirit to think and feel is absolute and seemingly boundless, when all possibilities seem to rise at once as accomplished facts, and every hope and desire of the mind seems capable of fulfillment, because of the possession of the power which is within! This is no exceptional state in me; aware that from long habit of thought, and from accustomed communion with spirit-life my mind was well prepared for this, I know since that many spirits who have no such outward knowledge are in reality prepared spiritually for this higher birth. It is a spiritual state, it is a state of exaltation, it is a redemption which comes to man after the fatigue and labor and comparative toll of life is over. Easy as was my daily path when I made it so by my mind and pen, and easy as were the allotted hours of my appointed labors upon earth, and easy as were the subjects of contemplation to grasp when thought and determination were set to bear upon them, I found obstacles which had perplexed my way suddenly removed, as if I had come from behind a ledge of rocks, and now could see the gray sky and ocean before me.

This sensation of death you will not experience, probably, until you pass through the change clairvoyants transfigure. Many persons who pass into abnormal conditions may realize it somewhat, but the unfettering of the soul from the body is the one thing that death reveals, and with it the hidden powers that otherwise seem to slumber, and are in some measure hampered by the physical senses. I observed strangely enough that my physical body was still perfectly apparent to me, that the friends upon earth were still visible, and I did not seem to have had an added glimpse of life, of scenes, of a new atmosphere, of being, that I could not see with my mortal vision. Not being clairvoyant upon earth, never having seen except such manifestations as were given through others, possessing knowledge only through the physical senses, I could not previously understand as I now do the meaning of that inward light, that perception of the spirit which seems to comprehend all senses, and makes mind as well as matter visible to disembodied spirits. To-night, therefore, as really in your midst, the double faculty of seeing your body and perceiving the spiritual atmosphere is mine, and with that the perception of all this spiritual realm that lies about you, which I find is not removed to some remote point in space, but accompanies you, hovers near you, attends upon your footsteps, is a portion of your daily life, and when the soul breaks through the barriers of time and sense, reveals the beloved one by your side. The spirit-land is no far-off realm. I find not a few spirits who have no thoughts beyond the earth, but if they have sympathies with human beings who are aspiring to lofty thoughts, they remain near to inspire and uplift them, and this atmosphere of which I speak is a portion of the spiritual atmosphere surrounding you. I do indeed perceive that there are dense places upon the earth and spirit atmospheres above the earth where it would seem scarcely possible for spiritual light to penetrate, but even there some redeeming thought or some kindly deed frequently illumines the surrounding darkness, and higher spirits attend.

But for the most part the spiritual existence of your friends who are newly departed is quite near to you; they are taken charge of, are made familiar with the scenes of spirit-life, and those who are in sympathy with them abide near them, as they abide near to you; and my affection being about equally divided between the spiritual and the earthly life, I assure you I have no intention of leaving the atmosphere of earth until, by communication and by constant effort, I shall possess myself of the facts on this side of existence as wholly as I did upon the mortal side. I mean to make every effort, not only to express myself in this manner, which by permission of her guides and the gifts of this medium I am enabled to do to-night, but also to try my powers at every form of manifestation which I have ever witnessed, to possess myself of the required information, that I may, if possible, state it in a manner which I often longed to have stated to me while I was still an investigator, and which, for the benefit of other investigators, I shall certainly endeavor to state from this side of existence. I now find that the aspirations and certainties concerning spiritual existence which came to me were not only real in the sense of manifestations and presence, but real in a more transcendent sense than this; that all the thought or hope of spiritual life, all the aspiration for the reality of friendship and the continuance of genial companionship is more than realized. You and I have experienced these things—that is, some of us—in a degree, that we were severed from time and space and death by conversation, by hallowed experiences, by our own intelligent and intellectual pursuits; I find spiritual life is even more than this, personal, and especially gratifying to the social, the intellectual and the spiritual thought of men. I find that real here which was not real upon earth; the sympathy of friends becomes the strongest tie here, and no outward change of circumstance or distance seems to affect that bond. As spiritual life is not a material substance compared with the substance of earth, so whatever composes the happiness or unhappiness of a spirit is the result of his or her inward state.

The spheres of which you hear so much I find to be conditions or states of spiritual life depending upon the thought and spiritual growth, and liable to exist anywhere; so that to-night there may be numberless spheres represented in this room, and your spirit friends attending upon you may represent as many grades of thought as yours. As spirits are not dependent upon material substance for existence, as they do not require shelter from the elements, as there is no necessity for any particular time or space, a spirit sphere may be near you, and that attendant spirit which abides by you represents the sphere of his or her existence, so that the state itself defines

the sphere, and not the place or distance, nor the position with reference to the earth. I am thus explicit, not because it is impossible for spirits to exist at a distance from the earth, but because much mistaken materialism has grown out of the thought of distinct locality as being necessary for spiritual existence, and while I find that in the highest spiritual state to which I have been permitted to enter, I seem to be removed and absolved from earthly things and earthly communion, I do not realize the distance that separates me, but in an instant, if I so desire, I can be back to the earth again, or back to the friends that I wish to communicate with. Space is literally annihilated; there is no necessity for time, except when we wish to converse with mortals; and therefore one mile, or a thousand or a million, are as readily traversed by the spirit having the wish to traverse that distance. I find that the knowledge of the spirits affects very materially their powers, and that some spirits reside near the earth, move slowly upon the earth's surface, hover about the places of their former occupations, without seeming to know that they have the power to pass more rapidly from point to point. It seems being there they are held there, and this probably constitutes their spiritual bondage; but for the short period of time that I have inhabited the spiritual state I find time and space are no barriers. Many things, sufficient to fill volumes, have come into my consciousness, and of which I had no power of analysis before. With the throwing off of the mortal body, clearness of perception and comprehension of spiritual principles, absolute sight of material substances that are sealed to mortal vision, and perception of laws and forces of nature, before unknown, occult powers that seem to be withdrawn from mortals' view, are entirely clear and perfectly understood by the mind as soon as brought in contact with them. To use these powers perfectly, to make one's-self familiar with them, to study them closely in the effect of union between the two worlds is to be my occupation for some time to come, since I regard this revelation, now that I have entered spirit-life, as even more important than I did while still among the inhabitants of earth, since I regard any added knowledge, or any light thrown upon its philosophy as being so much more important than that upon any other subject with which I was comparatively familiar.

And now I have an admission to make: I have wished since I passed into spirit-life that I had more and more revealed what I knew of Spiritualism while upon the earth. It is true I talked about it with my friends constantly; it is true that when called upon I made statements to the public; it is true that my works are before you; but if I had known as I now know the absolute nature of the importance of these manifestations, I would have daily and hourly devoted my energies to making manifest to the public, or to any witness, in proof of spirit communion. So much the more easily can spirits communicate when there is even an awakened power in the human mind; but the avenues of communication are so few, and the channels so imperfect at best, that could I have thrown the whole weight of my experience on your side of existence, I would now have the consciousness that I had not delayed in expressing that which to every human being must be the highest possible revelation of human life, the certainty of existence beyond death. If tardy in this duty, it was through conscientiousness; I did not wish to force my opinions upon others; I was reluctant to ask people to believe that which they had not themselves witnessed; but I now know that the value of human testimony is not to be underrated, and that the manifestations which I saw might have led many to an inquiry who otherwise were prevented from so doing. With this acknowledgment I will say that the states and conditions of the spirit-life by which spirits manifest themselves to mortals are as varied as the circumstances under which mortals abide, or exist, and that a spirit is obliged to overcome every one of certain outward conditions before he can intelligently reach the mortal mind. Finding this to be the case, I sought a familiar channel of communication in several places, and found myself able to express my thoughts through those accustomed channels; but seeking it in one or two other places, where there was no previously existing mediumship, I found I could only make an impression, and a very slight impression, upon the brow or mind, and while I have been able to converse in meditation with my friends who have thought of me since my departure from earth, I have not been able to make them aware, as I could wish, of my personal presence because of those intermediate barriers. To remove those barriers, to set them aside one by one, on your side of life as well as on ours, is the mission and work of true spiritual philosophy; to make intelligent research a pursuit which shall not be that of curiosity; to ask candid inquiry into the phenomena, and especially instruction in the philosophy of spiritual communion; to make some sort of preparation so that the upper world shall not be hampered with the conditions of earthly life as well as all those of ignorance in the minds of men—this is what I wish especially to plead for. But borne upon the wings of the new-found life, and conscious of the unbounded knowledge which I had yet to gain, and aware that those who had preceded me in spiritual state must be more familiar than myself with those methods, I have waited and shall wait until I receive such knowledge by observation or instruction as shall enable me to carry forward this research intelligently; but meanwhile no opportunity will be lost and none indeed neglected whereby I can speak or even manifest through any channel the light which has come to me, and which is the fulfillment of life itself.

If the reunion of long absent friends, if the silent communion of similar thought and souls upon earth, if the steady preparation for the long voyage that at last culminates in absolute realization, if to find the hopes of my youth and manhood more than verified, transcendently realized, if to feel that there is no change except an added endearment in the friends that preceded me into spiritual state, if to recognize as of one accord those minds whom I have long revered and held sacred, and those friends that with me have withstood the brunt and battle of persecution, if to be thus heralded and thus received into soul communion and into confidence, greeted as one worthy, though I felt my unworthiness, made an equal though I felt my inequality, if this be the realization of heaven, then I am in that heaven. No fabled wonder, no city of gold, no gems nor precious stones arose to greet my vision, no heaven of theology. I never believed it, I could not; but the spiritual union, the welcome of friends, the sunlight of love upon an atmosphere made buoyant by truth and hope, to feel the constant fervor, the absolute life of awakened intelligence merging more and more into reality, this was what I found; the love of the soul unquenched and purified, the transfiguration of thought made beautiful by all the images and symbols of art, the true reverence of the spirit for

the Infinite Creator imaged in lives of self-forgetfulness and ministrations, the busy spiritual world where thought itself is supreme, and where each messenger is a miniaturized spirit—this is what I found. Assemblages of spirits, into whose presence my father conveyed me after I had first received the benediction and greeting of my friends, assemblages of minds working together in community of purpose and thought for the amelioration of the condition of men, the social problem which my father commenced on earth and I but feebly followed to fulfill, these all made more clear, and the solution of them found in this higher and purer atmosphere: The faith, and hope, and certainty of human alleviation, that the States, socially, morally and politically, would finally be better, the absolute plan of the uplifting of humanity by steady and constant spirit ministrations, the instruction of the masses in the way and means of spiritual life, so that every human being would become aware of his or her individual importance.

In one conversation with my father since I passed from earthly to spirit-life concerning the society or association which he first endeavored to form in the Old and then in the New World, I said, "Is the scheme correct which you formed? Is it possible for any considerable number of human beings to live together in associative bodies, including their moral and spiritual uplifting?" He said, "My thought upon earth was only a prophecy; I did not fulfill it because I had not found the true key." "What is the true key?" I asked. He said, "It is spiritual adaptation in classes. I supposed that a community, external interests and a common bond of sympathy in external pursuits, would ultimately unite them spiritually. I find now," he said, "that there can be no real community without a base of unity in the spirit, and all associations formed merely for external purposes must fail, excepting in the external sense, while socially and morally and religiously, the world would remain as it is. You will witness," he said in continuation, "that those associated bodies bound together by a common religious impulse generally remain steadfast, and though their impulse be not correct, it still is a bond of unity among them. Now," he said, "what we intend to do is to pour out upon the world such a flood of spiritual intelligence as to sweep away the barriers of materialism, and bind men together upon the common basis of spiritual welfare." "But," I said, "that is what the Christian churches have been trying to do for two thousand years." "Oh, yes," he said, "but they have only done it in an exclusive way; what the world wants to-day is not only Christianity, but a religion or a Spiritualism that shall include everybody, and the moment you do this you place all on their proper level, they seek their associations, they become equally as important in the great project of elevation the one as the other, and in time, society itself will combine together upon principles not external, but spiritual. If there shall be an association formed," he said, "under the direction of spiritual beings, that shall be intelligently carried out, it will combine spiritual with material purposes, and the spiritual will be first. No one will be called upon or expected to join the association who is not practically capable of following the Golden Rule." "Well then," I said, "you will have to wait until the millennium." "Not so," he said; "there are many minds upon the earth to-day ready to practically demonstrate this, many who are longing for the opportunity, but they cannot combine, because of the wide severance in earthly matters. Now let every one of these be summoned to a community or association equally adapted, set aside selfishness, and work together for the whole good, and the problem is solved—the individual is swallowed up in the whole, and yet the individual is not neglected."

This was one conversation. And had you seen as I saw the deceased and risen students of social philosophy, Fourier, all who have taken the lead in the long line of reformers and socialists, many who had risen from the bloody fields of carnage in Europe, many who rose out of the Commune with imperfect and fragmentary ideas of social life, with many who have illustrated by their lives and example the possibility of self-forgetfulness, had you seen the myriads of souls intent upon this problem, and conscious that it is dawning upon the earth, you would not have been surprised at the vast manifestation which has recently taken place with reference to labor, nor would you blame that spirit of true freedom which—although in the existence of the present customs it makes carnage and destruction—indicates a wrong at the basis of your social order. [Applause.] Had you seen what I saw, you would not be surprised at the terrible echoes running all along through the various arteries of commerce, and the aisles and corridors of vast speculations in this country and in the Old World, a tremor which will not cease and will not pass until it becomes a loud voice and powerful protest against the injustice of the present system of social and commercial life which binds man to man by any servitude whatever. Had you seen the hope and the joy which spread all through those lines of intelligent spirits when they found any united purpose in the appeal for man, you would know that there is no end to disturbance on earth until injustice shall cease, and while we do not seek warfare and while every one deplores the shedding of blood, that there is no responsibility upon those who seek redress for their wrongs. And then I said, "Will it be possible that this shall come about without great warfare and conflict? Will there not be shedding of blood and serious disturbances? Shall we not finally have a war that shall involve the whole country, and perhaps nations in ruin, bringing anarchy instead of freedom?" "There is no need of this warfare," said my kind parent; "the shedding of blood is not a proper atonement for sins to-day any more than in any past age; there can be no respite for wrong by committing added wrong; we shall make voices to instruct the people in their rights, to see that they steadily unite and maintain them, and above all to make their spirits calm and steadfast, that the injustice may not be perpetuated, that they may not seek for redress by injustice, but that they may protest against it intelligently, acting so unitedly that all will be won by the simple power of intelligence and spiritual truth." And then I saw far off in the coming time, though not so far as one would imagine, that there will rise up teachers under the influence of that sphere of spiritual life, who will instruct man, first of all, that his spiritual nature is the highest, that he has no right to inflict injury upon his fellows, even in redressing wrong, but that he has a right, steadily and persistently, to protest against wrongs until the wrongs shall disappear, that he shall live above them and beyond, and that this is the inauguration of the new social state.

I passed into other fields of thought, of science, of philosophy, of art, of religion; I found no idleness, I found none unemployed, I found none indifferent, I found all acting and working for the benefit of others, and thereby gaining knowledge for themselves. I found that in proportion to their ministrations and communication of knowledge was the attainment of knowledge. I found the seclusion of students and the possi-

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HERETICS and HERESIES—Liberty, a Word which all other words are vain.
This work is written in large, clear type, and is suitable for the young.

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