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—THE—

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THE IMPORT OF THE DAY.

[THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADVENT OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM—]

[ALSO EASTER SUNDAY.]

DELIVERED AT CHICAGO, SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 1888.

INVOCATION.

God of the universe; Thou Awakener of all life; Thou who out of the night of chaos and darkness hath caused worlds to come forth and the suns to shine in splendor, and Who from the deeper night of the shadow and darkness of death hath made for man a living splendor, the light of the sun eternal: we would praise Thee with glad thanksgiving for the glory of this day; for its full import in the hearts and lives of men, and for that divine and perfect awakening that cometh to the spirit in the knowledge of things divine, in the recognition of perfect truth. We would praise Thee that from the long winter the earth awakens to loveliness and bloom, that the sun has at last emerged from the shadow of the winter's night and the earth once more feels the splendor and delight of his life giving rays. We praise Thee that along the whole lines of life new tides of awakenings are to be found, new glories in the earth and sky, and that even those who are accustomed to celebrate this day in joyfulness understand that it means the consciousness of life immortal, the awakening of man from the terror of death. But more do we praise Thee that in real spirit, in the real consciousness of the world and in the unfolding of the present day the winter-time of error is passing away and the spring of the year, freighted with the blossoms of immortal life, appears; that death no longer holds sway over the hearts and lives of Thy children as heretofore, but that messages from the skies, freighted with the life that is eternal, have won them from the terror of the tomb; that no longer in the shadow of fear, and darkness, and error are they enthralled, but that hades

is quenched in the life tides immortal, and that the promise of eternal love hath swallowed up all fear and desolation. O God: Thy children would praise Thee for the blessings of each life, for that renovation which casteth out fear and darkness, and for the recognition of that love, eternal in the heavens, glorious, all-pervading, encompassing, triumphant, and filling the universe with life and light forever. Amen.

DISCOURSE.

There is a story, whether it be tradition or revelation you shall judge; but it has its origin in that mystic Oriental religion that seems to encompass and include all the spiritual thought of man. That story is of the Awakener: such time as the sun has crossed the bond or barrier that separates the light from the shadow God sends forth from the celestial region Azereth, the Awakener; that he not only touches the earth with the wonders of his wand, bringing forth the buds and blossoms that shall yield their fruition, but all living things are renewed each spring-tide with the wand of the Awakening Angel. That at such time, also, souls who have been enthralled across the barriers that separate them from the realm of Ormuzd come into the knowledge of the light that the Awakening Angel gives them; the consciousness of immortality; and where they have previously slumbered in hadean darkness they then become aware of immortality. That human lives are also touched with the wand of this angel, and, with the awakening of birds and flowers, hatred, darkness, and terror depart, and love is renewed; friendship, long severed, is restored; to such as were in sorrow and mourning for the death of loved ones there comes the knowledge of immortality. Whatever this may mean it certainly is a symbol of that renewal which is celebrated in the spring-time among all nations.

The risen Christ is in Christendom today the symbol of all praise and worship. Whether we accept the theological dogma of the risen form or choose to interpret the symbol according to the spiritual significance and believe in the recognition of the spiritual resurrection, still it is the Awakener that is here: for that all Christendom can set apart a day of rejoicing, and wreath their altars and shrines with flowers, and come unto their places of worship in glad rejoicing for the sign of immortality, is proof that the knowledge of immortality is latent within every soul. But for this there could be no evidence to any person living today that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth symbolized immortality; but for this consciousness that is intuitive within every soul there could be no thought that that form laid away in the sepulcher in Jerusalem, that arose to the sight of his disciples, could be any attestation of life immortal in man. But so do men transcend their creeds, so does the life itself supercede the dogma of theology and prejudice that today is a season of rejoicing for immortal life, without a knowledge of how or why, because the soul springs spontaneously to recognize any symbol, however faint and feeble, that shall confirm the vision that is within the hope of the soul. Even thus Christendom worships today, and throwing aside the outward covering of creed as the young bird bursts the shell, or the incubating seed bursts from the matrix, so do the thoughts of the world burst forth into glad accord and harmony on this dawn from winter to spring-time; and if there are those who have been disappointed in creeds, if dogmas have failed to satisfy, if the consciousness of the resurrection has been too much in accord with the body instead of the spirit of Christ, they have other cause for rejoicing today.

A new life is in the world, a trembling of the same tides of spiritual thought that swept down when the angel, at the dawn of the morning of the resurrection, prefigured the risen Christ in the divine symbolism that it may be expressed to the world; it is because this is the recurrent period of the greatest joy, that there should be set apart a certain day to commemorate in the hearts and lives of those existing on earth today a new advent of truth.

It is said to be forty years since the advent of Modern Spiritualism. We will not cavil with dates and terms, it is forty years since the advent of the Rochester knockings, as they were called, at Hydesville New York, it is as well to make that a date of departure from the old and the beginning of the new as any time, although the manifestations occurred before, and there has been no cessation in all past time; still that new life in man that was brooding over the world has entered into and forms a part of the existing life of hundreds, of thousands, and millions, of people today. And the forty years which is celebrated throughout the length and breadth of every land among the handful of Spiritualists in each place is a forty years pregnant and replete with more proof of the future existence than all of history put together.

Therefore it is no wonder that we call you today for a double-rejoicing! Rejoicing for the evidence of immortality that was in the world before, which, notwithstanding the dogmatism of human interpolation and interpretation of creed, priestcraft, ritual, and catechism, still remains tracing the light of immortal life along the lines of history; and praise for the testimony of today, for the living evidence of the spirit of truth, for the Christ, not risen from the tomb in Jerusalem, but the Christ-spirit risen for all eternity unto angels, spirits and men, the testimony of truth that cannot be suppressed; through the shadow of the earthly night, through the darkness that may cross its way, even as the splendor of the sun has made its great pathway through all the terrors of the past winter, as now the glorious orb comes forth veiling his face and the splendor of his garments lest the earth shall be too quickly summoned into blossoming, so through the long night of error, through the mystic darkness of creeds, through the cyclones, wars, and tempests of human passions, through the deep winter-time of fear and the terrors of that dogmatism that enshrouded souls in such darkness that the love of Christ was well-nigh veiled, Spiritualism summons you to the testimony of thanksgiving today, for the awakening knowledge of immortal life. It demands of you this tribute, it asks you to give it as the voluntary expression of your thankfulness for what it has done for you.

Whomsoever or whatever your Christ may be, under whatever form you have praised God or worshiped, or if worshiping in the temple of nature, you are summoned today, to the altar of the new life, and the Awakener; a perpetual and living fountain of inspiration; a truth that is not sealed up; and exhaustless waters that never run dry, a river of inspiration that flows forever from the throne of God, and which has restored to you your loved ones and the knowledge of immortal life.

Whatever you may think of the Christian easter, today should be a day of thanksgiving and tribute from every heart that has knowledge of immortal life through the living revelation of Spiritualism and the name should be so distinctly pronounced that no one in all the world who speaks or reads the English language can mistake it: I know of the truth of immortality by the evidence of Spiritualism. Look back forty years, those of you who are old enough, and see where you then were, doubtless some of you sincerely worshiping under the name of some Christian denomination, before some altar of praise and prayer, but though you had faith in immortal life, though you had hope for immortality, though you might have dreamed a dream of restoration to the presence of your loved ones and recognition in the heavenly state, some barrier of creed, some shadow of fear, some darkness of doubt would creep in when you stood beside the open graves that held the outward form of your loved ones, you could not then have said I know they live, you, with trembling and fear, trusted, you might vainly hope that

they would find grace through that mystic, silent confession, which they had failed to make verbally, of the blood of Christ, and all the time there was a lingering doubt as to whether that really was the perfect way, as to whether immortality came to man in that way, and driven almost to madness by terror, doubt, and fear you were well-nigh plunged into the darkness of materialism through the various conflicting theories around you. See how with the first dawn of spiritual truth you persecuted it, how you not only scoffed and joined in the usual sneer but declared it impossible, placing all your barriers of creed and unbelief before you that you might fortify yourself in the unbelief of any new light, at the same time scarcely feeling strong in the old faith, then how, one by one, the evidences came, appealing to your senses in the simple rap that, like the telephonic signal signifies that some one wishes to communicate, then the message, afterward the vision, then the evidence in stronger voice and testimony, then in written, then in spoken words, then the forms that might appear, in the various objects that moved without contact of human hands, pile upon pile of evidence; one by one the barriers being removed until at last the open message from the dearly beloved ones, the recognition of the hand writing, the testimony of intelligence which was only known to you and to them, and this crowned the whole line of conviction; all the barriers gave way and the full flood-tide came in upon your spirit; fear and terror departed; your loved ones stood before you in spirit face to face; sometimes were even able to descend to your mortal vision; and the light of this immortal truth pierced in and through the external dwelling and made you aware of the life beyond death.

Could there be a greater resurrection than this? Could there come into the night of earthly darkness any greater light than this: between doubt, and fear, and hope, and faith, and uncertainty the in-sweeping tide of absolute knowledge the evidences that, one by one, tore away the barriers of outward conviction, of intellectual dogmatism, and placed instead the sweet blossoms of immortal life?

Whatever is said in the world by those who do not know about Spiritualism; whatever is said by a flippant press, and a still more flippant clergy; whatever may be said by those who have not had a message from the skies, you who have had; who, in season and out of season have been ministered to by spirits; who have felt the light of their presence around your dwelling; who understand the presence of departed friends, ministering spirits, and angels; who know that no human fireside is deserted, no hearthstone desolate; who understand that there is no vacant place in any family circle, no broken links in any golden chain; you who *have knowledge* are reprehensible from the hour of that knowledge if you fail to give your testimony gladly, consciously, and fully on every suitable occasion, to the certainty that Spiritualism has brought, and its name is *Spiritualism*, no other word means the same in the world today. People may try to add to it or take from it; place adjectives before it, but nothing can add to its value; the term "rational Spiritualism," Christian Spiritualism," "philosophic Spiritualism" will not change the meaning of the word. The meaning that belongs to Spiritualism is everything that pertains to the present knowledge of man's spirit in the human state and in the state that follows the separation from the mortal body by the change called death. This knowledge, this intercommunion leads to such wonders, through such avenues of thought, that they cannot be spoken now, but the open gateway is Spiritualism. Pursue whatever paths you choose when you get beyond that gateway, follow whatever thought you must or may, name them by whatever mystic titles your convenience, or your policy, or your conviction may suggest, but the only open doorway between the other world and this world today is under the name of Spiritualism, and that name, therefore, is the name under which you express your joy at this hour.

Forty years: it is the same period of time that the wanderings of the children of Israel required ere they reached the promised land. Forty is a mystic number, and the initiates in ancient mysteries began their sacred offices after forty years. It was forty days that Moses was upon Sinai receiving the law. It was forty

days that Christ was tempted in the wilderness and on the mountain. These forty years have an especial significance today. Has not Spiritualism reached the full growth of the initiated? Is there not now sufficient strength and power for it to come forth from the shadowy, misty, unformed state in which it has heretofore existed, pervading the lives of the people and giving its testimony to the full attestation of its power? Are you not summoned by a higher voice today; is it not more complete, this absolute possession?

Even those who are younger in years, and who cannot recall the advent of Modern Spiritualism, still they are fortunate to be born in the midst of its light, to be carried forward by its constant knowledge and testimony. They have but to step aside for a brief interval into the shadow of uncertainty, into the doubt of materialism, into the study of anything less certain and secure; they have but to turn to the various dogmas of the various churches instead, to discover what they are not founded upon; to show what truth there is in this light. How fortunate they are, being young in years to be born in the midst of the light of the nineteenth century!

It is a great privilege to be in the world today. It is the advent of such new light in all the lines and ramifications of human life, as has not been seen since the Christ of Christendom had being. To be fully aware of its blessings you have but to compare the present state with that which was in the world twenty, thirty, forty years ago and to see how indispensable the light has become to your existence, has grown in and through every fiber of your being. Men do not realize how dependent they are upon the sun's rays until it is suddenly eclipsed at noonday and its brightness blotted out; so were it possible for any eclipse to come into your lives, to shut out the spiritual knowledge you have for one instant, would you not think the universe bare, barren, and void utterly?

Talk about material possessions, and "one world at a time," about "living for today and letting the future take care of itself"; but who can be said to live if blind, and deaf, and lame, halt and feeble, and without understanding? Such is the state of what men call life without Spiritual knowledge: blind to the real purposes and scenes of life; deaf to the real voices and music that are in the world; lame because feeble and impotent in moral and spiritual purpose; full of infirmity because tethered by the passions, and by the darkness of the dust; without understanding because the understanding is shadowed over by the senses. What kind of living is that which merely eats, and drinks and sees sights for the body and hears the sounds that build up the senses, and understands only the pyramid of dust that may be piled up in the name of gold? That is death.

It is a great work that Spiritualism has wrought among those who accept it as a belief, who have found it knowledge: to have the barriers of creeds removed, to have the bondage of the fear of death cast out, to know that the dear ones minister daily and hourly to the wants of the spirit, to feel the dear companionship of those who were the light of your lives, to know that in spirit the communication is constant, that whenever the opportunity offers they will make them more and more palpable even to your physical consciousness; we say that if nothing else had been wrought by Spiritualism in the world it would be forever a bright and shining splendor, the great advent of such a truth as forms the cumulative truth of all ages.

But more than this is wrought; the death in life is set aside, the bondage of the physical senses is over ruled, the spirit turns to the quickening powers of immortality for the knowledge of what the soul today is in the earthly estate. Many lives without boasting of it are strengthened from day to day, from hour to hour, to meet the great death and darkness that are in your paths, by these ministering voices and this awakening spirit. It not only giveth man promise of the hereafter, strengthening the knowledge and conviction of immortality, of consciousness in the spiritual world; but in and through the daily life pours the divine life-current of spiritual truth and makes them alive, and makes that life well worth the living from day to day. The conquering of self, the overcoming of hatred, the

setting aside of the barriers between neighbor and neighbor, brother and sister, friend and friend, and triumphing over the shadows, perplexities, and entanglements of daily life: showing the paths of humanity more surely; wiping away the barriers of creed, dogma, nationality, race, country and condition, until every soul is recognized as one of God's blessed ones. Yes and every child of earth one of the children of God. More of this spirit prevails in consequence of Spiritualism than ever before in the world. The world catches up the strains, they are heard afar off and unconsciously echoed, even as you hear children upon the streets catch the songs of the most gifted singer, so do those who hear these matchless voices catch the strains and echo them, though they do not understand.

The divine solvent of Spiritual life is here in your midst. It is now forty years since it was given a name. You are to take that as evidence of its full and perfect growth, of its manhood and womanhood. This is a great light that has been vouchsafed to you, this light and testimony of the future life that has never ceased, never been withdrawn, that has all the time continued to pile up its evidences at your doors, to bring its trophies to your feet,—as nature not content with one blossom, not content with giving you one voice of spring, not content with giving you one ray of sunshine, pours the whole flood tide upon the earth and awakens myriads of germs into blossoming, causes the song birds to pour out lavishly of their songs until the fields and woods are filled with harmonies, even loosens the song in the upper air when the skylark is out of sight that it may float in showers of music around your way—so has Spiritualism lavishly poured out its gifts without stint, and surely the eyes, and ears have not been strained to catch the sight or sound, for this has come softly or trumpet tongued to your ears, you have not been obliged to lean heavenward to know of the presence of the spirits, but they have taken possession of your dwellings, come to you in your hours of daily occupation, they have invaded your sanctuaries, they have entered your cloisters, they have walked by your side in business hours, they have overwhelmed you with testimony. One evidence would prove their existence, but a million proofs destroy all doubt and take you beyond quibbling to such a degree that he who is not wilfully blind, stubbornly ignorant, may know the truth of Spiritualism today in any part of the world if he will.

And this is that for which you are to be thankful. Priests were initiated in ancient days by long and tedious ways to hold communion with the skies; prophets separated themselves from their kindred and for forty days, or forty years, journeyed in the wilderness of isolation that they might win the companionship of angels; the novitiates put upon themselves the sackcloth and ashes of asceticism and followed a long ordeal of severe penalties, and lives of abstinence, that they might have messages and spiritual manifestations; now to the child, to the little fellow playing upon the street, to the young maiden and young man the voice of the spirit comes; it is not denied to the middle aged, and the gray haired sire and matron hold converse with the skies.

By the affluence of spiritual benedictions these manifestations are poured out upon the world. The initiated are baffled, priest and prelate set them aside and say they must be the work of Satan or sorcery; all who have been accustomed to look to Jerusalem, to Mecca and Medina, to the far Orient, to some secret and mystic brotherhood, supposed to be hidden in some mountain fastness, who keep the secrets of the skies, turn in amazement that these secrets are poured out upon the world and are shocked that the spiritual light is for all, who see that these mystic rites, and ceremonies, and gifts that only belong to the shrines and sacred temples, and were stored away in mythic caves and held in fear by the initiated and experts are now the possessions of such as receive them from the skies without other preparations than that which the spirit world may give in the daily injunction; there is nothing else required; surely this is why you are to be thankful today.

The mysteries of Egypt are at your door, the mysteries of India are brought face to face with you, and the light of that wonderful and sacred secret lore is

here revealed in the form of a little child who gives you, with the voice of love, the message from the spiritual paradise. All is embodied in this, and the sacred flower of immortality is placed upon your hearts, as Azereth the Awakener has touched you with his wand of life you are typical of the resurrection: they who are risen, who speak to you at this hour from the skies, they are not alone the types of the new life, but you, who live, and think, and move, and breathe in the imprisonment of the dust, but have the knowledge of immortality, and the consciousness that love is eternal, is undying, that the heavenly hosts commingle with you in your praise and pour out glad thanksgivings for the Awakener who is here.

THE LIGHT THAT LEADS THE WAY OUT OF THE WILDERNESS.

[IMPROMPTU POEM: THE SUBJECT BEING GIVEN BY A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE.]

It is the wilderness of time,
 The entanglements and pain of sense,
 The weary way and the mournful chime
 Of the dead march without recompense,
 That makes mankind bemoan their death
 And long for the eternal, living breath.

But the light is here, even in the dark,
 No shadow is so dense and deep,
 No burial so dreary and stark
 That it does not somewhere the sunshine keep;
 As in the coal beds of the earth
 Lurk the gems that with the light appear,
 So within the form of clay on earth
 Some dawning of the light is here.

It is the wilderness of death;
 You saw the leaves fall from the trees,
 The flowers fade like a fleeting breath
 And everywhere instead of the breeze
 The stormy tempests swept over the plain,
 You said, the flowers cannot come again.

But lurking in every snow flake's light,
 Imprisoned in every icy bar,
 The glory of the heavenly sight
 Revealed the promises; here they are:
 The buds, and blossoms, and leaves of spring,
 And at last their banners bright will fling
 Their glory over all the earth,
 The resurrection of pure worth.

It is the wilderness of hate;
 And all the world is striving here,
 Save the few hearts that come, though late,
 Into the peaceful atmosphere
 And find some respite from the strife
 By the hope of a new and better life.

But piercing through the battle smoke,
 Through the thunders of man's discord,
 Come gleams of radiance; they have broke
 The bonds of winter by truth's word;
 They'll break the bonds of human strife
 And bring mankind to the realm of life.

Yes; all the way the light is here;
 When you weep in sorrow o'er your dead,
 That grander, higher atmosphere
 Envelopes you instead;
 And the whispered word enters the soul
 Of the truth of life and love's control.

God hath led you through the dark,
 The wilderness of time is here,
 Forty years and the world will hark
 For the voices of the heavenly sphere.

Another forty years and lo,
 No human heart will be left in pain,
 No famishing souls will hungry go,
 For the one divine and heavenly strain;

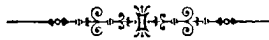
For even as light encircles the world,
 So will the pinions of the upper air
 O'er every land of earth be unfurled,
 And give the message of truth most rare

Another forty years and the light
 Will be seen in every valley here,
 And lo, the wonders of the heavenly sight
 Will dawn upon man's mystic sphere;

For the wilderness of time will pass,
 And the hosts of heaven shall shine above;
 And all will see as in a magic glass
 The wondrous image of God's love.

BENEDICTION.

May every heart lay its tributes of praise upon the altar of its devotion,
 and there with ministering gifts and the light of angels pay tribute unto God
 who giveth all. Amen.



BANNER x OF x LIGHT.


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