

SPIRITUALISM.

A DISCOURSE,

With introductory and concluding Prayers,

Delivered on SUNDAY EVENING, April 25th, 1858.

BY

THE IMMORTAL SPIRIT OF

CAPTAIN HEDLEY VICARS,

*And reported verbatim by Mr. W. Carpenter, Mesmerist
and Spiritualist, near Christchurch, Greenwich.*

O ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, look down, I beseech thee, upon these thy humble servants : may they feel the blessed influence of thy heavenly spirit ; may they be brought to know and to fear thee, ere their prime of life is passed ; may they be brought to love and to fear thee ; and wilt thou wash away all their sins, and be unto them as thou wert merciful to me when I was in this world. I went astray, thou knowest, Lord : but thy holy spirit guided me into the right path ; and, though I had temptations, thou gavest me strength to resist them. Do thou, O most merciful Father, show to these dear friends now present in their body and spirit, the likeness of thy holy influence,—the peace of thy holy spirit,—the joy of heavenly love :—that, if it should please thee to call them suddenly before thee, they may be prepared to meet thee in glory.

MY DEAR FRIENDS :—While I was upon this earth, and when I was brought, by the blessed influence of God, to know and to fear him, and to rejoice in all his works, I did my uttermost to bring my fellow-soldiers and companions-in-arms to know and fear their God. He blessed my efforts, even more than I deserved, and, through me, there were many brought to know and fear God. Now, dear friends, I cannot but rejoice that I have the privilege of visiting this earth, and of speaking to these earthly friends. I will now bring to your

minds a few words of Scripture. They are these:—
 “My soul rejoiceth in the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in my God.” Dear friends, has it been your lot to feel the awakening of conscience? Has it been your lot to experience the influence of the spirit, when the Almighty God is so graciously pleased to redeem you from the world? Have you felt its light dawning? Have you felt its influence drawing you nearer and nearer to God? Have you felt influenced to give up all your worldly pleasures,—all your worldly goods,—for the Lord? Have you experienced that, dear friends? And has there not,—if you have felt that,—has there not something come over you—some *different* influence, of not so peaceful a nature? Has it not come over you, and you have said “Why should I do that?” or “I will do it on the morrow.” When your spirit has been raised up with hope and trust in your Lord, has it been able to keep so? No, it has not: because Satan is always going about as a lion seeking for its prey. Now, I will, as far as I am able, show you in what way I was brought to the knowledge of God: and then you will see that I have great pleasure in giving these few short words. When I was a child, (so my dear mother told me often,) I was unruly, obstinate, and impetuous; I did not like to be controlled; I liked to have my *own* way. My dear mother was a pious woman,—one who tried to bring up her children in the fear of God. She tried her hardest with me: my dear father being away often—away from home with his regiment. She could not control me the same as a *father* can control a boy. I grew up reckless, in great measure. I, sometimes, as I have been saying to you now, felt the dawn of the holy spirit of God: and I have said within myself “if I had *promised* you, my dear mother, that I would try and do better, I *would try* to draw near to God.” For she used to say to me—I can fancy I can hear her dear voice *now*—“O, my dear Hedley, draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” Oh, these were blessed words—blessed words they were: but, alas! they made no impression, or but a very faint one which only lasted for a little time. Well, dear friends, I went to school: and, as most boys do,—instead of keeping myself as I ought,—I joined in all manner of sports and tricks. I ought to have known that the eye of God was ever upon me. I remember, once, while at College, I contracted a debt, and I was ashamed that my dear mother should know it:—but I was compelled to let her know it. *
 * * * I shed tears over her beloved letter, when it came to me; I went down on my knees, professing that I would try and lead a more holy life. As soon as a day or two had passed over, the effects of that letter

went from my mind, and I was as bad as ever again,—ay, and worse! For those who do reject the holy influence of God—those who do not listen, *at first*, to his warnings—their sin is far greater than if they had never professed the Christian religion. Well, my dear friends, that is the way my early life passed, and I went as a soldier,—but not as a soldier of Christ,—a soldier going to fight for my country. The world's glories—the world's temptations—were before my eyes. I remember perfectly well, when the news came that I was to be selected to be *Captain*,—Oh! it was not with thanks to God for placing me in a position in which I might benefit my fellow-men. No: I thought to myself “How fine I shall look in my regimentals; how grand it is to have men under me.”—I did not think that I was under *God*! My dear friends, the Almighty gave me a fine form and a handsome face: but I was a sinner, and had sins of the deepest dye, because I was instructed to lead a holy and religious life,—I had such good examples before me,—and I had such a pious mother to warn me. My sins *were* of the greatest dye,—more so than those of many a man that has been hung for breaking the laws of his country, because, very likely he has not had a beloved mother or father to show him the way to Heaven. But it pleased the Almighty God to afflict me with sickness. He drew my heart towards him. Oh! I shall never forget the beautiful sensation of that holy influence,—what joy and hope, what misery I felt at the same time,—when the Almighty, with his gracious love towards me, set before me in array all my sins, and showed me how I had broken the laws he set before me—how I had rejected the advice of a beloved mother, and caused her many a bitter tear! Dear friends, it was in agony of spirit that I cried “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” Oh! dear friends, if you never have experienced that, I hope, before many days are over your heads, you may cry, in the same earnestness of spirit as I did, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” Your privileges are as great as mine:—you have your holy spirit friends—holy, holy, spirit friends—to come and direct you in the right path. And, remember, dear friends, if you do not wish to feel any bitter pangs of conscience, *do not reject them*! Do not reject what they say! Oh, treasure it in your hearts. Do try earnestly, and pray for the holy spirit of God to love you, that you may be led to know and fear your God. You cannot do more, in the flesh. Oh, take warning by me, and do not suffer the bitter pangs of conscience as *I* did. Oh, the days and nights of misery that I spent thinking how I had neglected the Word of God! My sins were set in array

against me; I knew not where to turn for aid; I was too proud to ask some beloved fellow soldiers of mine—who had tried to draw my mind to Heaven—to help me. I had a proud heart,—a heart of stone: for I could not, with a humble spirit, ask God's forgiveness, until He, with a powerful influence, one day, as it were, broke the spell which bound me to the earth: and then, dear friends, *then* was the time that I really and truly did shed bitter tears of repentance; then was the time that I felt the soothing influence of his spirit, and felt that God was Love,—and that though I had been a sinner—a great sinner—my Saviour was willing to cleanse me from all my faults. Dear friends, may you all feel that holy influence—may you feel that blessed influence—that holy, light, peaceful influence that I felt, as it were, entering into the doors of my heart, softening it, and making it take impressions. But I did not *then*, alas! *go on* in the right path: for, you know, Satan tempts every one while in the flesh. He tempted me. I was often tempted to neglect to read my Bible. Sometimes I would lie in bed longer than I ought, so that I had, perhaps, not a minute to read my Bible; and sometimes I would get up *soon* enough, but how, then, did I read my Bible?—never thinking what I read: it was read carelessly. Dear friends, is that *your* case? Do you lie in bed late in the morning and then have not time to read your Bibles? Do you take up your Bibles never thinking, or never praying for a blessing? Do you get up so late that you hurry over your prayers, or, perhaps, do not say them at all, being pressed for time? Oh, dear friends, let me beg of you—earnestly beg of you,—if you have done so, to do so no more. Oh, pray for that peace of mind which the world cannot give you. All its pleasures must pass away; all its pomps must lie in the dust: but you, dear friends, have a soul to be saved,—you have a never-dying soul,—a soul that must live in happiness for ever or be miserable for ever! And, I ask you, as one who has had the experience of it, not to reject the holy influence of God. When you feel the awakening of conscience, do not still it. O, it is a silent but a sure monitor to bring you to God. But if you do still go on—if I had still have gone on rejecting the influence of that blessed spirit, I never could have been as I am now: I never could have risen to Heaven! No. And, my dear friends, let me beg of you not to reject it. If you have never felt the dawning of it,—if you have not had your sins set in array against you,—pray that you *may* have them set in array against you; pray that you may feel yourself a miserable sinner—a worm, as it were, crawling in the dust. And when you feel that,

dear friends; be sure that it is the first dawning of the spirit. Do not reject it. And when you feel in that agony of mind, which you must feel, cry aloud that your hearts may be softened; "Cry aloud," saith the Lord, "in the day of your trouble, and I will help you." This is a sure promise, dear friends: I found it so, and so will you. And then, dear friends, I had the comfort of that spirit while upon this earth. What—Oh, what a comfort it was to me on my dying bed! O may every one present here experience that sweet influence which I had on my dying bed! May your pillow be soothed as mine was, and then you will be able to cry "Oh, what joy has filled my heart." Yes, dear friends, I can say "What joy has filled *my* heart." You can do the same, when you once get the awakening of conscience,—when you once feel all your sins set in array against you,—when you once feel that blessed dawn of God's holy spirit:—you can then say "Oh, how my soul rejoiceth in the Lord—my spirit in my Saviour." Oh, dear friends, if you have never experienced it, you cannot tell what it is to feel Satan with all his *wily* wiles. He will allure you from the right path, if he can. Oh, he did *me*! He will say "Follow me: my path is flowery:" *I* say,—follow the path of conscience, though it may be thorny. There is a road which leads to Heaven where all is joy and peace and love. Reject Satan. Say, as your beloved Saviour said, "Get thee behind me, Satan:"—though your path is flowery, when I get to the end of it, where shall I be?—shall I be in peace, joy, and love? No: in endless misery! Oh, dear friends, what I wish to impress most upon your minds is this:—that you may *pray* earnestly that *your* sins may be set in array against you; that you may see your faults; that you may feel how unworthy you are to approach God's footstool; that you may feel what a poor miserable sinner you are,—that you are but dust and ashes. I wish you all to feel that. And oh, when you feel that, though the agony of your mind will be great, the hardness of your heart will be dreadful. It will be so hard that you will fancy that nothing can impress it: but as wax is melted to receive the impression of the seal, so will the holy influence of God melt your stony hearts, that the Word of God—the word of life, love, and peace—may be engraven in them, never to be effaced. You will, indeed, have a thorny way: it will be *full* of thorns. There will be your worldly friends saying "*Do* give up that: what good does it do you? you sit here moping at home, reading your Bible—what do you want to do it for? Come and take a little *pleasure*." This is one thorn. Satan says, "If you will give up your Bible, and go out

with your friends, pleasuring, you shall have all the world can bestow: oh, you shall be so happy and so gay. Take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry: for to-morrow you die." But does he say "After death comes judgment?" No: he says no more than this:—"Eat, drink, and be merry: for to-morrow you die." *He does not say* "After death comes judgment:"—if he did so, he would not get so many to himself. That is the second thorn. The third kind is this:—"thorns of the flesh:" illness,—death. Dear friends, you feel wretched; you feel that you are but a worm; you feel that your sins are so great that you cannot bear the burden of them: but here is a consolation,—*"Come unto me, all ye that are laden,"* says the Lord, *"and I will give you rest."* Yes, dear friends, that third thorn is the most severe. Satan and your worldly friends will work with that last thorn, and they will try not to comfort you with Heavenly influence but with worldly influence. They will say *"What good has your Lord done you?—You have lost a dear friend; you are sick, —ill; in pain and misery; you cannot go here—you cannot go there! Why do n't you give it up, and come with us?—God has turned a deaf ear to you."* And then comes death:—death for the body, but a LIFE for the spirit. Then the thorny path is passed: you can then say, *"My spirit rejoiceth in the Lord my God."* You can say to your worldly friends, *"Though I have passed through the thorny ways of this life, 'my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.' Cry aloud,"* you will say, *"to the God of Heaven, who is my help and my strength in the time of trouble: I have his holy influence; I have his blessed spirits; my spirit is going to leave my body; you will mourn for me on earth, but I shall be in the realms of the blest, singing glory to God who has redeemed me from all my sins."* Dear friends, do you not think it is worth while to make the trial? Do you not think it is worth while to go through that thorny path? Do you think you have courage to do it? If you *do*, I would rather that ye felt faint-hearted. I would rather that ye felt ye had not strength to go through it: for then you would call upon the God of Heaven to help you and *give* you strength. Now I have shown you what the thorny path of the righteous man is:—I will now speak of the pleasures of a worldly life. First, you see a child:—"I must have this; I will have that; I will not do what you tell me." Satan comes into that little child's heart. He goes on till he gets big enough to go to school. Comes Satan:—"Would you not like to go bird's-nesting?—Would you not like to take an apple off that tree?" They are very tempting: the child takes an

apple. Satan steals that child's conscience, because that child has no one to instruct him, or because he will not *listen* to instruction. This is the flowery path of young people. The child grows up to manhood. He enters into all the gaieties and pleasures of the world. Mind: I did so myself. Satan says, "There, you can lie a little longer in bed." Well, you lie a little longer. "I don't want to read my Bible this morning," or "I will read it presently." This is Satan: he steals conscience. Conscience says, "Can't you spare one five minutes?" You go to your worldly business: God is not thought of. You feel that you are getting on in the world: you say, "I don't have any sickness; I don't have any trouble; I have plenty to eat and drink, and clothes to wear." There is your flowery path! You go on, gay, gay, gay, to the very last: listening to what Satan says, and doing all his works. Then comes the death-bed. "Oh," you say, "I am going to die: I don't want to die,—I cannot leave this world. Oh," you say, "would that I had not listened to Satan." Satan says, "You have done my work and my pleasure,—you have sold yourself to me: now you are mine! No blessed spirits to stand by that bedside, dear friends! Picture it to yourselves. No blessed spirits to comfort that dying soul! No blessed spirits to carry it to God! No. The cries of the unrighteous man are agonizing; he feels hell, as it were, near him! All his bones are, as it were, being consumed:—his spirit, before he dies, has a touch of the misery which it has to endure for everlasting,—in the same way as the spirit of a just man, who has passed through that thorny path, has a taste of joys which are to be *his* for everlasting! "Oh," he says, "Oh, had I but one hour to live, I would give it to my God." Too late! "My spirit shall not always strive with man," saith the Lord. *Too late!* Oh, when that word comes:—*TOO LATE!* The righteous man,—the man who listens to conscience,—his death is glory; but the unrighteous man or woman, who have sold themselves to Satan for this world's pleasures which must die: oh, they are *too late!* Satan says, "You should have thought of that before: you have done my work, I will reward you with a happy place!" He laughs at you. He mocks at your misery and at your sufferings. Your spirit leaves your body: but where has it gone? Where has it gone—never to return? Has it gone to Heaven? No: it has gone to Hell! Too late to repent. Repentance must be on the earth. "There's no repentance in the grave, nor pardon offered to the dead." Dear friends, I hope, with the blessing of God Almighty, that your consciences may be awakened; that you

may pass through the thorny path of life; that you may meet your reward in Heaven; and have the joy of Everlasting Life.

O ALMIGHTY God, grant that thy blessing may now rest upon the few words which I have used to-night, with my best endeavours to impress them upon the minds of these your earthly servants. Grant, O Almighty God, that they may be brought to love and fear thee; that their sins may be set in array against them; that they may cry aloud for the holy influence of thy spirit to soften their hearts, that the words they may hear or read may be engraven in their minds; that they may go through that thorny path of life, and come to its end in joy and peace, for Christ's sake.

"Our Father, &c."

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost and of holy spirits be with you all for ever and ever: Amen.

SPIRITUALISM, when conducted in accordance with the principles of the Sacred Scriptures, is, beyond all comparison, the Science which brings the greatest amount of solid happiness to the human race. It is impossible for any true Christian to deny the fact that we are surrounded, by night and by day, with "ministering spirits" who are exercising a positive influence over us for good or for evil, according as we desire that which is holy and hate that which is profane. Can there be anything more interesting than to receive a decisive recognition from them through the various modes which are adopted by Spiritualists? But what a glorious fact it is that the holy spirits of God are permitted to *speak* to us, through the mouth of one of His humble servants in the flesh, and to give us the full assurance that although the inhabitants of Great Britain are too prone to neglect His laws, He is still as much the God of the English as He was of the Israelites of old! If we reject Spiritualism, we scorn the outstretched hand of a helping Providence:—if we accept it, the Bible is made plain to us,—the path of duty is rendered a path of pleasure,—we know that we shall triumph over death and the grave,—and the event too commonly looked forward to with feelings of dismay, will be anticipated as the consummation of our fondest hopes, and will be hailed, with emotions of joyfulness, as the entrance into "LIFE."

W. C.

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