

CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL WORLD,

13

AND

WHAT MEN KNOW THEREOF.

AN INSPIRATIONAL ORATION

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BY

MR. J. J. MORSE.

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CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL WORLD, AND WHAT MEN KNOW THEREOF.

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We have to speak this evening on a subject that must appeal to the sensibilities of all hearts present. We might go almost so far as to say that in all ages of the world's history, in the distant and remote past downwards to the immediate present, the great question has ever been before humanity, "If a man die, shall he live again; and if he live again, what will be his state and circumstances?" It does not matter what religion we turn to, or what people we choose to select as an example, the patent fact is ever before us; and in every land, and with every tongue, the question is propounded and an answer sought for, "Concerning the spiritual world, and what men know thereof."

Away in the distant past many strange and peculiar notions have been entertained and promulgated in reference to this question. Nothing definite, perhaps, nothing very substantial or real, has been handed down to the present as the remains of those notions; but still, floating mistily through the thought of the present day, are to be found the ragged images of the days gone by. The fields of Elysium, peopled with the hosts of the good and great; the plains of Tartarus, flocked with the souls of those who have disobeyed the commands of God, and placed themselves in opposition to the great principles of purity and goodness; that fabled state to which the Hindoo fondly aspires, and which is wrongly supposed to be absolute absorption into the Deity; the future state of the Mohammedan, a heaven of sensual delights; the home of the future as portrayed by the principal religion of Christianity—on the one hand all happiness and beauty, on the other all misery and darkness: all these and many other conceptions have floated before the world's mind, and have been mixed up with its thought in all times.

The present day, with all its boasted advancement, fails to really give a rational answer to the problem as to what the spiritual world is like, and where it is located. Suppose, for the sake of illustration, that we were to appeal to one of the popular leaders of the orthodox religious sentiment of the day, and to ask him a question something like this: "You believe in the existence of a future state. If that state exist, it must be a reality. Being

a reality, it must occupy a locality somewhere; it must be a something that is real, a condition of life that bears positive relationship to the present. Please to tell us where it is." This is a simple question that is asked on every hand to-day, to which we say the entire religious community utterly and completely fails to give any satisfactory answer. Think of it. You are all immortal souls destined to pass from this world into another. Where is that world? Echo answers, Where? Think over this matter, and then return to the sad and miserable fact that you are profoundly ignorant as to where that land is, and ask yourself what you really know in relation thereto. If a spirit-world exist, it is of the highest importance to humanity that some accurate knowledge thereof should be possessed by every living individual. Minus this knowledge, the world lacks something that should make it bright and beautiful; man lacks something that would be a foundation to his life—invisible, we own, but nevertheless enabling him to stand erect in all the glory of his immortality.

Alas! what shall we say? Let us look for a moment at the popular conception of immortality; and do not think that in handling this popular conception of the future state as entertained by the vast majority of religious professors that we have the least desire to cast ridicule thereupon. Far from it; we only intend to calmly and dispassionately analyse what is believed now in reference to the future state, and then, if we should be so successful, to substitute in the place of that which we think inefficient and groundless, other matters that shall be substantial and true—matters that shall survive the onslaught of scepticism, triumph over all opposition, and soar heavenwards bathed in the light of eternal truth. If we can do this for you, root out old errors and substitute new truths, so much the better for the human family, for it must tend to their enrichment.

The popular conception of the future state divides itself into two heads. And what are they? Heaven for the virtuous, hell for the wicked. We will take the more glorious item first. What does that item involve? A condition of existence where the souls of just men are made perfect and happy. No one here, perhaps, will quarrel with such a proposition, or such a definition. But when we come to analyse that definition, we find it means something very different. We must then take exception to it, for we do not find that this heaven is so adapted to those who have lived on earth as some suppose. Heaven has been stated to be a place composed of jewels, with streets of gold, and gates of pearl; but the whole paraphernalia of the Christian heaven is so well known to all, that there is scarcely any necessity for us to dwell intimately upon this portion of the argument. And so with the occupation of those who are supposed to inhabit this city; the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem are supposed to be always singing hosannahs, wearing white robes, waving palm-branches, and bearing crowns of gold. To this we offer no objection, if man's

supremest pleasure and highest happiness consist in being thus employed. But is this the only end of human life? Is this the only use immortality may be put to? Are the conditions named possible, and if they be, are they likely to conduce to the wished-for happiness?

Now let us come to the other side. Here we have a picture full of gloom and terror—hell with its cavernous recesses resounding with shrieks and groans, its sulphurous smoke curling snake-like through its vaulted chamber. At times a lurid light blazing up from the burning depths below; and amid the shrieks of the tortured, and the laughter of the torturers, hell, with all its horrors, is brought before you. And this, we are told, is the punishment inflicted upon his children by our Father God! Yet St. John says, "God is love." Is there not something very terrible in all this? If these things exist as realities they must have a locality; they must be situated somewhere. We ask, as hundreds have asked before us, Where is this heaven or this hell? Again we find echo answers, Where? The old conception was that hell was down there—below the earth; that heaven was up there—beyond the stars. Science, lynx-eyed and keen, hath soared up into the infinity of circling blue which extends on indefinitely; her powerful gaze hath found space on space, until at last she is lost in the dense black darkness beyond, impenetrable in its profundity. The science of geology hath unravelled the tangled skein of the earth's history; hath torn the secret from the pages of rugged stone and granite. This science reveals the past history and progress of the earth whereon you now live. Beneath the earth's crust she hath gone down to the primeval granite; beneath this she hath tapped the ocean of fire that still rolls and writhes within the globe's centre; and she hath computed, sacrilegious as she is, that if all the human beings that were said to have gone to the infernal regions were mustered together it would be impossible to place them within the regions of hell, as they are supposed to exist within this earth! Science hath sounded the depths of life, and scaled the vast heights beyond, and returning hath said, We have explored the face of the earth, and sounded the depths of the globe, and we find no place where a hell could exist, we find no locality suited for a heaven! But Spiritualists, who have given some attention to the question we are discussing to-night, have come to very different results; they have found out that some more rational answer to the question, "What is the spiritual world?" must be given than that which is furnished by the material scientists or the orthodox theologians.

We return, then, to consider the weakness of the orthodox picture in relation to heaven. Before doing so, we have to ask you whether it be possible for man to know anything of the future state, whether it be an order of existence? We certainly think it is within possibility, and that it is one of the necessities of life that man should know something of the future to which he tends; and

by the phrase "know something" we don't mean that which he is easily content to receive as evidence and argument in faith, but some practical knowledge, some solid fact that shall reveal to him unmistakably the nature of the world to which he is tending. We would ask, if you were to make a journey into a far-off country, a land that you had never visited before, would you be esteemed sensible and sane if, without the slightest inquiry as to the nature of that country, without the slightest preparation for the journey, without the least effort to become conversant with its manners and customs, you were to start off upon your expedition and visit that far-off land? Your friends would smile and perhaps significantly tap their foreheads and think that you were very soft indeed. How much more so, then, with regard to that greater home, that brighter land whose denizens are the ascended spirits of relatives that once dwelt here with you; is it not necessary that you should have accurate knowledge that you may be able to prepare for that journey while in this life?

If there be any sense in the argument that we are using, it must certainly appeal to the sentiments of all. The weakness of the theological heaven consists in this fact: it is utterly at variance with the nature of man. But we may be met with the counter argument: We know that such a condition of purity and goodness and worship and praise is utterly at variance with the nature of man; but before the good and the pious enter into that condition, there is a marvellous transformation effected in their natures. They are changed in the twinkling of an eye, and made fit to enjoy that high estate of purity and peace! Suppose we admit the validity of this argument. We will do so, and then analyse the deductions that it necessarily leads to, which are these: If man be changed when he enters into the world of spirits, it is someone else that enters that world, and not the man that you knew here in this life. If any of our friends were to be translated from this life into the one beyond, and in the act of translation were to be changed entirely and thoroughly from what he is now into something else, *who* would be immortal? Not our friend; because that which is our friend now would not be *him* then. You see the inference. If man be immortal it must involve the retention of his identity or the annihilation thereof. You can, of course, accept which theory you like; but so far as truth is concerned, the balance of opinion must ever be in favour of the retention of the personality and identity that the great Creator has endowed you with. What are the pleasures of life? Are they not summed up in the one word—the identity of your own existence? How is it that the great and noble minds have stamped their impress on the age wherein they have lived, and which has been felt from their times down to the present? Without that bright and shining personality, without that strong identity, what would have been known of them by their fellow-creatures? What would you have known of Demosthenes or Galileo, of

Shakspeare or Milton, of the bright and shining lights of modern days, if it had not been that these men exhibited in the fullest degree that striking power of individuality and identity that is the central fact of every human being's career?

How fraught with good and usefulness have been the names mentioned! Shall we accept the idea, then, that when you are translated, the very essence of your power for goodness, the very central and integral fact of your consciousness and being, shall be swept away from you, dragged out of you? Shall you live the ghost of your former self, with nothing left of that power for good which in the community of life was so incalculable? If immortality involved the loss of identity, of personality, of individuality, then immortality could not be appreciated by the mind in the sense of being known and understood, for the conditions of immortality being totally dissimilar and distinct from those of your being at the present time, with faculties dissimilar to those now exercised by you, you could not understand or intellectually appreciate that which is distinct and foreign to your ordinary existence.

But if, on the other hand, the identity and personality of the individual are to be retained, why then it follows as a necessary sequence that the condition of life to which the individual enters must bear some relationship to the personalities that enjoy it. That being so, there will be some similarity between the conditions of the first experience in the next world and the experience of humanity in this; there must be some relationship, or how would the faculties be enabled intellectually to know or understand the administration of existence in the spirit-world?

We now come face to face with the important and startling fact that there must be, according to our reasoning, some relationship and sympathy between man in this and in the next world. On the other hand, if the personality of man be destroyed, there can be no relationship and sympathy; it does not matter what the man is or what the conditions of the world which he inhabits. But we accept this theory, distinctly and emphatically—that after death there is a retention of consciousness, that there is a perpetuation of identity and personality; and a recognition of this fact will help us to know something of the nature of the spirit-world. Standing, then, as we do now, with a rational immortality before us, we shall perhaps be accused of overthrowing the conception of Christianity, and trampling the beliefs of ages beneath our feet. We accept the situation, not because we desire it, but because the inevitable consequence forces itself upon us. Now, you know well that intelligence is always dependent upon organisation for its expression; therefore, if all the powers that constitute the man in this life, all the intellectual, moral and spiritual powers that make the man here are retained and perpetuated in the life beyond, the intelligence animating and directing those powers must be retained as well, as an inseparable part of the

self-conscious principle itself. If, on the other hand, intelligence exist in the world beyond, you can very readily see that organisation must be necessary and essential to the expression of that faculty of man's soul.

Our friends will think perhaps that we are getting into a horribly materialistic state, dispersing into thin air as we are doing those sublime transcendental conceptions of spirituality and of the spirit-world that humanity have so long revelled in. Well, we had far better clear the sky of its cobwebs—mentally speaking—we had far better efface from your minds all superstition and ignorance, so that you may have your mental horizon clear and free, and that the light of truth may shine upon the darkened walks of human life. We had far better do this than bow down to hoary superstition or to errors long treasured by the people. All this must come; the sore must be removed, and then when the wound is healed the patient will thank the physician—ay, thank him even for inflicting the necessary pain incident to the operation. There is perhaps one name we might refer to, one who has done more for modern times than any other, and who has cast much light upon this particular subject—Emanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg was a writer of much voluminousness and wonderful depth, and was most intimately acquainted with the problem of the spiritual conditions of humanity. This author revealed in his writings many things respecting the *post mortem* existence of men that are of incalculable value to the world. The great body of civilised humanity who have perused his works have come to the conclusion that they are the mere vagaries of a dreamer, that they are the outpourings of a diseased imagination, that they have no foundation in fact or reality. But, strange to say, when modern Spiritualism came, which was looked upon as a new delusion, a fresh departure from the truth, and another imposture—when revelations were made by the spirit-people who were said to communicate from the other world, it was found that in many respects Spiritualism substantially bore out the testimonies of the Swedish seer. It was very strange that Swedenborg should precede the actual development of modern Spiritualism—should, as it were, have laid down the lines and placed the foundations whereby Spiritualism should travel and whereon it should build. Yet nevertheless such is the fact, and if our friends will only take the trouble to peruse certain of his writings, they will find that the details are substantially the same as those we are about to bring before you. But do not think that we are uttering this simply because Emanuel Swedenborg or any other writer has put these opinions on record; we are simply uttering them to you as our perception of the facts, as our knowledge of the truths involved in the existence of these facts.

The existence of man, then, involves in the next world the presence of an organisation and the possession of the rational powers. Now, who is there among you at the present moment, even

were he so good and pure as no other man or woman was before, who, if he were to be transported into the next world with all his powers—mental, moral, and spiritual—still intact, that would care for the theological heaven that we have described to you? Who would care for the particular happiness and enjoyment which is said to be the lot of all who enter that place? Who is there that would care to be always singing and praising the Lord, always waving palm-branches, always wearing white robes and golden crowns? Echo answers, Who? There is not one who can lay his hand sincerely upon his heart and say that he would always wish to be so engaged; not one is there who can say: "I am fit to praise the Lord for ever in the land of endless day." He who would say so would be instantly branded as a braggart and a boaster; the vaunted profession would be viewed with suspicion, and the religious fervour and zeal that would be said to prompt the expression would be valued at its just estimate. We ask, then, if you were to be transported into the next world with all your powers intact, what would be the most rational conception you would entertain of your condition? Substantially this: Those higher pleasures of life, those actions and expressions of intuition and reason that constitute the pure and true mind's greatest pleasure, would so engage your attention and consideration. You would seek to solve the mighty problems of Deity, unravelling the threads of life and tracing them to their ends and issues, thereby gathering a fund of wisdom and information, storing up your minds with a wealth of such knowledge, continually seeking after the supreme Cause that controls existence; and the more you knew, the more you discovered of the works of God, the better would you be able to praise and worship that Being.

We feel that if humanity were to be transformed into a lot of psalm-singing automatons, waving palm-branches, and clothed in white robes—if we were to be droning away an eternity in such a miserable manner—that immortality would be the vilest end of life. But if there were to be a future state for you, where the bright and pure would be able to enjoy a high and elevated state of existence—where every faculty of the soul could expand and develop itself—where, looking up with trusting and confiding gaze to the great future still before you, seeking for the inspiration of the great God who rules all—where, under such a condition, man could put forth the flower and beauty of the faculties God has given him—in that condition man would find the only happiness his soul was made to comprehend and appreciate.

Immortality, then, means one of two things—the retention of the individuality and consciousness, or their annihilation. The one enfolds you in an eternity of activity and usefulness, the other in an eternity of nothingness. The activity and usefulness are matters familiar to the human soul, and fill the requirements of our common humanity. He who reads the lesson of the time feels the necessity of labouring for the advancement of

himself, that he may be the means thereby of effecting the development of his own mind and the improvement of his fellows. Self-improvement is, in short, a means of advancing civilisation.

We come, then, to the spiritual world as discovered from the nature and standpoint of those who inhabit it. Suppose yourself in the position we have arrived at, and suppose that this next world we have been speaking of, and which humanity seems to have such vague notions concerning, were to reveal itself to you as simply a condition of nothingness, of mist and vapour, no land, no object, no reality, but a something that you could not actually describe or make known to your senses, and while floating about in the air you were supposed to enjoy this for immortality, how very happy you would feel, how satisfied your soul would be with the grandeur, the sublimity, and the nobleness of that future state! Supposing it were to be the picture of heaven, as painted by orthodoxy and by theology; you have there little pleasure in gold and jewels and precious stones, things which are but the baubles of earthly life, the mere dross floating upon the surface of the world's ambition and selfish desires, things sought after and prized, not for the good they do humanity, but for the distinctions they confer upon the possessor. If, then, the heaven you aspire to were to be built of these shams of earthly life, these glittering pieces of consolidated matter, varying in their forms, and in themselves so mean that a soul dead to worldly thoughts, and clothed in the bright purity of wisdom, scorns them as things only to be trampled beneath the feet; if these things were to fill the nature of the home you aspire to, we might say in all sincerity, "O heaven, save thy children from such a fate!" But, on the other hand, supposing the end of life were the presence of a seething, liquid fire running through hell's blackest depths; suppose the end of all existence, and the fulfilment of the wrath of God, were to mean the eternal damning and torturing of his children in such a condition; supposing that that were the one end and purpose of all existence, "Heaven save you from such a fate!" is again the prayer that arises from our lips—a fate that never did nor never could be made the manifestation of the wisdom of God our Father.

We must look, then, for a more rational interpretation of this future state than any that the world has yet received. Even the heaven of the Mohammedan cannot answer the requirements of cultivated life; it is one only of mere pleasure and sensual gratification. The spiritual principles involved in the existence of that heaven have been so covered over by the gross perversion which they are subject to, that they are lost sight of in modern times. Take any other conception you please, the real truth has not yet come upon the world. If we say that Spiritualism professes to reveal it, do not accuse us of egotism; we only say that Spiritualism gives you one of the most intelligent answers, and we leave it for you to decide whether it be the best the world has ever received. And the answer that it affords stands revealed in these words: It,

the spirit-world, must meet the requirements of the inhabitant that enters it. Hence, in the bright days of summer the sky is cloudless, and the sun beams down upon you in such a flood of glory that all Nature seems bathed in a shimmering sea of gold. In the distance the blue hills tower heavenward; near to you is the smiling sward of emerald green; running through the broad plateau is a stream, shining and sparkling like liquid diamonds; and all around you are bright and gorgeous flowers and waving feathery trees. The sound of birds makes the air musical; the lowing of the kine, the bleating of the sheep, all add to the charm and splendour of the scene; and o'er this picture walks man and woman, the noblest handiwork of the great Creator, breathing love and purity, and every action one of rhythm and music. How grand the picture! Change it! Barren hills and sterile rocks, the foaming cataract, and the hissing, boiling stream rushing from the depths below, the goat scaling the rugged cliffs, the sky overhung with clouds, the rain pouring down, it may be, in pitiless showers, the peal of thunder rolling down the mountain side. Man stands appalled at the mightier strength of Nature governed by our God. Go into the spirit-world! Stand there where the towering hills, the pleasant meads and the flowery pastures—where the shining streams and all these things and appurtenances of spiritual life that impart to it such beauty, and reveal in so bright and clear a light the divine skill of the Mighty Architect—are to be found, and observe that if these things were not there our presence in the absence of them would be absurd. Man, retaining all his faculties, feels the necessity for such a state. Put it to yourselves, put it to your own hearts, and you will come to the same conclusion. We, therefore, urge upon you now to answer the question: that if the spirit-world be not a real world, diversified by all the pathos and grandeur that belong to those of a nobler and higher order; if it have not all the things that make Nature beautiful, and reveal the presence of Nature's Author, why then what in the name of heaven can that spirit-world be? What is your condition of life when you pass from here, if it be not to enjoy a condition as real, as actual, and more glorious than the one you have just left? Spiritual we grant you, refined we admit, but still in itself a condition as real and true and substantial as the one you now enjoy. This is the answer put forward by Spiritualists; this is the hope entertained by the Spiritualists—the hope, mark you, that is founded upon practical acquaintance with the facts involved.

Let us then, having gone so far into the spiritual world, for a moment direct our attention to its conditions of life. But, before we do so, let us sum up the various portions of our discourse insofar as it has gone.

We first stated that there had been a vast number of answers to the question, as to what the spiritual world is. These answers, no matter whence received or by whom given, have up to the

present day proved unsatisfactory. Again, we found that it was the desire of all men who had a grain of sense—there are some deficient in the latter quality, yet priding themselves in the possession thereof—to learn something of the next world. He who professes not to care one jot or tittle for a future state, who laughs the idea to scorn, who thinks that immortality itself is only a dream entertained by the superstitious and ignorant—he who says he has sounded Nature's depths, and scaled her heights, and found no place for it in the scheme of nature, no room for it in the economy of the universe—who declares that immortality and a future state are exploded dogmas altogether, just watch such a one closely. See disease step along like a hideous phantom, and lay its hand upon the brow of one of his children; watch the blush of health depart from the face; see the eye grow dim, lacking its lustre; watch the limbs lose their strength; see the form wasting and decaying. At last, see the dead calm spread over the features; see the eyes for ever close; see the form stretched lifeless before the professor of materialism. Then watch the tears of agony course down his cheek; and if you have the power pour your words into his heart, and ask him if, in the very centre of his being, facing his dead child, he can disbelieve in immortality, when every faculty of his nature is quarrelling with existence, and asking an answer to the question, "Is my child dead, or does she live?" Interpret his answer by what your feelings would be then, and you will find that which is correct.

All men without exception, thus it seems, have a yearning desire to know what the future world is like. We appealed to the popular religious sentiments of the day. The answers they gave to our questions we returned, pronouncing them unsatisfactory. We then quoted the nature of man as he is here in this life, and the popularly-entertained conception of his nature in the next life; we threw over the miraculous change in that nature as being inconsistent with the description of immortality, and we stated that man's existence in the next world, as generally defined, is at variance with what we know to be the requirements of man in this.

We then analysed the nature of man, and showed that immortality must be a sensible, rational existence. From that we drew the picture of what the next world really is. Place it side by side with what you know of the nature of man, and you must find the two dove-tail completely, each meeting the conditions of each.

Here, then, we pause—pause before a picture of the condition of life in the next world into which you may enter as rational and sensible beings. Now we direct your attention to the conditions actually obtaining in that next world.

The popular conception of heaven and hell, we have said, and we repeat it, never did and never will express or evidence the justness of our Father, God. We ask you, where, in this world of spirits that we have now discovered, is there room

for either of these two conditions? There is no room for either the theological hell, or the theological heaven. Do not think, because we dispute the existence of these two states, that we deny the possibility of either punishment or reward. We do not; and it is precisely on this question we wish to speak to you now. If you took the rounds of human life, it would be absolutely impossible to discover a man the very embodiment of all that is grand and noble, warranted without the slightest crack or flaw; and, on the other hand, if you would look for one who is totally and absolutely depraved, within whose mind or heart there never was or could be the slightest germ of truth and purity, you would be as much disappointed in that search as in the other. If, then, we cannot find absolute purity and absolute evil, where is the use of such conditions in the world beyond? On the very showing of the argument, the foundations of heaven and hell are thus sapped to their very core. They are useless because there is nobody fit to live in the one, and no one whose sinfulness will justify his being cast into the other.

In the next world you will find, much the same as here, that like associates with like. Look into the realms of your own society, and ask yourselves whether the illiterate boor is ever to be found in association with the fine-strung intellect of the poet. The bright land that opens itself up to his gaze would be death and pestilence to the boor. Look at the virtuous and wise. Would they find pleasure and comfort if they associated with debased characters? Those who are immoral, who are tainted by what we are pleased to call vice and the crimes of life, would find no enjoyment and happiness in the same sphere of labour with the good and the virtuous. Come over, then, and view the inhabitants of the spirit-world as they in reality exist! Remember as you come the words of One whose utterances you are generally careful to attach some importance to, who said, "In my Father's house are many mansions." We should be inclined to say that the many mansions were for the habitation of the innumerable degrees of individual development continually passing to them. You will find here in this life degrees in virtue, degrees in vice, one fining down towards the other until you arrive at what you think is the line of demarcation, that you cannot grasp because it is so very fine, it is so difficult to say where virtue terminates and vice commences. In the next world—all go there—those who have been moderately good and moderately evil; and those who have been positively good and positively bad, but they are there not mixed up as here; for in the spiritual world the law governing the spiritual man is that like associates with like. This being so, you will find innumerable societies of individuals over in the world of spirits; you will find that those who follow certain pursuits will congregate together; those of different degrees of morality and virtue will all be found in their proper societies, and residing within their defined sections and localities.

A word here now as to what is the punishment of vice, and what is the reward of virtue. There is an old proverb, which we are generally inclined to quote, and it is to this effect: "Virtue is its own reward." How many of you can say that you are amply content and satisfied with the consciousness of having done a good action, and are utterly regardless of that action being made known? We are sadly afraid that there is a great deal of ostentation connected with the doing of good. It may gratify the vanity of the good-doer, but it would seem to us to be more in harmony with the principles of a good life if the good were done in quietude, and the good-doer "blushed to find it fame." What reward do you want for your goodness? Do you want to be lifted into "the chief seats in the synagogue," decked with a crown, vassals to obey you, thousands to worship you? Do you want to be the centre of a faction, because you lived a life here the best you could? If so, fie on your virtue, fie on your nobility and goodness! It is only the means for the acquisition of power, which, on the part of its possessors, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, generally ends in the oppression of those beneath them. If virtue be of the proper nature, it will be like that referred to by the philosopher when he said "Virtue, when practised, must act on the life of the individual, and produce a virtue internal;"—and that internal action is in itself the best and greatest and only reward man has a right to expect for doing what good he was designed to accomplish. Compensation in this light is reaction.

Thus development and expansion constitute one of the rewards man is blessed with in this world. But suppose that in this life your efforts had been misunderstood, your purposes destroyed, and all your disinterestedness given to the wind, yet you still laboured on to accomplish the purpose before you and guided by Providence you have succeeded; when you pass to that world where the scales fall from men's eyes, where you see plainly, face to face with the good and true, they recognise to the full the disinterestedness of your past efforts, shower their love and sympathy upon you, and put you in the way of attaining to the higher life, and of reaching out to the things yet beyond you.

Compensation, then, is the great law of spiritual reward. If this be true, what shall we say of those who consciously and voluntarily pursue the paths of evil? If reaction be true in the case of virtue, so in that of evil; just in proportion to the depth and blackness of your iniquities, so will be the amount of reaction on your own souls when you pass into the next world. How many of you who perhaps have had it in your power to do a good action have rather chosen to do a bad one? Little by little increases, and much becomes more, and more becomes vast. So easy to do a little action, either good or bad, and if it be a good little action, that little can be increased, till at last the practice of virtue becomes easy and pleasant. It is also easy to begin evil actions, and that which was difficult at first becomes

customary and seems pleasant; and, at last, retribution is waiting, like a sword hung over your head, to strike the fatal blow. Think, then, before you do an evil action, that the reaction of that action shall be as great in extent as was the act itself.

Again, more intimately to consider the point, what is the destiny of the good and bad in this world of spirits? let us inquire if the evil are eternally doomed to a state of bondage, and the good for ever kept in that bright state of goodness they enter into at first. If that were so, the whole scheme of existence would be a failure. We repeat that if the precise condition that the individual enters into at first in the spiritual world were for ever maintained, the mighty scheme of existence would be a failure. Progress, life, energy,—these are the characteristics of the world wherein you live, and of your own natures as well. You are always living in the future, not so much in the present; you are now enjoying the past which was once to you the future. Progress, activity, life, energy,—these are the underlying vital characteristics of the future life of the spirit, and are as real and solid as the granite rock. They are not lost because the spirit has been disembodied; it has not lost a single attribute; not a single portion of its self-consciousness has been annihilated. Therefore progress must be the destiny of the disembodied. Then it may be when the reaction of vice has fulfilled its purpose, and the individual been purged and purified through sorrow and suffering, that it shall be free to come out of the darkness, away from the lands of trial and despair, into the pleasant highways of peace and purity. The action and reaction of virtue being existent facts in the next world, reaction of the virtuous dead shall cause an unveiling of the faculties, and lead the individual to aspire to greater heights, to grander flights of usefulness and activity. Then every day is enjoyed, every soul realises its own powers, and feels that the more it knows of the mechanism of life, the better it is able to worship and understand the fatherhood and presidency of God.

The destiny of all souls in the world of spirits is progression; due punishment, and only due punishment, is administered, and that self-inflicted, by virtue of the fact that every law that you seek to violate brings down upon your own head the punishment due.

Evidently the world has hitherto been ignorant as to the nature of the spiritual world, and the condition of its inhabitants; in the light of the argument used this evening, which is simply that of the Spiritualist, a definite and rational conception is produced. Put the two side by side, the indefinite and vague conception floating through the world, and the rational philosophical conception we have placed before you, and we ask you to accept or reject either as it seemeth best to you. It will be asked, What proof is there that what we have said is true? There are several millions of human beings who profess that they have received communications from supermundane sources, that these spirits are

in reality the disembodied persons, the people who once inhabited human bodies; and from these intelligent communicants all, substantially, that we have stated to-night has been communicated to the world. The evidence of scientists and philosophers, writers and speakers, has been given to the world confirmatory of these facts. The millions of people commonly called Spiritualists have taken the matter in hand also; and in all ranks of society, from the very humblest to the most exalted, the bright thread of spiritual communion can be traced, and you can receive evidence that spiritual communication has been received by all classes of the civilised community; and if concurrent testimony be of any value, especially when fortified by great names and powerful intellects, we should certainly say that a very fair case indeed, *prima facie*, has been made out in favour of all we have urged in relation to the existence, the nature, and the condition of the spirit-world.

We leave, then, the argument to the consideration of our friends; we have dealt with the question "Concerning the spiritual world, and what men know thereof" to the best of our ability. It may, of course, be possible that we have not satisfied the requirements of many, but we have done our best to cover the whole ground, and can only feel that the patient hearing you have given us is some evidence at least that we have not been without success.

TRANCE ADDRESSES BY J. J. MORSE.

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