



Practical Spiritualism.

A COURSE OF LECTURES
THROUGH

J. J. MORSE, Editor of "The Banner of Light,"

To a Class of Spiritual Students in
San Francisco, Cal.

With a Preface by William Emmette Coleman.

(Copyrighted 1881.)

SIXTH LECTURE.

The Soul World: Its Hells, Heavens, and Evolutions.

(Continued from last week.)

What is the cause of the obliquity of vision which so changes all these transcendent glories we described a moment since? The difference is this: You looked through eyes unclouded; you looked through your better thought and nature; while he sees but through his own disordered and demoralized thought and feeling. The fairest flowers do not attract his gaze, the verdant hills and luxuriant valleys are bare and barren, the trees are stark and naked, the musical and crystal streams are but turbid waters. When the mind is unattuned to the beauty and glory of nature and the harmonies of God, then all of being is bare and bleak and dreadful, and your fellow creatures seem like foes and vile. People in this condition are mentally and spiritually demoralized for the time being, out of order with nature, and out of relationship with God; or, as you would say, psychologically insane, and see existence not as it is, but in the light of their own perverted states. Reflection, however, at last penetrates through the obscuring mists of their disordered minds. Why are they here? Is the spiritual life a natural life, if the Soul World is for every one and all, why do they come here? they ask themselves. The answer is that they are brought there unknowing to themselves by a power superior to their own, and being there are literally held there. How so? Some things in the spirit-world are done much better than they are done among yourselves, and this is one of them. Sometimes the absurd idea of the liberty of the individual is carried to too great a length among yourselves, and results most disastrously; for it is not right that the untrained and the ignorant and the vicious should have the same absolute liberty and freedom in the community in which they move as the virtuous and the good. This is a problem we suggest to you for your own consideration. You have to protect yourselves against them; and that protection carried one step further might restrain within well-defined limits, and make you realize the fact that those out of relationship with the best conditions, and the best form of human society, should be legitimately restrained by those wiser and better than themselves.

In this very Hell we are speaking of this law holds good. The wise and philanthropic spirits, the great and the good, through all their tributary and subordinate agencies, exercise control. They bring in, from time to time, men and women, youths and maidens, within whom they see the possible development, this sprouting to life, so to speak, of their several natures,—they are brought within the magic circle, shall we say, within the spiritual sphere belonging to this locality,—and the general influence of the protecting minds makes a wall around this place that these feeble wills are utterly incapable of passing through. They meet a barrier; what it is they cannot tell, but they are conscious of a superior force, the character of which they cannot define.

There they are kept until this sphere of influence gradually penetrates their thoughts and infuses itself into their minds, stimulates their moral character and quality, and develops their latent possibilities into action. Then, as the mind becomes orderly, as the soul comes into right relationship with the spiritual surroundings that belong to it, in the place where they are, behold, they begin to see the sunshine; blades of green grass begin to take the place of barren soil they have seen so long; the very trees begin to put forth their leaves again, and the turbid waters seem to move with a quicker motion. Little by little the beauty of the scene begins to unfold itself. You may take it from us, that the more of beauty you can see in your external surroundings, the more of beauty is there developed within yourself. So as these disorderly minds become adjusted and reduced to due relationship, to the conditions with which they are surrounded, behold their mental and moral natures begin to assert themselves, and their intuitions and aspirations begin to make music in their happy souls; little by little they begin to realize that the Hell in which they lived was a great Sanitarium, a great Health College, where under salutary moral influences they have been gradually brought out of the Hell that the disorderly conditions of their past life created within themselves.

Thus the hells of the Soul World are educational, reformatory, spiritually and morally hygienic, so to speak. These only are brought into them in whom it is seen the harmonies and germs of goodness are beginning to sprout; and these being thus treated are by degrees brought into active relationship with those who instruct and surround them, their special adaptations and qualifications are discovered, and they are in time transferred to other educational places, where these qualities can be nourished and developed into health and activity. Thus from the lowest hells spring forth the angels we shall deal with next.

Before leaving the hells and their inhabitants there is another peculiar point we would like to impress upon you which concerns the souls living therein, for in many cases they appear to grow worse after they have passed into the spiritual world. You must remember that there is in every one of you a certain amount of disorder, disease of body, obliquity of mind, and perversion of moral

consciousness,—all of which are potent elements of evil and wrong-doing. If you cannot exhaust the germs of these things while you are living in this world, if they are not expelled by the superior moral faculties and intellectual and spiritual development while here on earth, then will they cling to your mental sphere and effect their out-working when you get into the spiritual world. Do not, though, for one instant construe the argument that every man has so much wickedness, therefore he has got to be wicked to get rid of it, and thereby excuse the wickedness of yourself or your neighbor. Nothing of the sort is here involved. There is this possible misdirection in you all, but its true and legitimate expulsion is through developing more and more of the spiritual attributes, which is your duty here. If you do not get rid of this possible element of degradation while here, then it will have to exhaust itself in the spiritual world; and apparently it will result in your becoming much worse after death than before. The end comes at last; the period of reaction asserts itself. At such times some gentle brother, from one of the great benevolent Brotherhoods who have charge of these hells we have just mentioned, is able to take you, unconsciously to yourself, and place you in one of the Sanitariums we have portrayed, and in the end effect your purification.

But come with us to fairer scenes, if possible; though surely we may say this scene is fair enough,—for wherever the doing of good to your fellows is involved, there shall we find beauty and sweetness, and something akin to the beneficence and love of God himself is there.

We come, then, to what, for convenience' sake, we will call the fairer scenes of the Soul World, where the souls of men are supposed to be basking in everlasting felicity, where eternal sunshine reigns supreme, where happiness, pleasure, and joy are perpetual. "Yes," you will say, "one would like to find that such things were true, one would like to discover such things after death; if we could only enter there and enjoy all the beatitudes of such a condition, how happy should we be for the change!" At first you will not find such things; the everlasting and eternal sunshine is a dream that we do not think you will realize for ages yet to come; the alternations of joy and sorrow, of shade and sunshine, of hope and fear, of success and failure, are necessities to the immortal soul for ages yet to be,—and in these heavens there will be no one uninterrupted and glowing day, no unceasing tide of joy, no unvarying sunshine; the soul has to grow, man has to advance step by step and gain experience; experience brings him knowledge. But while he is gathering knowledge through experience, failures and disasters are sure to assail his progress from time to time.

Therefore the heavens will not be altogether devoid of their cares and anxieties, shall we call them, not altogether devoid of their aspects of gloom; and yet because of the germs of sweetness and order and beauty belonging to them, it shall make these as fleeting shadows passing across the path of human life,—only as a fitful cloud briefly shutting out the golden sunlight.

"What shall we find in those heavens?" What do we mean by Heaven? As Hell is within, so also is Heaven. It is no more a locality than Hell. The sense of order, peace, and righteousness, consequent upon well doing, within the breast, makes the place a Heaven; and in the Societies, Fraternities, Families, and Associations of the Soul World the pure soul lives in sweetest bonds of unity. There in that happy estate you shall find all that the souls of men desire,—all their hopes realized, all their affections ministered to, all their aspirations unfolded to the point that they have reached.

What shall be the evolutions that arise from the heavens and the hells we have just referred to?—for one might truly say that the heavens are the evolution of the hells; indeed, when we take life right through, in every case do we find that each ascending stage is an evolution from the stage that preceded it. What then is beyond these heavens? When the minds and souls of men grow strong enough they plume themselves for flight to higher regions, and all the conditions of disorder and inharmony disappear from the realms belonging to their existence on the planes described; all shall then be order, harmony, and peace,—and on the particular plane of spiritual existence we have been detailing, there shall be embodied within yourselves all the latent possibilities that will then have become actualities. Then, the essential principles being thus embodied within the consciousness of those who live upon that plane of life, behold the old heavens shall be rolled away as a scroll, so to speak, and those who have lived therein go to higher states still; where still nobler elements of spiritual life shall be evolved,—where what you have reasoned upon, what you have thought upon, and experimented upon, in preceding stages, shall then become actual and positive knowledge that shall be as plain and clear to you as the simplest of simple things among yourselves today. Then shall the soul unfold new powers, new qualities and orders of action,—new and stronger associations shall arise, and over all shall brood the consciousness that there is a mightier than thou, a deeper than that which hath yet been revealed or done, a grander than even you have yet dreamed of; and your search for the mystic words of wisdom, your desire to find the deeper fountain yet undiscovered, shall bubble up with renewed force and power within your souls whenever you but do and dare for the greater truths as you did and dared for the radiance and glory of that Heaven you have now attained. Then shall all feuds be stayed, all hatreds of the mind be quenched, all the discords of affection be stilled, all the differences and dissensions that ever keep the human lives and loves apart be banished forever; and the great family of humanity shall become one spiritual brotherhood of happy and united souls in the more real Soul World that lies far, far beyond the conditions of the Soul World that we have just been dealing with. Thus, briefly, we have endeavored to place before you the quality and character of the hells and the heavens, and the evolution of possible greatness and grandeur in yourselves, in the conditions of being that

will meet you after you master the first conditions of the Soul World into which you enter immediately following your departure from physical existence here.

Thus discord and harmony, as you will have learned, are the key-notes of the hells and heavens of spiritual existence; and the lesson we wish to enforce clearly upon you is, that the Divine Providence has not made one condition or state bleak and barren and wretched and miserable for those who are unhappy and in darkness and misery, and another condition of divine beauty and glory for those who are morally and spiritually progressed; but that the Soul World, like the Natural World, is a bright and beautiful world in every department, and that you see and interpret its character through the medium of the discord or harmony that resides within your own breast and is manifested in your own mind. Take this lesson to your heart, and then you will realize that as is your own character and development, so will be your interpretation of the condition of existence in which you happen to be situated.

Now, let us withdraw you from this fair world to the realms of mortal being again, leaving its glory and its beauty as a memory bright and pleasant to linger within your thoughts,—coming down from these Brotherhoods, these Families and Fraternities, from these noble and philanthropic hearts, so that you may again be practical dwellers in mortal life; and as the curtains roll behind you, as you retire from the glory that lies behind them and again tread the terrestrial fields, oh! remember but a thin veil hangs between yourselves and that world from which in mind you have now returned; that, if you wish to enter into the calmer heavens over there, see that heavenly conditions are unfolded within your lives and breasts while here on earth. Remember also that surely you shall find an entrance into the hells that lie beyond, as a consequence of the discords in your natures now.

Strive, then, to reduce all discords to harmony,—purify yourselves from all unclean thoughts, desires, and deeds,—lift your natures up to the highest plane of personal application, morally and spiritually; live so purely before the world that, like the brightest silver, if but a breath rests upon it, it vanishes ere the stain can fairly be said to have been seen. Keep your hearts so purged, your souls so pure and sweet, that no stain can ever rest upon them; and when you die, when you pass through the mystic portals into the Soul World beyond, then shall you be fitted to enter into some of its heavenly associations by having a heavenly condition already developed within yourselves,—and that shall measurably assist you to come under the influence of that greater and grander evolution that we have suggested as possible for the inhabitants of the Soul World beyond.

SEVENTH LECTURE.

Life, Development, and Death in Spirit-Land.

When you remember that life for the inhabitants of the spirit-land means an eternity of life, and that the argument is an unending existence, you may naturally inquire, Is it possible that the bodies of the people living in the immortal world shall continue to maintain their structure and their functions for such an enormous duration? There is, of course, to the majority of people living on the mortal plane, the idea of friction, waste, and consequent decay, as being facts they are familiar with in association with material bodies,—and it will be urged that if there are functions and activities associated with the spiritual bodies there must necessarily be friction, waste, and decay in connection with those bodies; and while people may, in a certain sense, be able to grasp the conception of the eternal duration of those bodies, they certainly are unable, in the great majority of cases, to dispense with the supposition of friction, waste, and decay, as previously stated. That these are factors in all organic structures on the mortal plane is self-evident. Have they to be considered in regard to the organic structures of the spiritual plane? and if so, what are the means whereby that waste is repaired, and that friction reduced to the lowest minimum? These are deep questions, and asked in vain of the usual and accepted authorities upon such subjects.

Now the development of the spiritual personality in the spirit-life is also another important question; for if there be a development there must either be an expansion of existing materials or an aggregation thereto,—for the development must either proceed from within or be the consequence of additions from without. It matters little whether it be development of soul or mind or body, the law must hold good in either case,—and if one case, in all cases; and the solution will have to be sought as to where is the source of the means of the possible development of the individual inhabitant of the spiritual world.

We will also, as another interesting speculation, ask the question, If the duration of the personal existence in the spiritual world is eternal, and the development of the individual is eternal also, may there not come a time when the personality of the individual will have grown so enormous in proportions as to be practically unwieldy? When we introduce the speculation we have to deal with, the possibility of death in the spiritual world, a wave of fear and sadness may, as it were, roll over your spirits,—a chilling blast may seem to sweep across the eager buds of your aspiring natures; and you may say, if we have to face the grim monster again after passing through mortal death, then the exchange has advantaged us but little! Yet having realized that death in your mortal conditions is only a stepping-stone to a larger life, and having gained the confidence of victory in one case, the assurance of victory in all cases where a like experience is to be encountered may almost be counted upon as certain. If existence in the higher life leads you to higher powers and the exercise of greater ability, it follows that every seeming obstacle in your path will grow less powerful the more exalted you become yourselves.

Life in the spirit-land means several things as associated with the individual. It means spiritual life, mental

life, personal life; for you must bear in mind that the inhabitants of the spiritual world are just as much beings, persons, men and women, as are yourselves; that they are endowed with the machinery for the expression of intelligence, just the same as humanity; that they, any more than yourselves, have not yet reached a plane where they are able to express intelligence apart from organization. Now this is a most important fact to be considered. You must bear in mind that in all cases the exhibition of force is dependent upon an agency for a manifestation. It matters not what the ultimate expression may be, the agency is the thing contended for; and as intelligence, as a force in man's personal nature, is dependent upon an agency for its expression, you must have in spirit-land, as here, an organization,—and this organization is the agency for the expression of your intelligence, and the manifestations of the inherent powers of your immortal entity. Then the existence of this organization, the reparation of its waste, the reduction of the results of its friction to its lowest possible minimum, are questions fairly and legitimately before us for consideration.

Here it follows that the spirit-body being upon a higher plane than the mortal body, its functional operations will involve another set of laws, and those laws will be upon the higher plane, as is the body they are associated with; and whereas there are certain processes that are absolutely necessary in the material life, their counterparts may be accomplished by other methods and higher laws than those by which they are accomplished while you are living here on earth. The processes of physical existence may be thus summarized:—

You consume food; the heat and chemical action in the various organs of digestion reduce the food to its component elements, which elements are distributed to the various portions of the system. Through the various activities there is a waste of tissue, and this expenditure is repaired by the liberation of the essential elements or forces of the foods or substances which, being absorbed into the human organism, sustain and repair it. Therefore, ultimately, it is the forces of nature that sustain the human organism; and the process whereby you reach these forces is the process of destructive assimilation, as expressed in the digestion of human food. This is apparently a roundabout process, you will say. It is particularly fit and proper for the plane of life upon which it operates, and it would be improper and inadequate and utterly unfit if applied to beings living upon a higher plane than that you at present occupy. But if the question of assimilated forces on the lower plane has to receive attention, why should not also be considered the assimilation of forces upon the higher plane? If the elaboration and absorption of forces is the means whereby reparation is accomplished here, may it not also be that upon the higher plane a similar process is also involved? and if so, shall it not be further accepted that the means whereby, this result is obtained upon the higher plane shall be a higher method, as compared with the method you depend upon in this world? If we accept the position that the organization of the spirit-body and its processes are to a certain extent a duplicate of the material organization, then the question becomes a point of interest as to what use the duplicates of the great organs of the interior of the system subserve, what are their counterparts in the spiritual personality, and how are their functions accomplished there. If we take the duplication of the organism as a spiritual fact, and that it contains within itself the spiritual counterparts of most of the organs you are familiar with in the human physiology, then we have to assure you that that internal organism becomes, as it were, a species of battery, a collection of cells or sacs,—whereby in the peculiar structure and formation of the spirit-body the essential forces of the spiritual realm are extracted, and are sent on their mission for absorption into, and the consequent maintenance of, ethereal organizations that constitute your bodies there; that instead of the grosser fluids of the material organization, the etherealized electricities and magnetisms of the spiritual world are the circulating mediums in the spirit organization.

Now the operations of the spiritual physiology, shall we call it, to use a term to convey the idea clearly to you, necessarily involve the expenditure of force, just the same as the operations of your earthly body, when, having exhausted its forces in the accomplishment of any particular object, they have to be recruited and restored by means of the forces elaborated and distilled by the digestive and assimilative agencies of the system from the food consumed; so in the spirit body, corresponding processes are necessary to distill the elements and forces that are needed to establish and maintain health and action in the spirit beings. Now this necessarily demands not only the expenditure of force, but may possibly involve the expenditure of substance as well, and this substance has to be again supplied; for the structure has to be continually built up and sustained, as well as its depleted forces restored,—which, when the needful processes are duly fulfilled, is satisfactorily accomplished and the structure sustained.

(Continued next week.)

Love alone can transform that which we do like into something more to our liking, but we must do the loving to effect the transformation. Love does not find fault with the imperfections of persons, but it tries to help them to become perfect. . . . All things and thoughts move in orbits; whatever we send out returns in kind to the sender in ever increasing quantity. . . . Any form of affection, whether it be for human beings, animals, or objects, makes the being better and more refined. The affection and respect we have for all that, daily, come within our sphere of consciousness is the "love of God," for Deity comprises all and is the life of all. There can be no love apart from God.—The World's Advance-Thought.

