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NO. 13

IF SPIRITS DIE.

William Brewster.

If spirits die—then all we have is dream.
A foolish fantasy—things that seem.
And we are shadows in deceitful light.
The prey of darkness and swift-coming night.
For vanished soon is 'em the noonday gleam!

Why then allured with any shining beam.
Why think of any hope as still supreme.
It all will come to naught and loss and blight—
If spirits die.

For such a world we needs must lose esteem
And it is barren with such prospects dim.
And turned from life with shudder of afright.
Crushed to the dust with such appalling sight.

Since thought could come from all earth's scheme—
If spirits die!

The Spiritual Rostrum.

Joe Robertson.

An Address given by Mr. James Robertson to the Members and Associates of the London Spiritualists' Alliance in the April 12th, 1905, in the Salon of the Royal Society of British Artists, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall. Mr. H. W. Whitall, Vice-President of the Alliance, in the chair. Reprinted from Light.

Mr. Robertson, who was received with loud applause, said: Buckle, in one of his posthumous essays, has said, "Belief in a future state is one which, if eradicated, would deprive most of us to despair," and that "the expectation of it is the prop and mainstay of life"; and yet, amidst a waning belief in the actuality of another life, every effort is made to weaken or deny the evidence which could place that belief amongst those things about which we have absolute certainty; for Spiritualists lift the question as to a life after bodily death out from any region of conjecture, and establishes it upon the firm ground of ascertained fact.

This, no doubt, is a profound claim to make, but the accumulated proofs are so sweeping that we are entitled to proclaim that a future life has been demonstrated.

For nearly sixty years Spiritualism has been freely talked about, and almost everyone has seen something in print regarding it. Still the great outside world is never sincerely stirred to come into close touch and investigate the phenomena which reveal that our departed friends have been by collaterally communication and those who have ventured to criticise persist in viewing the subject from a distance, instead of pursuing our literature, or comparing their experiences with our assertions.

Fifty years ago a number of notable people were aroused by the reports concerning D. D. Home, the controversy with Sir David Brewster, the conversion of Robert Owen, and a variety of other episodes which were chronicled in the public Press. Being interested, they made their own inquiries, were moved by what they heard and saw, with the result that prejudice and doubt were dissipated. The conversion of these prominent people, however, did not create the enthusiasm one would naturally have expected.

These adherents of the new movement accepted, in all sincerity, the manifestations which came under their notice, as to them they could bear only one interpretation. The voice, speaking through the entranced medium, claimed to be, once upon a time, an earth-dweller, and proved his claim by collateral evidence which was completely satisfactory. There were raps and, and table tiltings, revealing personality. Again, bodily forms were seen, with the presence of the departed, and writings were presented bearing the seal of their spiritual origin. Such absolute proof was furnished of the two worlds being brought into close contact, that George Herbert's words were realized.

"Man is one world, and hath
Another to attend him."

The brave Dr. Eliotson, who had battled and suffered for his advocacy of the then unpopular mesmerism, heard and saw sufficient to dissipate the materialistic ideas which had formerly ruled his life. Robert Owen, after years of research in the realm of objective Nature, as depicted in his work, "The Natural History of the Vestiges of Creation," caught new life and inspiration from his communion with the spirits, and ever afterwards expressed his gratitude for the vision granted him. Robert Owen, after all his wanderings, found in Spiritualism the truth he had missed, the great factor which works continually for human improvement. And this large-hearted philanthropist finished his earthly career with the full knowledge that the better day, for which he had so long striven, had at last dawned. His gifted son, Robert Dale Owen, who at first had mourned for his father as one caught in the meshes of a miserable superstition, had his own eyes opened; and we have the fruit of his discovery in those ever valuable volumes, "Footfalls in the Boundary of Another World," and "The Debatable Land."

George Eliot thought so highly of Robert Dale Owen's rationalism, that when she heard he was an investigator, she said, "he was the one person capable of entering on such an inquiry without the drowning of his common-sense." Cromwell Varley, the eminent electrician, was extremely enthusiastic—he had received such abundant tests of spirit presence that he would not be silenced. Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall were alike certain that what they had heard and seen could only be accounted for by admitting the presence of their ascended friends. Mrs. Catherine Crowe, Westland Marston, and William and Mary Hewitt were amongst the most pronounced disciples of the new Gospel. Elizabeth Barrett Browning was so strongly moved by the reality of the facts that she bravely bore the sneers of husband and friends, and nothing could affect her strong belief; in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Note Books," in Mary Russell Mitford's "Letters," in Frances Power Cobbe's "Autobiography" one meets with continued references to what was considered her foolish devotion to Spiritualism.

These noble adherents stood faithfully and consistently by the new truth, believing that to withhold such knowledge from their fellows was an act of cowardice. They braved all opposition, because they knew the world needed the revelations of Spiritualism, and that antagonists were actuated by blind prejudice due to antecedent dogma. Speculative in thought in other spheres, the foundation upon which they stood as Spiritualists had no relationship to the speculative, but consisted of objective realities which no arguments could undermine. In every course, their stations were regarded another life, to a man fettered by religious convictions, could only be characterized as delusions. He could perceive nothing in the mechanism of the material Universe, or the laws of nature, which were not in accordance with another life, to a man fettered by religious convictions, could only be characterized as delusions. He could perceive nothing in the mechanism of the material Universe, or the laws of nature, which were not in accordance with another life, to a man fettered by religious convictions, could only be characterized as delusions.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Dr. Carpenter came forth with his theory of "Unconscious Creation," which has about as much relation to the subject as Free Trade has to biology. Professor Tyndall, who was no doubt quite honest in his opposition, recoiled from all narrow and uncharitable suppositions. He wrote in a very interesting but unbalanced style as follows: "Men of science would sell all that they have for a glimpse of the phenomena which are mere trifles to the Spiritualists." The dogmatism which he lavished upon others was manifested in all his utterances on this subject, for the man of science need give nothing, beyond the inspiring mind, free from prejudice, with which he credits his own. The beginning of knowledge is surely the rejection of any prejudice! The onslaughts that were made upon them did not weaken the faith of the believers in the least, who only served to endear the subject to their hearts.

Some years ago the old form of opposition changed. There arose a new school of critics, who did not call themselves opponents. They even went so far as to say that there was a shade of truth in our assertions, but that we were bereft of the necessary ability to estimate the true meaning of the phenomena; our eyes were out of focus; we lacked the proper scientific training; we had a sneaking kindness for mediums; frauds; and what we needed above all other things was education and guidance! There came then the second class of theosophists with their philosophy of fog, and next the Psychical Researchers. We were sometimes patted on the back and pointed to the medium opened up, which we should approach the occult realm! Our hopeful and consoling faith was tabooed and discredited by those who used this patronizing tone. They sought to discount the memory of the melodious days when we sat and talked with people from that other world, and endeavored to drive us back amidst dark clouds and confused thought. We were not to trust our unaided faculties of sight and reason, but should accept the blessed word "Shells," "Telepathy," or the "Sub-conscious Mind" as being the true elucidations of what we had stupidly called Spiritualism. Experiences. The strenuous which had been reaped by real research and wise thought, they sought to undermine, but there came not any accession of strength, or the least glimmer of new light from these clever conglomeration, merely a haze of distracting doubt, and we were left to exclaim with the gifted Goethe, "If you have any faith, give me for heaven's sake a share of it. Your doubts you may keep to yourself, for have plenty of your own!"

An American writer has said regarding Nathaniel Hawthorne: "I think it one of the happiest circumstances of Hawthorne's training that nothing was excluded to him, and that there was no profoundly intellectual person in the family to usurp the place of Providence, and supplement its shortcomings, in order to make him what he was never intended to be!" Our borderland friends have been seeking to engulf him in the whirlpool from which Hawthorne escaped, but like him, we would prefer to be left alone. They have concentrated attention on the trivialities, but ignored the commanding evidence we possess. I have been perusing Theosophical and Research literature with an open mind for many years, and at odd moments I have felt that I was about to enter upon a rich vein of knowledge, but some of the friends of theosophy, who have reached the plane of accuracy, have been so helpful. In the words of an old proverb, "I heard the sound of the millstones, but never saw any mill!" The full-fledged Theosophist has been little affected by the plethora of theories that have been offered to him; yet some good people have been perplexed by them who might otherwise have reached the plane of accuracy. Sir David Brewster, when he was faced to face with some startling facts, declared that spirit was the last thing he would give in to, and there are many others like him. Let some of the friends of theosophy which the other world will be disproved, and all outsiders who have seen nothing of the subject will applaud.

It is sometimes said that those theosophists are gradually coming over way, that they get closer to us year after year. But if it be true, we cannot be grateful to those who place obstacles in our path, even though, by their aid, they are able to report their faith. We do not want people who persist in taking a roundabout journey to a given place when there is a shorter way in sight. We are not content to see our spiritual life, and especially grateful when we meet a genuine Researcher, who falters and stumbled along for years, is at last able to speak about the reality of the future life. Even then he occasionally doubts, and his confidence is shaken, because he has been misled by the phenomena of Spiritualism.

As Spiritualists, we ought to express our convictions in the outspoken way that characterized the Edmonds and Owens, and how we are glad to see people who are firm on this point, and should banish all speech of an evasive character. It is positive affirmation of the spiritual facts, and the spiritual facts are so plain and so simple, and so easily grasped by every man, woman, and child, that we are certain that spirit people return to earth, we are firm on this point, and should banish all speech of an evasive character. It is positive affirmation of the spiritual facts, and the spiritual facts are so plain and so simple, and so easily grasped by every man, woman, and child, that we are certain that spirit people return to earth, we are firm on this point, and should banish all speech of an evasive character.

Mr. Andrew Lang, who so warmly can leave the subject alone, seems to have taken an example from Sir Walter Scott, who forced the occult in an exactly similar way in his "The Monastery." Mr. Grant, of Lazzaro, an old friend of Sir Walter's, once wrote of him: "I have never seen Sir Walter so happy as in keeping entirely clear of the occult." I am pretty confident he has a glimmering belief in it, though not the courage to own it. We need something else to our ordinary generalization, and Sir Walter Scott, who forced the occult in an exactly similar way in his "The Monastery." Mr. Grant, of Lazzaro, an old friend of Sir Walter's, once wrote of him: "I have never seen Sir Walter so happy as in keeping entirely clear of the occult." I am pretty confident he has a glimmering belief in it, though not the courage to own it.

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It is refreshing to turn to the pointed speech of Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace. He of all men has penetrated to the root of the matter, and caught the true meaning of Spiritualism. He has found a key which unlocks some mysteries of life and being, and the knowledge is so precious that he will have no misunderstanding regarding his platform. When Mr. Harold Brierley, as reported in the "Pall Mall Magazine" of September last, began to question him in the usual language of Researchers regarding spiritual matters, Dr. Wallace said: "We were once afraid of Spiritualism? I am a Spiritualist, and am not the least frightened at the name." When Mr. Brierley further asked if we were likely to get the existence of Spirit, and the persistence of consciousness beyond the grave, Dr. Wallace bluntly affirmed that those points were already established.

Theosophists and Psychical Researchers, when in our company, would call themselves our friends and allies, but when away from us they seem to set rather as rivals and enemies. We unhesitatingly admit much of what they say, but we do not follow them, though we cannot help thinking that their system of handling these matters makes what was plain a M. obscure, and further, we declare that it is Spiritualism, which throws light on all the problems which they deal with.

Our position is strong and secure; our evidence points clearly to the fact that spiritual beings are in actual relationship with this world. While we recognize that there are immense and untrodden fields yet to explore, we are not going to ignore and shut out those spirit people whose enlarged experience will help us in the work of exploration. It is true that Mr. F. W. H. Myers ended his long inquiry with an affirmation in favor of Spiritualism, but we want vital beliefs to be strongly and clearly expressed. Only lately, in Glasgow, a popular clergyman, dealing with Mr. Myers' volumes, said that he (Mr. Myers) had revealed the plane of assurance regarding immortality, after he had cast aside all the delusions of the Spiritualists; either Mr. Myers was too vague and qualified in his conclusions, or the clergyman had not read the volumes intelligently. We desire to refute the charges both that we are too credulous, and that we follow delusions. Many of us were entirely sceptical as to any other state of existence until we met with facts which were irrefragable. Even yet we are prone to doubt and deny phenomena which may not have come under our own individual observation, we do not give ready welcome to the manifestations we hear about from others, and cannot imagine that anyone has reached a higher plane of knowledge than we ourselves have traversed. Of course, there are in our ranks ill-balanced and credulous people who, having once believed nothing new believe everything. The usual tendency, however, has been to deny what we personally have not seen or heard. I say this to show how we have been misinterpreted in being called credulous visionaries.

So long ago as 1856, Theodore Parker, the great American preacher, said that Spiritualism had more evidence than any historic fact of religion, and, noting the many writings of Andrew Jackson Davis, said that with Spiritualism "inspiration was open to all."

Spiritualism has given the only true key the world has had to the meaning of the word Inspiration. Never before did we really understand the mystery of the infowing of thought until mediumship supplied us with the missing link, a perfect Rosetta Stone. We had no need of scepticism, but no straight and clear speech which we could grasp. Wordsworth might say:

"And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused—
Whence depths of feeling that have not
Before reached the soul."

When we looked at the heading, we found it was set down as a poem of the "Imagination."

John Jacques Rousseau tells us in his "Confessions," how, before he entered upon his literary career, he was witness to the return to Paris, when a rush of thought came upon him regarding what he said:

"If ever anything resembled a sudden inspiration, it was the movement which began in my mind, and which I have since called by a thousand sparkling lights, crowds of vivid ideas thronged into my mind, with a force and confusion that threw me into unexpressed agitation. I felt my head throbbing in a dizzying confusion, a violent pulsation oppressed me. I sank under one of the trees, and if I could have written out all the contractions of my soul and system."

The literature of the world abounds with records of similar experiences, which are not understood except by explanation. Spiritualists affirm that John Milton may say that we have not to suppose that there was any miracle wrought on Rousseau by celestial or any other outside agency, and that a subjective something produced it, but in saying this he does not throw any light on Rousseau's experience. It is colorless and ambiguous, and cannot satisfy those who have felt the affluence poured upon them, which pointed to some external cause. It is to trace and investigate mediumship that we have to look for the real solution.

Do not the following words, expressed by a spirit through a medium, when under personal control, shed some light on the subject?

"Of late, I spent a long midnight day
With Theosophists, and I have heard
Upon his brow, and sensed my spirit breath.
Wordsworth was with me, that calm, subtle
Sweet thought, as fragrant as the new
He knew not that the infidel Rousseau
Bent over him, and was a courier
Of truth; flowers to male intellectual brow."

It has been my privilege, for over a quarter of a century, to come into the closest touch with my friends Mr. J. J. Morse, Mr. E. W. and Mr. H. H. Wallis, and other notable exponents of our people. Much as I have been drawn to them, and inspired by their public platform, there have been hours passed in my parlor where there rushed out a petulant presentation of truth in rich melodious thought which entranced and enraptured me, and on the strength of which I have walked many forty days. I have felt that the public platform hid the deep wells of living water that might be tapped, and gave but a cupful of the great ocean of truth. It is, perhaps, not wise to dwell publicly on the per-

sonalities who are behind trance speakers, but no one could come into close contact with mediums for years, as I have done, without having the most complete assurance that the "Ties" and "Standard Bearer" and "Strolling Players" and "Lightkeepers" and "Mourning" were real human souls.

The men and women whose organs of speech are used now for a certainty that those differing intelligences are not the product of any sub-consciousness, nor are they the product of any imaginative faculty. I have known these spirit people so long, have come into such close personal friendship with some of them, have received so much of real guidance and help, that to me without any germ of doubt, they are human personalities genuine helpers, coming back to earth with their messages of hope, of counsel, and of cheer. I could be affected in the least by talk about "disintegrations of personality," or "sensory automatism." They are people who exist apart from the mediums, and if I did not believe this I must bid good-bye to reason and mistrust every item of life's experience. I know in whom I have believed, and am confident that all who have had similar experiences will stand on the same platform.

I do not mean to say that all the trance speaking I have heard has been of the same intelligence and personality; but I am inclined to think, even in some cases when we are presented with what Carlyle has called "botanical moonshine," that spirits are behind the work who are either ignorant or incapable, or it may be that the receiving instrument is out of order, and the spirit cannot see the transmission is irregular.

I cannot forget my first association with trance mediumship, nor the many ladies with whom I have kept intercourse to this hour—the "White Stars," the "Messengers," the "Blackwicks," each of whom has had an individual expression, and distinct from the others. These people I knew first through Mr. Robert Duguid, perhaps a more wonderful medium than his better known brother David. I used to sit weekly with him, in my old room at 10, North Street, Glasgow, and, kindly, would another brother, Alexander, hold meetings. There I met the same spirit friends, scarcely a shade of difference, the same well-known mediums, the same identical words, only now so-called events which has transpired in the Glasgow circle were referred to as Kierkeldy, and vice versa. I have heard Mr. Alexander Duguid talk for months on persons and themes which were outside the knowledge of the normal man, and the most profound philosophy was set forth, claiming to be the speech of some angel. Mr. William Orley being present at a Joseph Prestley, or a John Stuart Mill, chapter after chapter of luminous lore delivered in the most masterly manner—and yet at other times there would come forth eloquent sentences, which could not be translated, with any matter on hand, and could only be designated as wretched drivel; but these experiences showed me that something was at fault with either transmitter or receiver.

Trance mediumship, as I have said, throws so much light on the well-worn word "Inspiration," that it does seem somewhat strange that the society who have devoted so much energy to expressing the phenomena, should be troubled themselves as to if any information could be gained from those who claim to be the recipients of thought and guidance from another realm.

There is another form of inspiration, which reveals that spirit people can use the hands as well as the lips of mortals. Automatic writing, which has been fruitful of evidence, has improved the world to the degree such startling fact should have had. The marvelous records of Stainton Moses have not been fully considered as yet. Here was a man of great intellectual endowment, cautious, reserved, and of the most practical character, who, as I have said, thought that flowed from his spirit-guided pen. No finely-spun theory of innate power possessed by him can cover the tests of spirit identity or explain away the creation of such characters as the dignified "Imperial" and others. That the messages were obtained, not by filtering through his mind and thence to the paper before him, but quite independently of his consciousness, can be readily seen by any unbiased examination. His life is worthy of the most exacting study, affording as it does the proof palpable that outside intelligences can act through the sphere of matter.

Another set of striking evidences has been furnished to the world through the instrumentality of one who has long ago settled the question of a future life in the negative. Mrs. Tindalwood, the hard-headed but most dignified agnostic, was taken possession of by spirit people in much the same way as Stainton Moses. Her hand wrote out remarkable statements, purporting to be the sentiments of persons who had done with physical life. In his case there was no religious bias that might have prompted the expectation of such messages; go negative or passive frame of mind, but a mind that had been schooled in scepticism.

(Continued on page 4.)

