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A LECTURE,

ON THE

CONDITION OF SPIRITS AND OF THE SPIRIT WORLD.

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[Phonographically Reported for the "Spiritual Reporter."]

The theme that I am to present to you this evening, is one of deep and absorbing interest. The intelligent man who designs traveling in a foreign land, turns his thoughts to that country and seeks to know all that he may of its geography, its climate, and the habits and customs of its people. He reads the accounts of former travelers, and seeks to form the acquaintance of those who have come from that country, in order that he may acquire all the knowledge that may be obtained of it.

We know, as has been said by your president, that we are all to visit and live in that unknown land of the beyond, and, hence, we grasp eagerly at the reports of its conditions which have come to us from time to time.

But, before proceeding with my lecture, with your permission, I will read a communication which I received a short time since from one whom to know, was to love and revere, and whose memory is precious to all of us, especially to those of you among whom he spent the last years of his beautiful life—I allude to our sainted and risen brother, JOHN PIERPONT. It was my privilege and pleasure to have known him intimately for the past six years, to have entered closely into communion with his soul, and to have felt the pure and living aspirations that sprang up there with all their beauty and freshness, unclouded by the crusts which age too often throws around these.

It has been my experience for some years past, at times, to see and hear spirits, and on Wednesday, the 19th of September last, just as I awoke in the morning, I saw my venerable friend standing by my side, holding a beautiful scroll. His eyes flashed with light—it seemed to be a repetition of the thrilling scene in our late convention, where the noble old man recited his "Poem in Praise of Water." No voice broke the solemn stillness. I was unable to read the words on that scroll. It was a poem, I think, in reference to his entrance into his new home. I could see the words: "The Silver Chord," "The Golden Bowl," "The Pitcher at the Well,"—but no more. The next morning, just as

"Before me at the eastern portal far,

Like a glorious herald angel stood the beauteous morning star,"

he came again. More calm was he now, and the lute-like notes of his voice fell upon my ears with their wonted music. He said: "Life is grand and beautiful, but thrice glorious and forever blessed is its crown, the resurrection. To me the stream has been continuous. I composed myself with reverend hope and trust, and a peculiarly calm and serene feeling covered my spirit, when I retired on that last Sunday night of earth; and when I awoke upon this 'far off, near shore,' it seemed but a dream to me. My first consciousness was of the presence and warm embrace of my own dearly loved companion here. Soon there stood beside me the noble form of my good father; then I perceived the face of my dear mother, in whose shining countenance was concentrated such a wealth of love and tenderness as penetrated my whole being. I had dreamed of heaven often; I had seen in the bright visions of fancy these loved ones clad in their shining robes; but this was the most real dream of them all. I had hoped to pass on without much consciousness of the change; but this was much easier and more pleasant than I had supposed the transition could be. The remembrance of the last hours of life was more real than it is in dreams, and I was forcibly impressed with this fact. Then, too, in my former dreams, when I had seen one or two spirits, they were alone; now, there were multitudes around me, some more distinctly visible than others,—the air was full of them. For a time I was wrapped in silence most profound; nothing seemed to move, save my own waking thoughts. At length, my father, bending over me, for I was lying on a beautiful couch, said, in a voice which I recognized at once as his own: 'My son, be not startled, when I say to thee that thou art now a dweller in the land of spirits! Henceforth thou wilt be with us, and, though yon bright shore is not afar off, this is thy new home, these thy own loved friends.' I listened and turned the thoughts in my mind. Was it still a dream, thought I, for I could not speak. The scene became clearer to my vision, and then came stealing upon my mind the conviction that it was real, and I began to be filled with ecstatic joy, and lost all anxiety.

"There I lay, in calm repose, drinking in the beauty of the scene, until I was roused from my pleasant reverie by a ripple from the waves of time, which had been started by the shock that my friends experienced in discovering the lifeless form which I had left so unconsciously; and this was my first realization of death. I was not troubled, though I think I should have been, had there been any feeling on my part that I was to go back again into the old familiar tenement in which I had walked so many long years, over the hills and through the valleys of life's journey.

"The first vision of earth that I had, was in the room where the old form lay. I saw it distinctly; saw my friends coming and going, and their thoughts and feelings were strangely daguerreo-

typed upon my mind. Soon, however, this vision passed away, and the friends, who stood around me here, one by one gave me a welcome greeting. I was becoming more composed and more conscious of my condition and surroundings. Troops of little children came around me, singing sweet songs, familiar tones, though far more beautiful than anything I had ever listened to before. Judge of my surprise, my friend, when I discovered that some of the words were from my own simple songs. I was still reposing on the couch, and could feel the streams of life flowing into my form, as one recovering from a spell of sickness sometimes feels a new glow of life which enables him to rise up and leave all disease. So I felt, as a youthful glow of feeling came tingling in my veins, arteries and nerves. I looked at these familiar hands; the marks and lines were all there, but they were much finer and more beautiful; still, they were mine. I struck my limbs and body, and these were mine, too. The only question which remained was, shall this condition continue? So intense was this feeling, that I was enabled to utter a few words, and I said: 'Father, will this condition continue? Where am I?' He replied: 'My son, be calm, thou hast passed over the river that men call death! Thou art now a new-born spirit! and it is needful that there should be repose for thee.' Then a holy calm descended upon my spirit, and, oh! how sweetly I rested. Visions came and fled; I grew more quiet, and listened with intense interest to the music of the little ones around me, some of whom I recognized. In this passive, composed state of mind and body I remained some time, though I know not how long, for I had no thought of time, and was losing all anxiety for the future.

"The next event of importance was, the laying away of the old casket. I was at my own funeral, saw with my eyes, as well as through those of sorrowing friends, the familiar form as it lay encoffined, heard something of what my brother said, though not all, and I may say here that I have seen a number of persons engaged in conversation from whom I could hear no sound. I saw the vocal organs move. In other cases, as with Mr. Stetson, I have been able to hear a portion of the words; while there are persons whose utterances fall upon my ears just as naturally as they did when I was in the form. Your friend, Edward, who was introduced to me very soon after I came here, and who has assisted in bringing me to you, says: 'There is a deep and profound philosophy in this. Words may be spoken from the surface, or by the lips only, and these will reach no deeper; others come from the soul depths, and will reach to a corresponding plane in those who hear them.' I received various impressions from the friends who attended my funeral, but generally they were unsatisfactory and I was glad to leave the scene.

"I had now realized the fact that I was a spirit, and all fears

that I must return were banished. One of the first disciplines of this life, as I am told, is this calm feeling, in which all anxiety to discover the conditions of our surroundings and the excitement of the novelties around us, shall not disqualify us from receiving clear impressions. I was mostly in this quiet, resting condition; and now more fully than ever realized the truth of the inspired saying that this was the place 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' There were times when I was carried into the presence of loved ones in the form, and I had been able to make them conscious of my presence, and to express a few words. But the chief object of my visit to earth friends, thus far, has been, that I might come into sympathy with their conditions and receive from each of these some peculiar elements which were needed in my present condition. I have learned, that while the spirit world holds a very near and important relation to the material world, (and it is well for you to obtain all that you can from this world,) it is also of vast importance to this world, and especially to the new-born spirit, that the relations between the two worlds should be as free and open as possible. I am told that the difficulties in the way of coming back to earth, which some spirits experience, is a very serious barrier to their progress, as they are unable to obtain that which is essential to their well-being until they can do this. The mode in which this is done is very simple: There is around every individual a peculiar atmosphere, or influence, and it is a common experience of individuals to be either attracted or repelled by every person whom they meet; or, if they are very sensitive, by the atmosphere around the person.

"I found myself conveyed into the presence of certain individuals, and soon a glowing sense of warmth and strength came to me. This was not a new experience. I had often realized something similar in my association with true men and women on earth, but never to the same extent that I do now.

"I can understand why Mr. Davis should have called this 'The Summer-Land,' for the experience of my earth-life, that approximates most nearly to my present feelings, is one that I have often recalled with pleasure, in which, beneath a tropical sun, I reposed in the cooling shade of a pleasant grove, surrounded by the magnificent floral beauty of the clime, fanned by the gentle breezes, and breathing the fragrant 'airs of Palestine.' I then felt, as I now realize, that such is heaven. I have realized a more interior meaning to many of the statements which I had accepted in regard to this home of the angels.

"Brother, I cannot give you much more at present. I am thankful for this brief opportunity. Permit me to return thanks to you, and to my spiritual friends, for the aid so freely rendered me in my search after a knowledge of this land of the hereafter;

for, feeble and imperfect as were my realizations of this, they have been of incalculable value to me."

Friends, these words of eloquence need no comment from me. I leave them for you to draw your own inferences.

It has been supposed by some that there are three spheres or conditions in the after-life. By others, and perhaps more generally, that there are seven. Jesus declared: "In my Father's house are many mansions." When we look around, and see that each individual here occupies a particular position or sphere of his or her own, and especially when we see that, as mind advances and throws off the fetters of ignorance and bigotry, this independence of sphere and true individuality manifests itself; are we not led to infer that, in the more free and advanced life of the hereafter, there will be not only seven or seventy, or seventy thousand spheres, but just as many as there are well-developed individualities—one for each human soul?

As it would be impossible to follow out the lines of demarcation which give to each one of the myriad hosts of the angel-world its peculiar sphere, we must, therefore, be content to inquire into the character and conditions of certain classes of spirits. We read in the New Testament of a place of "outer darkness," a very expressive term for the lowest conditions of spirit-life. I remember some years since visiting a poor, degraded human being, who had inherited a bad organization, and blackened it all over by vice and crimes of the deepest dye; he was in prison, and to be executed within a few hours.

I said to him: "My brother, if you are permitted to return from the unknown land to which you are going, will you come to me and tell me what your experiences are?" He replied: "I know that the Lord Jesus will never let me come back to this wicked world. I believe in him now; He poured out his precious blood, and died to save sinners like me. I know I shall go right to the Lord Jesus, and never come back to this world."

Poor man, he was psychologized by the theological magnetism, and he wrapped himself in this delusion, soon, however, to wake up to the consciousness of a terrible reality. This conversation was on Thursday. On Friday he was executed, and on the following Sunday he manifested himself by raps, at a small circle, in the presence of Mrs. Coan, Rev. T. L. Harris and a few others. After spelling out his first name, I remarked to him: "So, you have come back?" With some difficulty he replied: "No; I have not been away. They took me out of the cell where you saw me, and that was the last I remember. It seems dreadful dark, and so cold. I have seen nothing but the body of that miserable woman that I killed, and that I did not want to see."

Brother Harris, entranced, saw the spirit, described him, his dark condition and his surroundings, spoke kindly and feelingly

to him, introduced him to several spirits who were around him, and who were desirous of doing something for him, but whom he had not been able to recognize.

I have met others on this plane, whose spirituality was so utterly buried beneath the darkness of crime and sensuality, as to be totally blind to every ray of the beautiful light that bathes the Summer-Land with its rich effulgence.

I met a spirit, who told me, that, after leaving the most terrible conditions of earth, where he had become familiar with many forms of vice and crime, he found himself in the most intense darkness, with a sensation of falling with great rapidity for what appeared to him a very long period. As our ideas of time are dependent upon the succession of impressions, they must be exceedingly indefinite under such circumstances.

At length he saw a very small star twinkling in the midst of the blackness of darkness which enveloped him. Fixing his eye intently upon this star, it seemed at first to arrest his downward course, and for a time he was suspended; then slowly he began to rise and rise, and now the star grew brighter, and after a long period it opened to him a "human face divine"—it was his own loved and sainted mother. Thus was a beautiful door opened for him to escape from the regions of "outer darkness."

But among all the denizens of these lower regions of "outer darkness" from whom we have heard, no one has found anything comparable to the fabled hell of fire and brimstone,—the place of eternal torment which our theological friends consider so essential in the divine economy and in their system of religion.

As not an atom of matter on the external plane can ever be lost or escape from the universe, so not an atom of spirit, which is also matter more refined, nearer to God, can be lost.

If you can prove that an atom on either plane can be lost, then I will show, by the analogy of reason, that the universe and God Himself "shall be rolled together as a scroll" and perish forever!

But all these souls, however low they may be, belong to the common brotherhood of man, and acknowledge the one Fatherhood of God, and are acknowledged by our loving Father.

Did you ever think, when you were upon a lofty eminence, and looked down upon the earth far below you, and saw men and children and animals side by side, how little difference there was between them, how the distinctions were lost? May we not suppose that, as our Father looks down upon his children, upon the various worlds all over the universe, He will see them very much alike? We know that it is the monitor within that gives us our true measure and standard.

He may see some enveloped in mists and darkness, and others brighter; but to Him the spiral pathway of Universal Progress is clearly revealed, and He knows that all these wandering ones will

sooner or later mount its ascending steps and return with joy from all their wanderings.

I remember on one occasion describing spirits as they appeared to me, some very bright and glowing, and others very dark and repulsive, when a friend in the circle said: "Why do you say some are so bright and others dark?" and this response was given through me: "When you look upon the diamond, you see the most beautiful gem on earth's jewel-crowned brow; but what is the diamond? Carbon chrystalized; the same carbon that in other conditions present the black and repulsive charcoal. The lesson is this: the carbon of the diamond has come under the dominion of 'Heaven's first law, ORDER.' All its particles are arranged in accordance with this beautiful and divine law. So, too, of the human soul. When it comes under this law it will no longer be black or repulsive, but, like the diamond, become the brightest diadem in the coronet of Heaven." The dawn of light to these dwellers in the dark valley of shadows, comes under varied circumstances to each, sometimes much more rapidly than others, but it comes to ALL.

Passing up through various grades, measured and defined by the individual spirits, we come to the next condition, which is the children's sphere. This, as you well know, includes a very large number of persons. It is a fearful thought to realize, that not only ignorance, but the vices and crimes of civilized life, are so rapidly peopling these regions with immature and imperfectly developed human beings. So far as the victims themselves are concerned, the conditions are very different from those which we have been considering. Helpless innocence appeals always to our sympathies, and the joyous glee of these little ones, as "their white feet make music on the floor of heaven," while they are receiving those lessons which are essential to their development, is peculiarly attractive to all, except the most debased human beings, who have lost their love of little children, and perhaps the love of the mother who bore them, which loss produces the lowest depth of human degradation.

It is through this children's sphere that we must all pass to the higher conditions of active virtue and true progression. Hence, the memorable declaration of Jesus: "Except ye become as little children, ye can in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." This beautiful educational sphere furnishes a field of labor for all who pass from earth; for no one has acquired all that is to be obtained in the state of childhood on earth; and here, in teaching these little ones, we may all hope to acquire that which is needed to round us out into harmonious beings. Oh! ye fond and loving mothers, whose heart-strings were torn and lacerated when your darlings leapt up from your arms to bathe their beautiful brows in the sunlight of the celestial sphere, when the clouds of your

sorrow are dissipated so that you can see these loved ones, you will know that they are "not lost, but gone before you" into the beautiful land, where you will find a labor most congenial to your souls. And, oh! ye whose hearts beat warm with love for innocent children, know that for you there is a field wherein all these feelings will be drawn out and strengthened by exercise. Here, among these beautiful children, how is the love-nature of man drawn out in its highest and purest expressions! Many a great stalwart man, whose hard hands and rugged features and form seem to express but little of the love-element, finds the way to the softening influences of love through little children, and these will pass through this sphere in the after-life.

The next sphere in spirit-life is that which is mainly characterized by labors for physical development. It includes the sphere we have just referred to, and extends beyond it. We are entirely indebted to Modern Spiritualism for our knowledge of this sphere and its conditions. There is nothing in the records of the past, either sacred or profane, that refers to this; and yet it is one of the most interesting and important spheres that we can study. "What!" says the skeptic, "physical development in spirit-life! How absurd!" But let us look at this matter a little. All spirits report, what common sense teaches us must be a fact, that they have physical bodies, (and it is very certain that if they had not, they would not report anything to us;) these are exact counterparts of those they had in this state of being; so much so, as often to be taken for the same. They not only resemble those from which they emerge, but they partake more or less permanently of all the deformities and diseases which these external bodies are subject to. If this be true, how many perfectly-formed spiritual physical bodies pass into spirit-life? We cannot find any perfect external bodies, and the spirits tell us that they have never seen a newborn spirit that did not require considerable aid to bring him or her up to a fair standard of perfection. Our venerable friend, whose experiences I have read to you, speaks of a sense of weariness, and of needs in this direction; and where will we find another who has gone through more than four score years of earth experiences who could present such a noble and manly form as he did—so free from contamination? My first experiences in regard to this sphere were given me about ten years ago, by a very dear friend who passed into spirit-life about twenty-three years since, a loved and congenial friend, who has been one of my most intimate associates. We were pursuing our studies together here, and we have continued them since he passed on to the interior. I have seen him frequently, and have had him described by many mediums in various places. He was shorter in stature than I am, with a broad chest and large head, not at all deformed, yet not so graceful and symmetrical as some persons. He came to me, and I saw him three

times in succession; first, just as I had always seen him here, and there, too. The second time he appeared taller and more graceful. There was a symmetry to his form which was beautiful. I was at a loss to know what the change meant. I saw him the third time, and he came near and spoke to me. He said: "Do you notice the change in my appearance? I have desired for some time to present myself to you as I really am, and to explain to you the fact that in this life we are all, sooner or later, impressed with the importance of bringing our physical conditions up to the highest standard we can attain. During the twelve years I have been here, my attention has been much directed to the laws of physical development and self-culture on the physical plane, in order that I might bring myself into harmony with the highest and best laws on that plane, and thus produce that condition which would enable me to accomplish the greatest good and enjoy the highest happiness." He then related to me the fact, that many of the old philosophers, physicians and physiologists were still engaged in investigating and teaching the laws and principles involved in this important subject; and that in all cases of disease or deformity, such means were resorted to as were competent to relieve and remove *all* these. We know that physicians on earth have a large list of incurable diseases; but with spirits there are none such. All these are removed, and all defects and deformities must give place to most beautiful and harmonious conditions; not by any sudden and miraculous transformation, but by a gradual growth and unfolding of the interior principles. Friends, what a beautiful idea is this! How consoling to all! not only to the diseased and deformed, but to all their friends, as well as to every lover of humanity. The thought that we shall all grow to be perfect men and women, and not only realize that growth, but have the means of promoting it ourselves, is a very pleasant one.

One of the most revolting thoughts connected with the absurd doctrine of the resurrection of the body is, that it is very imperfect. Even the very best of these do not come up to our highest standard; and if we need finer and more perfect bodies now, how much more will we need them in that after-life, when our faculties are unfolded to realize the value of still better conditions! By this beautiful arrangement in the Divine economy we shall all have the means of supplying all these demands. This law of physical development in spirit-life is in accordance with the long-established facts of healing mediumship, in which the powers of the spirit-world are transmitted through our physical form on earth to another.

There are many other spheres—the governmental sphere, the spheres of science and philosophy, of music, etc. The poets' heaven is no myth. The character of each of these is given by those who dwell in them.

We are sometimes asked: Where is the spirit-world? Many ideas

have been entertained as to its locality. I believe that space and God are alike infinite; that there is no point in space in which you can put the point of the finest needle and not touch God; and that wherever God is, the human soul will go some time. Hence, I hold that the spirit-world is everywhere; and the reason you or I, or any other spirit, cannot go everywhere now, is because our conditions and surroundings restrain us. When a spirit tells one that the spirit-world is a belt fifteen or sixty miles around this earth, or gives other limits and boundaries to it, I may not say it is telling an untruth, but believe it is only expressing its experience. There was a time when the most intelligent persons of Europe asserted that that was the only continent, and even Columbus was looking for a passage to India rather than for a new continent. These spirits who live within narrow limits now, may discover other worlds in the coming future.

True charity, while it opens the mind to a vast and comprehensive field of thought, does not seek to denounce those who move within narrow limits. A spirit told me, through Brother Harris, that "spirits, on entering the spirit-world, soon discover that they have the power of narrowing down or immensely expanding the visible firmament which appears above and around them, dilating and contracting their vision and making the firmament, which is the boundary thereof, as small as a room, or as immense in magnitude. Spirits may thus shut themselves in from the objective scenery about them. In this manner, many enclose themselves within very narrow boundaries, seeing nothing beyond the space to which they have circumscribed their vision. Herein is perceived the first grand distinction between the natural and the spiritual states; because to a man in the body the horizon and the firmament are fixed and definite. Distances and magnitude are limited; but to spirits they are indefinite, capable of contraction and expansion." There are conditions in the after-life in which all the lofty and sublime feelings, which crown human nature with its divine character, find appropriate fields for action, but time will not permit us now to trace out these further.

Among the obstructions to early progress in spirit-life, the undevelopment resulting from ignorance and the neglect of this higher law, though very common, are not alone psychological impressions; especially those on the theological plane, when firmly imprinted on the mind, are exceedingly hard to remove, and are often effectual barriers to progress. Some years since, I was walking in a cemetery with Brother Harris, I read this inscription upon an old tombstone:

"Here lies Thomas William Gray,
Waiting for the resurrection day."

Under this were the words: "Died, 1786." Brother Harris saw him lying on the grave and said: "How do you do, sir?"

He replied: "I am patiently waiting for the sound of the trumpets and the glorious resurrection day. Do you think it will be here soon?" The medium spoke kindly to him; alluded to the delusion under which he had rested for one hundred and twenty years as a spirit; showed him that he was now alive, and all the "trumpet" that he needed was in his own soul, and if he would let that speak out, it would enable him to throw off the spell which had bound him for so many long years. I believe, as the spirit said to us, that Brother Harris was the first one who had been able to approach him and give him any consciousness of his condition. Judge of the happiness which this Robinson Crusoe, wrecked upon a barren island of theological error, must have experienced, when a means was furnished him to return to his home and friends. I have seen many spirits bound hand and foot with the fetters of theological dogmatism, so that they were in reality "spirits in prison," needing to be preached to by any, in the form or out of it, who could reach them!

One of the most interesting features in this investigation of the conditions of spirits, and the spirit-land, is, that of their motions. We know that the most universal expression of life is motion, that stagnation is death, and it is a fact that ease and grace of motion are an indication of progress in this sphere.

The finer animals—the deer, the race horse, the greyhound, and others of this class—have an influence to elevate and improve mankind, especially our children. Whereas, if you place them among swine and other gross animals, they become clumsy and awkward in their movements and expressions. I know a little girl, who, from her association with her pigs, was frequently uttering the sound, "ugh, ugh, ugh." I have seen many spirits who were unable to walk on entering spirit-life. They could only move, as they were carried or assisted by others. Then there are some who walk very well, but who cannot move in any other way.

As the spiritual body becomes more and more refined with the unfoldings of the cycles, so the motions become more easy, graceful and perfect, until, on the manifold telegraph lines of sympathy, which exist everywhere, the soul passes from planet to planet, from sun to sun, throughout the illimitable universe, with greater ease than the little humming-bird flits from flower to flower.

The laws of attraction and repulsion hold spirits as perfectly in their orbs of motion as they do the planets in the solar system. Thought, through the *will*, governs the attraction from point to point, whether it be on our earth or out into space millions of miles distant.

We are all teachers; and I am glad the term *doctor* is from *doceo*, to teach, and that we are teachers. It is well if we teach those profound and useful lessons, the fruits of which shall always

bring peace and happiness to our pupils, as well as to ourselves. In all departments of life there are practical and prominent uses which belong to both spheres.

It is sometimes said that the members of the legal profession will have nothing to do in heaven. But this profession is not to be judged alone by the low and crafty cunning of some of its members. The profound principles of law and jurisprudence are allied to eternal justice and truth, and call forth the keenest and most acute efforts of the human mind to comprehend and explain them. So, in the after-life, the study of the everlasting principles of justice and divine law of truth will be one of the most sublime occupations which can engage the attention of the aspiring soul in its onward progress. In all departments of life error is mingled with truth. In the great harvest-field of humanity the wheat and the tares grow side by side, until the time comes when the great reaper, Death, shall cut them all down. Then each one shall go to his own place, not by the judgment his fellow-man places upon him, not by the judgment of a vengeful and angry God, but by the standard of his own condition, the judgment of his own conscience, holding up the line and the plummet on him. Thus shall each one of us gravitate to that sphere for which we are adapted and to which we belong.

Knowing, then, that "as the tree falls so it lies"—for the time being—what higher and nobler incentive can we have to plume our wings for a flight into the pure regions where beauty reigns eternally, and peace and love sit enshrined on every brow, than that which comes from a knowledge of the condition of spirits and the spirit-world? Let us, then, listen and endeavor to catch the echoing notes that fall upon our ears from that "far off, near land" of beauty.