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Weekly Discourse;

CONTAINING

SPIRITUAL SERMONS

BY THE GUIDES OF

Mrs. Cora L. V. Richmond.



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A FEW PRACTICAL STATEMENTS

CONCERNING IMMEDIATE REFORM.

DELIVERED AT CHICAGO, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1887.

INVOCATION.

Infinite Spirit of all life; Thou Perfect Truth; Thou Love Divine; Thou Wisdom Ineffable; Thou Who art the light of souls, even as the orb of day is the light of days, or as the more distant sun holds worlds and systems in its keeping, so the light of Thine Infinite Love, the infinite splendor of Thy knowledge, the power of Thy wisdom must hold the universe of souls, each in the orb of its own light: unto Thee we render praises, tributes of thanksgiving, offerings for every good and perfect gift. All gifts of Thy law are perfect: the earth teeming with abundance, the skies filled with the splendor of matchless orbs moving in their spheres, the harmony of Thy law pervading all things. All gifts are good from Thee: the storm cloud expends its fury that the earth may be purified; through the earthquake's yawning mouth the safety of the world upsprings; even thus Thy children would bend to the storms of adversity; even thus when adversity overcomes them they would perceive the safety of the whole, and would understand that Thy law includes the shadow and the light. Death the great shadow of the earth is the light of eternity. They would praise Thee that beyond the darkness and pall of earthly gloom the glory of that immortal day appears, that, bereft of its terror, robbed of its sting the grave no longer enchains them; but from the bondage of earthly things they look to the light divine, perceiving the glories from within that are enthroned and enshrined above. May every heart search earnestly for that which is best, striving to overcome the shadow within each: naught keeps them from the Life Divine. May every life turn to the best; knowing that it is from the

earth that the clouds upspring; that the sun is forever luminous in the heavens, so Thy Love impelling, forever moving, uplifts all men from the storm clouds and gloom, and at last reveals the glory of the Life Divine. Amen.

DISCOURSE.

"Can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

We know of no more fitting paragraph with which to begin our remarks today than one chosen from the remarkable message of your President.

"Opportunity for safe and deliberate reform is now offered: and none of us should be unmindful of a time when an abused and irritated people, heedless of those who have resisted timely and reasonable relief, may insist upon a radical and sweeping rectification of their wrongs."

This sentence from the pen of the chief magistrate of your nation on the eve of the most important election that the nation knows, in view of the possible prejudice of that power which proves itself to be the law making power of this land, i. e., capital, shows that even in the minds of politicians something is imminent which has not presented itself before for political consideration: and that imminent state is what all men fear, and which very few are able to meet; the end of which, perhaps, only seers, prophets, and those who are quickened by the emergencies of the hour can declare with any degree of wisdom.

The power of a people free to express religious and political conviction is almost unbounded; but when that power by existing systems, for which no man or class of men may be directly responsible, is suppressed, curbed, or set aside from its original channel, it becomes a power of danger. Danger seems to be that toward which most minds are sensitive. A cry of justice heard on the mountain top, or shouted down to those in the valley, never causes the multitude to move, or change positions or expression of countenance; a cry of right heard by some one who may see with clearer vision the lines of light along the horizon may never be heeded; but when a messenger comes hurrying down the mountain side and cries danger! the multitude are moved.

Your president heeds the messenger that rushes toward you. Long ago prophets, high up on the mountains said, these things cannot go on, there is injustice somewhere. Long ago capital and labor was offered as an ethical question for man to solve if he would and be prepared for an emergency. Long ago between the trades unions and manufacturers in England questions were solved by arbitration, and something was done toward staying the impending crisis; long ago in your own country there were voices which said, these things cannot go on, sometime there will be a crisis, sometime there will be a collision between the present system of commerce, or capital, and the labor which represents, or should represent the intelligence of this republic. Now the time is here, the day and the hour are upon you. It is useless to deny it; it is useless to set it aside as incendiary and revolutionary, because your President has declared, as a politician, that which all discerning minds have seen.

Then if this is true, what are the measures of reform? How are they to be carried forward? In what manner can these wrongs be redressed, that possibly may have passed beyond the pale of normal adjustment?

The first question to be considered is that the laboring people, composing not only the bone, sinew, and muscle, but the larger basis of the intelligence of this country, have seen the necessity of uniting for protection against united

capital; the methods which they have employed are methods which capital has furnished them. Strikes are but the combined methods of labor instead of the combined methods of capital, which were previously enforced. Even the boycott, shameless as it may be, is, nevertheless, the result of the "black-list," which capital had so long employed; and the various measures to which the workmen have resorted are all measures that have been, possibly unwarrantably, but logically adopted from those who preceded them, and from that condition which oppresses them. We do not say the oppressor is in the individual mind, or in any individual man; the oppressor is in the state of commerce, the state of capital, and the permissible augmentation in monopolies of wealth. This, as said before, is not the fault of any individual, but because it is not the fault of any individual man it becomes the fault of all men who will not heed the indications of the hour, who will not acknowledge that a change is important for the interests of the country and the best interests of mankind.

When it is confessed on every hand, that from the highest department in the government to the lowest there are needed reforms; when from the civil service to the smallest municipality, it is acknowledged by politicians of all schools that there is need of sweeping reform; when it is confessed that there is a gordian knot between capital and labor that somewhere has to be cut by the wisest, and most beneficent hand; then the question is; how shall it be accomplished without that dreadful result that has usually followed or preceded every attempt at reform, i. e., violence and revolution? In the first instance, the attitude of those who constitute what are termed the highest influences in society, the press, the pulpit, the merchant, the capitalist, i. e., the attitude that the existing state of affairs is right, that he who attempts to alter it is in the wrong; and they place themselves on the dignity not only of possession, but the right of the present order of things and any one asking, aspiring, or clamoring for any different state of affairs is guilty of an impropriety, and if possible the law is so strained, construed, or made, that it shall be considered unlawful. This is always the attitude of power against weakness; unjust in a republic that should be free and open to all reform, properly adjudicated and presented before the people. This attitude has been taken in some portions of your country, while it has never been able to suppress the united voice of labor in its demands that something shall be done for the amelioration of the condition of the laboring man; and the intelligent laboring man knows what he is asking for; still it has been such as to place him in the position of the wrongdoer if he leaves his work because he considers he has not sufficient compensation for his labor, if he does it unitedly in a body it constitutes an injustice to the employer; if he combines for the purpose of seeing what methods are best to be adopted for the benefit of his kind, or the class which he represents, they unfortunately have been made a class by the conditions of this country, he is liable to be charged with conspiracy. He is made the victim of certain conditions, he is then made responsible if he attempts to alter them.

The first condition of true reform is that every man's mind shall be open to conviction. If in the wrong he shall endeavor to ascertain in what way; and if the result is an entire change in the usual order of things, better so than that the usual order of things shall go on, being wrong, and adding injustice to injury with the gradually passing generations. People seem to think that the alteration of the existing state of affairs with reference to commerce, with reference to the protection accorded certain articles of domestic manufacture, with reference to the various departments of service in the government, if carried forward

would cause great financial loss. Can there be a greater financial depression than there is when a panic occurs? Does a panic ever occur in this country that is not the result of undue financial advantages in some directions and disadvantages in others? Was there ever a panic that was not caused by some strained combinations within the ranks of capital that produced its own reaction? You have only to follow the history of your financial panics for the last fifty years to discover that each have originated in the realm of capital itself, that capital reaps the disaster in proportion to the sowing: these combinations unduly enforced and carried forward.

Now there is no demand that the laboring men could make in this country, no adjustment of their differences with manufacturers, no line of policy to be adopted in commerce, that would begin to be as disastrous as one of these sweeping panics that are the result of the transactions of the various boards of trades; still it is this power of capital that says it will be ruined if these men have their way.

In what way? Are not they a portion of the country? Do not they constitute the vitality of the Republic? Can you exist without the hands that toil? Time has passed when labor in the hands of man can be reduced to mere mechanical toil, or bondage, or servitude. Though the chattel servitude is nominally abolished in this country, if there is a condition which exists that makes the labor of man servitude it is slavery. And even though you are voluntary slaves, as most of you are, to Mammon, it does not change the fact that Mammon enslaves you.

The services which you have rendered to this country; the cultivated fields the mechanical appliances that should be under the control of intelligent labor; all lie waste and fallow, or are perverted and converted into certain channels, owing to a lack of knowledge on this subject. To those who rally around the standards of labor associations; to those who combine expecting, politically, to gain a peaceful victory, we would say: let your standards be the same, let all unite on a common basis of action; if leaders become ambitious cast the leaders aside; let the intelligent minds of the laboring people understand what they are pleading for; let them plead for such a change in the laws as will effect the reforms needed.

It is true that you are driven to the greatest stress today; it is true that much has seemed to be lost owing to the agitation in some directions that has resulted in violence; but do not deceive yourselves: the cause which is represented by men of labor touches every household in the land. If you are strong, and firm, full of the spirit of humanity, full of that justice that scorns to do violence, but will forever protest against wrong, there is no doubt you will prevail. Employ every eloquent tongue in your land to unite the bodies of workingmen to the one end. Select your candidates, or fix upon candidates whom you can trust in another party. No matter what the reform you wish to bring about insist upon protection at the ballot box: insist that there shall not be a repetition of past corruption in connection with the ballot box, revealed in all large cities: insist that there shall be such measures adopted as shall make every man's ballot as sacred as a sealed letter; then when you place men in office, from the lowest office in the city government to the highest position in the land, see to it that they carry forward by proper legislation the measures that are necessary for reform; that monopolies shall no longer control legislation; that the great bodies of inert capital shall no longer crowd out your voice in the halls of legislation. that those necessary measures of reform shall be carried forward by your united ac-

tion. There is no need of especial leadership, but there is need of intelligent co-operation; of united purpose; of the power that will cement these various bodies of laboring men together for the purpose of having intelligent and united action.

It is well to dream of the highest state of mankind: we would take nothing from the scheme of any man who looks forward to the highest human brotherhood: but the state of mankind must be considered, and those steps can only be taken one at a time. While there is human selfishness it must be met, it must be overcome not with violence but with instruction: and every citizen of the Republic must be made to understand that his individual safety and his individual happiness rests in the protection of the whole people. Because individual enterprise, and that competition which exists in trade have been justified in this free and unmeasured country, there is no excuse for the indulgence of individual ambition to its fullest extent, any more than there is for a giant when he can crush the infant to do so. Whatever is required for the individual life any man may obtain; but beyond that, the moment it encroaches upon the rights or privileges of others, the moment power becomes oppressive, it is the duty of the honorable man to withdraw from the responsibility of possessing such power, if he will not then there should be such laws made as to make it impossible for him to hold such responsibility.

If the people accept the state of affairs as it is, who are constantly talking about the law of "supply and demand,"—as though every business man did not know that a demand can be created and the supply can be destroyed or suppressed—those who are continually talking about the affairs of the world as they are, it is simply necessary that these men and women shall be instructed in the line of moral perception. You talk about the laboring men being told to be calm, passionless, and free from violence! But if there has been the example set before them of violence and passion how shall they, with higher knowledge than you claim they can possess, know what it is to be unrevengeful? when you have taught them revenge from the highest authorities in the land, the press, the pulpit, and the voice of the community. You say the laboring men should be content with what they have; that every man can gain his daily bread if he asks for labor; we say that thousands of men have traversed every inch of ground of this city, thousands have traversed every mile of ground in this country, thousands more every foot of ground in New York and London, asking for labor and could not get it; shall they be contented with no labor and no bread? And if you say they shall, then have you reared a race of martyrs and moral heroes on the strength of your altar of worldliness, on the strength of your shrine and altar of mammon?

Do you expect; have you set the example, you capitalists, you prosperous business men, you whose larders are filled, you whose bank accounts are secure, with all the Christian virtues; that starving men shall be peaceable while prosperous men are violent? It is not possible you can expect it. If you do not expect it, then you expect to take into consideration the difference in position between your state and theirs, you expect to strive to understand the principle underlying this difference; and why it is growing wider and wider notwithstanding the enlightenment of this country! You expect to make such concessions as are recommended in the statesman-like message of the President, that in time you may divert the present storm that is approaching; when hundreds of thousands of men have no bread and their families are starving commerce and manufacture will have to hear their cry.

Against monopolies in certain localities the local law has raised its voice. You well understand what struggles and oppression have ensued from the coal monopolies in Pennsylvania: and in other portions of the land from the gigantic octopus that swallows up the largest portion of one production and industry: the Standard Oil Co.: these are the monsters held up before the people as fearful examples, while their spawn are on every hand, new serpents and smaller nests are everywhere being created: these gigantic schemes that would control every practical industry and divert its revenue from the hands of those who produce articles of need for daily life, and then stand between them and any redress like a black and hideous wall; these are the things that you as citizens of the Republic are to fear.

One eminent author of this country, whose name is a household word in this land, in a private letter to a friend said: "I am not afraid of open anarchy, but the lawlessness of the law fills me with dismay." What does this mean? It means that between the men who toil, between you who are accountants, bookkeepers, or business men in any direction of labor, who work from early morning till late at night, and the freedom and comfort which you seek, a wall is being reared black as the night from whence it sprung, all surrounding is the power which encompasses it: it is in the associations that exist under different names of protection, under different names of mutual benefit associations, that those monopolies are established that are endeavoring to control every practical industry of this land. Can you not see it? Is it possible that the eyes are blinded by the small coin that is in the eye? Do you not discern that the dime, which you pay for with the price of a day's labor possibly, excludes the light of this larger truth, this higher and diviner principle?

Join the ranks of those who ask that there shall be between capital and labor such an adjustment that if there is an augmented interest, labor shall reap its proportion of the reward. Join hands with those who would give to the clerk, to the accountant, he who is in the office, he who voluntarily serves this commerce ten or twelve hours a day, an opportunity for intelligent culture; a few hours of leisure for his home and family; a little respite from the daily toil by unification of labor, and such methods as shall make him determine how many hours shall constitute a days toil. Join hands with those who understand that if this Republic is to be prevented from being a country of caste, if there shall be no aristocracy of wealth, no monopoly of the various products by wealth, every man must unite in this effort; and every woman for that matter; for is it not upon the women that the struggle comes the hardest after all? The small children to care for, the mouths to feed, the babes to attend, the desolate home, the empty cupboard, the bare walls, and the hands that labor often powerless to aid. Is it not upon women that it comes severest when she toils six days in the week, perhaps twelve hours a day and the utmost she can earn may not pay for her daily bread and place of rest? Is it not upon her also that this comes the most piteously when large manufacturers combine to lessen the pittance she receives for her daily toil, and she is made a prisoner during the hours of labor or is discharged? Yes this comes upon woman; and if she may not cast her ballot, yet she still can influence those who do; her voice should not rest nor her pleading cease, until she may see her children clothed in comfort, their faces bright with happiness, her home surrounded with some of those objects which betoken refinement and intelligence, instead of the bare walls, the bare floor, the general discomfort. You say all articles of necessity are very cheap. so they are; but if one has not even a penny cheapness amounts to nothing.

The question is that there shall be no crystalization of capital, no domination of wealth, no monopolies that can control the people and the products of the land, none who shall have power, even though they have the inclination, to so augment capital as to oppress others, that this shall be abrogated, through legislation, by the voice of the people.

We commend the measures provided by the fathers of your government for redress, but if those measures are prevented, if laws are made against the constitution, if it is impossible for those measures to be carried forward, what then? The Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount, the voice of Christ, declare that man shall suffer wrong rather than do wrong; we would say this, but show us the Christian king, or government, or ruler, or power of law in any land that has set such an example to the people. Under wrong, we do not condemn those who, without the light of Christ, rise up and demand the right, but we say there is a better way. It is to the voice that can make the better way successful that we appeal: to those who having the power, and having the authority may turn this tide toward the rectification of the wrongs now; may see to it that there is a voice between the people and those who oppress them that shall do them justice: the abrogation of all possible rights in capital that are denied to labor; the abrogation of rights in capital, until the representation of man's life for what that man is worth, the intelligent labor of the hand, the daily existence as an individual factor in society, instead of a blind, useless, worn out machine, oppressed to earth because he is regarded as having no soul, shall prevail.

Let us turn mammon out of the temples of worship, out of the temples of legislation; out of the temples of human existence; admitting only industry, labor, and the product of individual toil; such a fair hand maiden as shall accompany mankind, and shall be second only to that religion that serves God and man, that justice that sees the right, that standard of excellence that exalts the whole.

We shall not hesitate to speak against these wrongs so long as there is a human voice to use we shall not hesitate to say: take the highest standard and work to that, taking one step at a time until the end is attained. But if there shall be no one to listen to our cry; if man will still go on blinded with human selfishness, failing to do that which he has the power to do; if the cry of thousands who are oppressed shall not be heard; if the voice that asks for justice shall not be heeded, even then from those higher heights to which Freedom and Justice withdraw, the voice will still be heard in the midst of the cries of persecution, or that which crucifies mankind in the name of truth, we shall still plead, and plead, until the voice of humanity will be heard.

"THE POOR; THE WARDS OF THE SKIES."

[IMPROMPTU POEM; THE SUBJECT BEING SUGGESTED BY THE AUDIENCE.]

Who are the poor? Sometimes in garments mean
 They walk the earth in poverty below;
 Sometimes in haunts of men with faces seen
 That seem as mirrors of all darkened woe;
 Sometimes down cast in human want and pain
 They strive to rise, but ever strive in vain:
 God says that such as these by Him are blest
 Whom men despise, these have Heaven's bequest.

Who are the poor? Made so by king and lord
 Usurping rights that man should have on earth;
 Made so by violence of tyrant's sword,
 Who are the inheritors of the heavenly birth:
 All such as these, whether in dungeon cell
 Or starving by the wayside here in woe,
 The skies are mindful of; and these impel
 Their messengers unto the earth below.

Who are the poor? Whom kings and rulers make
 By conquest their abused, unlawful slaves;
 Who even wrong and ignominy take
 Beneath the power of mammon, and its slaves
 That bind unto selfishness and greed on earth
 These, the inheritors of heavenly birth.

But though despised, downtrodden, outcast here,
 The souls of these within the sight of Heaven
 Are valuable; each one is just as near,
 And nearer than the tyrant who hath given
 Oppression's curse or the unhallowed power
 That wrongs them through its dower.

But there are poor more pitiable still:
 They dwell in palace halls; where they abide
 In splendor; they their golden cups may fill
 To Mammon; unto earthly things their pride
 Is given; they are wonderful and great;
 But oh, the angels see such poverty
 Of soul: in rags and tatters they must stand,
 All those, who on the earth in pride must be
 Uplifted at death's dire and dread command,

Go tremblingly unto the heavenly state
 As paupers; where none are truly great,
 Save those who by goodness and truth below
 Have won the riches that earth cannot know.
 Pity the poor! But if unworthily
 Man makes the poverty close to his door,
 Then surely truth and justice still may be
 Tempered with pity on the heavenly shore;

Such pity and compassion are not known,
 Save in the angel hearts, who, through love's power,
 Bestow to those most affluent upon earth
 But have in spirit no celestial dower.
 Paupers and outcasts, loved of God in heaven,
 Pity the rich who are most poor in love;
 For unto such compassion still is given
 To win them to the heights of heaven above.

BENEDICTION.

May the all guiding hand of light,
 Pointing which way the feet of man should tread,
 Lead every spirit to an added height,
 To truth, and love, and purity instead
 Of misery, and pain, and strife,
 Lead unto Thee; O Thou Eternal Life.

Amen.

