NINETEENTH CENTURY MIRACLES

365

OR,

A Rational and Scientific Basis

for a Belief in Immortality.

A LECTURE

Delivered at the Bijou Theatre, Mel­
bourne, on Sunday, Nov. 7th, 1886,

BY

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1886.
Ladies and Gentlemen,—I wish in my lecture to-night to call your attention to some of the strange and marvellous phenomena whereby at least a good many millions of people have come to cherish a belief in immortality as both rational and scientific.

The work I have set before me is both easy and difficult. I know that some who attend these lectures have no such belief. To such I desire to so present these facts as to cause them to regard them in the same light we do. Suppose you have never seen an ocean and beach. I am to prove to you one exists by bringing to you some of the pebbles. Bringing from the shore a handful of specimens would be easy enough, the difficult part would be from the few to produce in your minds the idea of the billions left behind, and of the great ocean whose rolling waves had cut and polished them into such varied shape and smoothness.

The facts of ancient and modern Spiritualism are in number like the pebbles on all the shores of this world.

Before I bring forth these facts let me show you in what way I claim them to be both rational and scientific. By rationality I mean the quality of reasonableness. What is reason? It is the power of the mind to perceive the mutual relations and dependencies of things; to trace cause to effect, and effect back to cause. One who sees things in an isolated way and cannot attach a fact to the truths it stands related to, may be said to have intellect, but not reason. If any of you lack this quality of mind, my appeal to it will be in vain. The power of reason is also the power of comparison of judgment of weighing of facts for and against opposing theories. You may, however, possess this quality and yet lack the moral quality that will lead you always to pronounce sentence...
for the side that has the most and the best evidence. There is many a judge whose lack of moral rectitude leads him to side against his own reason. Now, the moral nature is born of the emotions, and whoever lacks the knowledge and feeling of the immortal life is destitute of the chief source of health and supply that belongs to the emotional or moral nature.

Some would say that this is a subject with which the emotions have nothing to do. Give us calm, dispassionate reason, the logic of the head, not the feeling of the heart. Whoever makes such a demand takes a very narrow and distorted view of life. The head should never act without the heart, nor the heart without the head. I had rather trust any interest to one with a good heart and a poor head than to one with a good head and a bad heart. Every man is threefold. Whatever we do should be done with all our strength, with all our mind, and with all our heart. You may have reason without much heart, but you can only have wisdom and sound judgment with a good heart as well as a good head. Hence if I persuade you to decide justly on which side lies the truth, I must speak to both head and heart. I want you to feel that I am in the right just as much as I want you to think so. In deciding this case I want you to remember that we do accept many things without question on evidence. I never saw a murder, and yet I believe that there have been many murders. You may have never seen any of the facts of which I shall speak, yet to deny that they ever took place would be just the same as for me to deny that there ever was such a crime as murder because I had never seen one. Shakespeare suggests the idea that one may doubt the existence of crime through innocence, when he makes the gentle Desdemona, after speaking of wives being false to their husbands, say, "I do not think there is any such woman." So I admit that one may be as honest as Desdemona and yet doubt the fact of immortality. It is an old saying that there are exceptions to all rules; but the exception only brings into greater prominence the strength of the rule. So the few who doubt the continuity of life after death only make the truth the clearer and more certain to the many. The lack of truth
In any argument for Materialism will only cause the truths of Spiritualism to shine the brighter.

In weighing evidence you are influenced by both the quantity and the character of the testimony produced. The evidence of two good men of acknowledged reputation for veracity, together with the fact of a murder, is enough to convict and hang a man. If this matter depended on the number of the witnesses, I could go on bringing them into court for always and afterwards. In quantity the witnesses are a multitude no man can number; of all nations, kindreds, and tongues. In quality they are the best and noblest, the grandest intellects and warmest hearts our world has produced; ranking amongst them the Titans of the past, the founders of religion, like Jesus, Guatama Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, and Mohammed; the founders of philosophy, like Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle; the founders of science, like Kepler, Copernicus, Bruno, Galileo, Bacon, and Newton; the founders of poetry, like Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare; the founders of art, like Raphael and Michael Angelo; the great composers of operas and oratorios, most of whom have made the immortal life—the Alpha and Omega of their music.

If this could be settled by weight of influence I could spend all the evening in flinging at your heads the names of men great in science, art, letters, or social distinction. I have no wish to decide the question in this way. I must ask you, however, to remember that many of the most earnest Materialists have seen cause to change their views: Robert Owen, the father almost of English Freethought and Social Reform; Robert Dale Owen, his son; Joseph Barker, one of the earliest Freethought lecturers; Dr. Sexton, one of the ablest champions of Spiritual faith and knowledge, was once a Secularist; D. M. Bennett, who went to prison for the liberty of the press, was a Spiritualist in his later life; John R. Kelso, one of the ablest Materialist lecturers in America, declared himself convinced a year ago, at the California camp-meeting; Mr. Walser, the founder of the town of Liberal, has recently come over on this side; while the great majority of the most active Spiritualists in America were once Materialists. Facts that can convert and bring
over to their side their most outspoken opponents, must be worth some attention.

I also claim that the facts I am about to bring before you establish Immortality on a scientific basis. Science, says John Stuart Mill, is a collection of truths. The language of science is—This is, or this is not—this does not happen. Science takes cognizance of a phenomenon and endeavours to discover its law. Now I claim that the facts on which we rest belief in, and knowledge of, the immortal life are more easily demonstrated than many of the accepted conclusions of science, and hence whoever refuses them is both irrational and unscientific.

I know that a few leading Scientists scout these claims. What of that? Not one of these ever had the candour or fairness to give them as much attention as they would to the nature of an angleworm, or tumble bug.

You must also remember that a man may be very skilled in one science and yet almost entirely ignorant of another. Huxley may be a great Biologist and Physiologist, and yet know nothing of the science of music. So the facts of Spiritualism, being a separate study, may be equally unknown to him. Some say these phenomena are not scientific, because they are contrary to known laws of nature. That was what many said when telescopes and microscopes were invented, and the idea of the rotundity of the earth was first advanced. How unreasonable and unscientific it was said to suppose that men could walk with their heads downwards in space like flies on a ceiling? Well, here we are at the Antipodes, the very place in which the inhabitants were supposed to locomote after the manner of flies, and yet we manage to hang on without having hooks to our feet. And though some few say how unscientific to suppose we can go on living without a physical body, that seeming impossible thing is done, as millions know by just as convincing evidence as that which establishes the rotundity of the earth. Spiritualism, says Wallace, a leading Scientist, is truly an experimental science, and affords the only foundation for a true philosophy and a pure religion; it abolishes the term miracle, by an extension of the sphere of law and the realm of nature, and in
doing so it takes up and explains whatever is true in the superstitions and miracles of all ages.

It is claimed by others that these facts are not scientific, because they assert that a spiritual law cannot be proved by physical phenomena. Yet the physical phenomena of the loadstone are accepted as proof of the existence of a magnetic force; while the fall of an apple revealed to the eye of a Newton the great law of force of gravitation. These are invisible as spirit, save as they stand revealed in phenomena; the only difference is that one set of phenomena reveal impersonal and the other personal forces. But some people seem to be actually afraid of admitting that anything can prove that life is lord of death, and love can never lose its own.

Now, let me give you a few of the facts. Take first that of Clairvoyance. Of course such a wonderful power as this would naturally cause at first a great many charlatans and pretenders to play upon the credulity of the people in its name. But the spurious coin only proves the genuine. No such thorough belief in it could exist without a foundation in reality. But prove once that sight can exist without the use of light, sensation, or any physical organ of vision, and you prove a supersensous spiritual faculty. That these conditions of being continue after the death of the body is proved from the fact that many who have no natural clairvoyant power are wonderfully clairvoyant when under the control of some spirit other than their own.

One night, when sleeping in a tent, I was roused from my sleep in the middle of the night by a succession of sharp raps, that sounded almost like the explosion of gun caps. I arose and went outside to learn the cause, but could discover nothing. As soon as I returned to the tent they came in a perfect shower on the head of my bed. I then recognised them as the familiar spirit-rap first heard near Rochester, New York, in March, 1848, but since heard all around the world. The next morning, before I had told anyone of this experience, a clairvoyant said, speaking under spirit-control, “We were not on the outside but the inside of the tent.” Since then I have often heard these wonderful raps, both alone and in the presence of others. One of these raps, rapping
out an intelligent message as they have done millions of times is enough in itself to answer and overthrow all the arguments of Materialism.

On our way from Boston to California, a gentleman came up to my wife, in Cleveland, Ohio, and exclaimed: "Well, I have my gold-mine," and then told the following story: "When you were in Leadville, Colorado, you gave me a reading, and described a gold-mine I should have some time. I took no interest in it at the time, having lost heavily, and become disgusted with mining. I returned home to Cleveland and settled down to business. At the end of two years, while on my way to my office, I met a gentleman, who said, "I have a gold-mine I want to talk to you about." I replied, none of that for me, and was about to leave him, when something he said recalled your description. On looking over the papers I found everything in perfect accordance with your description, and at once took a large interest, and am now doing so well that I intend shortly to build a Spiritual temple."

I have many times known personally of clairvoyants giving the most minute descriptions of places hundreds of miles away, even to the describing of the pictures on the walls and the contents of bureau drawers. I have seen them take sealed letters, read the contents, and give the name of the writer.

Mr. Mansfield, of Boston, answers sealed letters every day, that he never opens, from all parts of the world, in many different languages, though he knows no language but his own. I have often sat in his office and seen him at his work, and know this to be true. This of course must be done by outside intelligence. Clairaudience or spirit hearing is just as well proved as spirit seeing. The greatest musicians have heard their music sung in this way before they composed it. Great writers have said the same for their best works; even George Eliot, the disciple of Comte, admitted that all her best works seemed to be done by some one apart from herself. I have seen mediums stand before large audiences, composed of entire strangers, and give them hundreds of names and messages, which they heard clairaudiently, all of which would be recognised.
Take now the case of Miss Mollie Fancher, of New York: a case well known and attested to by hundreds of reliable physicians who have experimented with her. Miss Fancher was born in Attleborough, Mass., N.E., August 16th, 1848, and was educated at the Brooklyn Heights seminary. In her eighteenth year she fell from a horse, and had several ribs broken. Soon afterwards, as she was alighting from a horse car, the conductor rang the bell too hastily, her dress caught on the step, and she was dragged for a block over the pavement; her spine was badly injured, and her body and head were so frightfully bruised that she went into convulsions. She soon underwent astonishing physical changes, and has been bedridden ever since. In a condition of total bereft of sight, speech, and hearing; her hands are fixed above her head, and yet in this condition she carries on the most delicate fancy work, selecting the colours herself, doing it as well by night as by day without the slightest hesitation, writes out the contents of sealed letters which have never been in her hands, writes down the names, and describes persons on their way to see her long before they reach the house. Mr. Henry M. Parkhurst, of New York, says: "From the waste basket of a New York gentleman acquaintance I fished an unimportant business letter without reading it, tore it into ribbons, and tore the ribbons into squares; I then shook the pieces well together, put them into an envelope and sealed it. This I handed to Miss Fancher. The blind girl took the envelope in her hand, passed her hand over it several times, called for paper and pencil, and wrote the letter verbatim. The seal of the envelope had not been broken. Mr. Parkhurst himself opened it, pasted the contents together, and compared the two. Miss Fancher's was a literal copy of the original. Surely here was a case of sight without the help of physical eyes! You can see that thought-transference fails to account for it when Mr. Parkhurst was ignorant himself of the contents of the letter. This is by no means a solitary testimony, but one of thousands. The history and practice of Psychometry is full of equally convincing evidence. Whence comes this power?

This planet of ours has a memory; everything is
written or photographed on the magnetic fluid or radiant matter, filling all space, penetrating every so-called vacuum, as Prof. Crookes scientifically demonstrated.

Those who have experienced the sensation of drowning tell us that they saw as in a lightning-like panorama every event of their lives. They were reading the record they had written for themselves in the book of account—that wondrous book of life. Now, the Psychometer sometimes reads or gets the sense of this record. Every word we speak lives in the vibrations of this subtle and all penetrating ether. The telephone and phonograph would be impossible without this law. During the rebellion in India it was constantly wondered how the natives obtained intelligence of a defeat or victory long before the Europeans. It is known now that it was by the process of thought-transference and soul telegraphy. That there is such a power as this the most skeptical must admit has been thoroughly demonstrated by the London Society for Psychical Research. I know many people who can bring others to them by fixing their minds on them, and willing them to come. Thoughts are not simply chemical and physical changes in your brain, but living realities projected through your brain from your invisible self. The brain is only a reflecter that photographs them in your physical range of consciousness. Before you can evoke a thought from the brain it must be involved from your spiritual self. This is why all our clearest and best thoughts seem to be given to us from an outside intelligence. This is why the work of genius always approaches the quality of inspiration.

Thoughts take form in the astral light; they are creations from the immortal part of us, even as worlds and laws are the thoughts of God. You all know that frequently just as you are speaking of some one he makes his appearance. Some thought from his mind had been his forerunner, and caused you to think and speak of him. Thus good-wishing, blessing or cursing, are not mere empty forms, but realities. All the evils you have wished another are alive somewhere, and will some time come home like chickens to roost. The hideous things the drunkard sees are the creations of his own mentality.
Thus you may create such a habit of denial that when you enter the spiritual life you will go on denying immortality and deceive yourself with the thought that everybody is trying to deceive you with the idea that you are dead.

Take next the fact that in America there are nearly two hundred inspirational speakers, many of whom give most eloquent and elaborate discourses at a moment's notice on subjects of which in their normal condition they are entirely and strikingly ignorant. Many of these also give remarkable improvisations in correct rhyme and metre at the close of their lectures, on themes handed in from persons in the audience. I remember listening to one of these, a Mrs. Brigham, who has been for years the regular speaker for a congregation of Spiritualists in New York city. She gave her poems on subjects that had been written down on slips of paper and handed up from the audience. As she gave them her eyes seemed to be rivetted on the slip of paper containing the subject. In passing around the camp grounds, at close of the public services, a lady present who said she was a member of the Episcopal Church gave it as her opinion that such a thing was impossible, and accused her of having the poems written down on paper and handed in by confederates. Instead of being insulted, as a minister would have been if accused of stealing his sermon, Mrs. Brigham said: "To show you, my dear woman, that you are quite mistaken, you can give me any subject you like this minute and I will give you a poem. The woman selected the subject of "Childhood." Mrs. Brigham immediately improvised some most beautiful verses, in which she weaved in names and descriptions of three children the woman had lost. The mother's heart was touched, and before Mrs. Brigham had done she was sobbing violently and declaring herself a convert to Spiritualism.

Mrs. Brigham's hand is also controlled, as I have seen, to write faster than any one can write normally intelligent messages with the writing bottom side up, and from left to right of the paper, so that they could only be read by holding them before a mirror.

Take next the marvellous fact of form materialisation.
Willie Eglinton, who has given convincing séances to Gladstone, members of the Royal family, and many of the nobility and leading scientists of Europe, often has this phenomenon in a good light while walking up and down in front of the cabinet, in full view of the sitters. A cloud-like appearance is first seen near the medium, which gradually condenses into a perfect and to all appearance a solid form. That there have been thousands of such manifestations, representing in some way forms of those who have once lived, I have the same evidence and right to believe as that I see living forms before me now. Sometimes, simply a face or a hand is thus made tangible,” "I can never forget," writes Dr. George Wyld, of London, "the overwhelming sensations I experienced on first seeing and touching these hands—warm, sensitive, detached hands—which grasped my hand with the perfect reality of human hands, and yet dissolved from the grasp as no human hands could do.”

William Crookes says: "Under the strictest test-conditions I have more than once had a solid self-luminous crystalline body placed in my hand by a hand which did not belong to any person in the room. In the light I have seen a luminous cloud hover over a heliotrope on a side-table, break a sprig off, and carry a sprig to a lady, and on some occasions I have seen a similar luminous cloud visibly condense to the form of a hand and carry small objects about."

I can well understand the overwhelming sensations of Dr. Wyld, for I have felt the same many, many times, both in company with others and when all alone. One night in a séance when this hand came to me, I said mentally, if that is you I want you to give me a certain flower out of a box in the room. It was done immediately. I then in the same way asked for a rose to be given one person, some heliotrope to another, and jessamine to a third: all of which was done immediately. From this we see that these invisible loved ones can under some conditions read our silent thoughts. That was a noble prayer found written in the journal of the young Prince Napoleon, killed while serving under the British flag, by the Zulus, in Africa:—"Grant, O God, that my heart may be penetrated with the conviction that those whom
I love and who are deceased can see all my actions. Help me that my life shall be worthy of their witness, and my innermost thought shall never make them blush."

All history, all literature, is full of evidence that those who are dead physically still live, and that by some strange occult law, occasionally reappear to the living. I have often seen them under absolute test-conditions, so that I had no room to doubt, and have seen many stubborn skeptics converted.

One of the most remarkable phenomena is that of independent slate-writing on double and frequently locked slates. You all know that Gladstone admits to have received writing in this way, through the mediumship of Willie Eglinton. I know that writing is produced in this way without any visible contact just as well as I know that water will run down hill, or that fire will burn. Sir Charles says: "Writing came upon the upper part of the slate when I myself held it pressed close up to the under side of the table, both Dr. Slade's hands being upon the top of the table in contact with my other hand. The writing was audible while in progress. This one phenomenon is absolutely conclusive. It admits of no explanation or imitation by conjuring. Writing also came on the under side of the slate while laid flat upon the table, Dr. Slade's hand being laid flat on it immediately under my eyes. These phenomena occurred in broad daylight, with the sun shining into the room, and with no one present but Dr. Slade and myself." They may be witnessed with slight variations by any of our men of science, and it is to be hoped that those who do not take the trouble to see them will at all events cease to speak disparagingly of the intellectual and perceptive powers of those who having seen declare them to be realities.

Prof. Zollner, the eminent German Professor of Physical Astronomy, testifies as follows: On the evening of November 16th, 1877, I placed in a room which Dr. Slade had never entered, a card-table and four chairs. After Prof. Fechner, Prof. Braune, Dr. Slade, and I had taken our places, and laid our hands upon the table, a knocking on the table was heard. Writing was given in the usual way on a slate bought by myself two hours
before, and which I had also marked. The book-slate after
being first cleaned, and a crumb of pencil laid between,
was then closed and held by Dr. Slade over the head of
Prof. Braune; the noise of writing was soon heard, and
when the slate was opened a long and intelligent mes­sage was found upon it. Whilst this was going on
suddenly a bed behind a screen began to move and came
about two feet away from the wall, shoving the screen
with it. The Court Conjurer, at Berlin, who attended
some of these séances of Dr. Slade, held with Zollner,
after the most careful scrutiny declared that he could not
find in them the slightest evidence of jugglery. I have
received the writing from several American mediums in
the simplest and most satisfactory way.

Now, go into the room of the medium, in broad day­
light, who meets you in an ordinary business and com­
mon-place way—whether you have brought your own
slates or use his, you are asked to write a question on a
slip of paper to the person you want to hear from. The
medium then gives you a small piece of slate pencil
little larger than a pin head, which you place with your
question between the slates. You then sit down at a
table together, the medium grasping one end of the
closed slates, you the other. If the séance is successful,
you soon hear the sound of the writing, followed by a tap
on the table by some invisible power. You then open
the slates and find them full of writing. This has been
done thousands of times on sealed and locked slates. It
would be almost impossible to conceive of any method
more convincing than this; still in spite of all these
evidences, guaranteed by the most honoured and repre­
sentative men and women, in all the walks of life, thou­
sands continue to repudiate the testimony.

Col. Ingersoll tells a story of a wrecked Irishman.
He was wrecked in the sea and drifted to an unknown
island, and as he climbed up the shore he saw a man and
said to him, Have you a government here? The man said
we have. Well, said he, I am agin it. No matter what
proofs we might bring of the immortal life, we should
find someone "agin it." I might show you that it is
written once every day in letters of fire across the blue
sky—that it is stamped on every leaf—that the flowers
that grow wild and untrained by man come up so as to say—There is no death! Yet some would still be found who would stoutly deny it. As I have already said, some people seem to be so thoroughly skeptical on this point, and prejudiced against the very idea of another life, that when they are dead I expect they will have so psychologised themselves with the idea that death ends all, that they will just go around denying Spiritualism and swearing they are not dead.

Clairvoyants often see and talk with such persons. Orthodox believers sometimes so psychologise themselves with the idea of hell, that when they enter the spiritual and more subjective life they think for the time they are there. Of course they die professing they are going straight to heaven. But during my experience as a minister, I generally found that when church-members came to die they had some secret fear in their hearts, growing out of the knowledge, I presume, of some of the mean things they had done that after all they might find themselves in the wrong place.

We have a good many Adventists in America, who are constantly looking out for the end of the world. Having fixed the date or time and put on their ascension robes to wait for the coming of Gabriel, one of them ascended to the top of a haystack, so as to have a better look out, and while there fell asleep. A party of mischievous boys set fire to the haystack. As the smoke and flames began to rise around him he was heard to exclaim—In hell at last; just as I expected.

Time will not permit me to-night to speak of Ancient Spiritualism or of many other Psychic phenomena that are proclaiming on every hand we are entering upon an age of faith in, and knowledge of, the immortal life. Countless evidences of the spiritual side of existence are common to every age and every people under the sun. From every quarter the evidence is accumulating.

I was pleased the other night to hear our friend Mr. Reimers, in the presence of Sir H. and Lady Loch, maintain so boldly the relation of these psychological phenomena to all that is practical, highest, and best in human life, showing that even music cannot be cultivated in the truest sense independent of soul or psychic culture. The
unfortunate part about our friend's lecture was that it was far too good to be confined to such an audience, even though it did include a Governor and his wife. I hope, therefore, that it will be printed in pamphlet form, and that you will all buy a copy and read it. The great daily papers catering to an unspiritual public found nothing to commend in that portion of the lecture, and yet without it the lecture would have been false and unnatural. Whatever of music, art, beauty, harmony, eloquence, or genius there is in your life, is the fruit of the Spirit. All poverty and sorrow, all disease and despair, all the ills that flesh is heir to, are the result of our ignorance or a neglect of our spiritual nature.

It is Materialism that ministers to man's selfishness and the diabolical altars of the vivisectionist. Spiritual knowledge would make all such cruelty and torture unnecessary. The Clairvoyant can see at a glance every cell and fibre of your being, describe the nature of your disease, and prescribe the best remedy. It is ignorance of spiritual laws that is filling our asylums with the insane, prisons with convicts, and hospitals with sufferers. The good that has been achieved by the little we have learned of the laws of Spirit, is beyond all powers of description. It is through ignorance of spiritual truth far more than ignorance of material law to which we can trace most of the ills we suffer under. I would not have you neglect one single interest of this life. But the more you know of the laws of Spirit the sooner will you succeed in your desire to translate this world into a paradise.

Spiritualism is not orthodoxy; it formulates no creed; it leaves every door and window of the temple of thought wide open; it welcomes every new truth; it never says, "Believe or be damned." All it says is, "Seek and you shall find." Be hospitable to the truth wherever and whenever you find it. Never be guilty of the miserable smallness of making mock at these the most consoling truths the world contains for millions of its wisest and best. Remember even that the greatest opponent of Orthodoxy and champion of Freethought, Col. Ingersoll, in standing by the grave of his dearest brother, could say, "Hope sees a star, and listening love hears the
rustle of wing." We take from you no duty you owe to this world. In finding Spiritualism to be true I believe you will find an added zest in duty and deeper, truer joys, as you come to feel and know there is no death.

With all these evidences of the glorious reality of the immortal life, I say with Ella Wheeler:

It seemeth such a little way to me
Across to that strange country—the Beyond;
And yet not strange, for it hath grown to be
The home of those of whom I am so fond:
They make it seem familiar and most dear,
As journeying friends bring distant near.

So close it lies that when my sight is near
I think I almost see the gleaming strand;
I know I feel those who have gone before
Come near enough sometimes to touch and blend;
I often think but for our veiled eyes
We should find heaven right round about us lies.

I cannot make it seem a day to dread
When from this dear earth I shall journey out
To that still dearer country of the dead,
And join the lost ones so long dreamed about.
I love this world, yet shall I love to go
And meet the friends who wait for me I know.

I never stand above a bier and see
The seal of death on some well-loved face,
But that I think—One more to welcome me
When I shall cross the intervening space
Between this land and that one, over there;
One more to make the strange Beyond seem fair.

And so for me there is no sting to death,
And so the grave has lost its victory.
It is but crossing, with a bated breath
And white set face, a little strip of sea,
To find the loved ones waiting on the shore,
More beautiful, more precious, than before.
W. H. TERRY

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