

A THEOSOPHICAL FUNERAL.

SERVICES OVER BARON DE PALM.

A STRANGE CEREMONY—REMARKABLE SCENES AT MASONIC TEMPLE—THE OBJECTS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY—THE FUNERAL ORATION—WHAT IS TO BE DONE WITH THE BODY.

At Masonic Temple, yesterday afternoon, the Theosophical Society of this City, which consists of some fourscore reputable but somewhat visionary ladies and gentlemen, performed what the association was pleased to call "funeral rites" over the body of Joseph Henry De Palm, an Austrian gentleman who has lived in this country for many years, and who, in his own land, rejoiced in the title of Baron, and was the recipient of many orders, crosses, and other distinctions which in Europe are counted honors. The contemplated funeral has been talked about for some days past by those who were interested in bringing the society into notice, and not less than a thousand persons assembled yesterday to witness what it was generally expected would prove to be a very interesting ceremony. These expectations were not entirely disappointed. The exercises were so simple, however, as to be almost tiresome, and because of one or two unfortunate circumstances they lost much of that solemnity which is the usual accompaniment of great simplicity. While these things are true, however, it is none the less a fact that the audience was one of the most respectable ever assembled in New-York, and the performers had at least the appearance of being thoroughly in earnest. It must be understood in this connection that the Masonic fraternity was not in any way connected with the funeral ceremonies. The grand lodge-room of the temple was loaned for the occasion by Rev. O. B. Frothingham, who hires it for divine service and has control of it on Sundays. The body of the hall was entirely without decoration. The platform or altar, however, was embellished by an incense burner, which, according to the offices of the society, was emblematic of the worship of fire, and a wooden cross bearing a serpent, who seemed to be engaged in an honest but fruitless effort to bite his own tail. This was typical, according to a member of the association, of "the evolution of matter." Between the cross and the vase of burning incense, and directly in front of the stage, appeared the coffin. It was a handsome ebony casket, bound with silver, and bearing the name, age, and titles of the dead gentleman. On it were placed seven lighted candles, five of them white, one red, and the other green. They also were intended to typify the worship of fire and light. Seated on the stage, in a circle behind the coffin, were the President and six members or fellows of the association. They were all clad in long flowing gowns of a heavy black woolen material, and each of them bore in his hand a bunch of green leaves, which signified their "good will and peace toward men."

THE CEREMONIES.

The Theosophical Society is an exceedingly punctual body, and at precisely 4 o'clock, the hour advertised, the proceedings commenced. After an ordinary hymn tune had been performed by a young lady who officiated at the organ the President, Col. Olcott, came forward and in a simple and commonplace way announced that the object of the meeting was the quiet burial of a dead brother who had objected to the presence at his funeral of any Christian clergyman. The services would, he hoped, be solemn and impressive, and nothing in them, he trusted, would be calculated to excite either mirth or ridicule. The speaker concluded by reminding his hearers that they were in the presence of the dead, and cautioning them to act with due propriety. At the close of his address a small choir of ladies and gentlemen sang chant, which was remarkable for nothing but the execrable manner in which it was performed. The Mr. T. Frederick Thompson was introduced and delivered the following prayer.

Oh, Spirit of Light and Wisdom; Soul of the World; whose breath gives and withdraws the form of everything! The universe is thy utterance and revelation. Thou, before whom the life of beings is a shadow that changes, and a vapor that passes away. Thou breathest forth, and the endless spaces are peopled; thou drawest breath, and all that went forth from thee returns again. Unending movement in eternal permanence we adore and worship thee with awe and reverence. We praise and bless the changing empire of created light, of shadows and of reflections, and of images: and we incessantly aspire toward thy immovable and imperishable splendor. Let the ray of thy intelligence and the warmth of thy love reach unto us. Then what is movable will be fixed, the shadow become a body, the dream thought. Incline us, O Spirit of spirits, to obey Thy will. Help us, O Eternal Soul of souls, to perform our duties. O, imperishable breath of life, Mouth that giveth and taketh away the existence of all beings in the flow and reflow of thy eternal word, which is the divine ocean of movement and truth, make our efforts to do good effectual, and let the light of thy divine truth shine in the souls of all mankind! Amen! amen! amen! amen!

The four amens, it may be well to state, were pronounced in chorus, and in the most solemn manner, by all the brethren, standing. Then the following somewhat remarkable liturgy was gone through with:

Lesson. (Spoken by the Master.)—The Divine light, that outshining of the supreme reason void of the deity which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, has not been altogether wanting to the devout of any creed. The permanent revelation, one and universal, is written in visible nature, is explained by reason, and completed by the wise analogies of faith.

Musical Response.—What we call death is change. The supreme reason, being unchangeable is the force imperishable. Thoughts once uttered are immortal.

Master.—In what condition is the invisible world? *Response.*—There is no invisible world. There is only different degrees of perceptions in the organ. The body is the gross representation and is, as were, the temporary envelope of the soul.

Master.—By what process does the soul perceive? *Response.*—The soul can perceive by itself, a without the intervention of the bodily organs, means of its sensibility and lucidity, the true whether spiritual or corporeal that exist in the universe.

Master.—What is death? What do you call death? *Response.*—We call death change. We die and are born again every day, for every day our form change. There is no real death in nature; all living.

Master.—What evidence does movement in death supply?

Response.—That there is no death. Even a body, if dead, would not decompose. All the atoms that compose it retain life, and move to free the selves.

Master.—How is the equilibrium of motion preserved?

Response.—By antagonism, life and death, light and shadow, good and evil, spirit and matter. These are the scales kept evenly balanced.

Master.—There is but one first cause, uncreated eternal, infinite and unknown. The soul of man immortal, and his earthly life but a point in the centre of eternity. Harmony is in equilibrium, equilibrium subsists by the analogies of contrast.

As the master of ceremonies, in pronouncing concluding remark, said, "There is but one first cause," an old gentleman, who, as it was afterwards discovered, was the father of the lady organist, rose in his place, and in an excited tone exclaimed, "That's a lie!" Then he quietly proceeded where his daughter was sitting and ordered her to leave the hall. One or two of the brethren tempted to interfere, but the father insisted quietly but earnestly, and the young lady was obliged to leave the organ.

THE FUNERAL ORATION.

After this slight interruption the Master or President of the society came forward, and, standing the side of the coffin, pronounced the funeral oration which was substantially as follows:

On the 17th of November last, in this City, a earnest men and women met together and organized the Theosophical Society, the mortal remains of one of whose fellows lie here before you. Its was to study the history of ancient myths and a bold, religions and science, the psychological powers of man, and his relations with all the law nature. It made no empty pretense of being able to teach anything, for it had every thing to learn. Wearied with the unsatisfactory and illogical speculations of modern scientists, borrow from the ancients what gives warrant to their infidelity, and reject what rebukes it; with the pretensions of a church which anathematizes all who challenge her Divine authority, promoters of this purely scientific society, concluded to go to primal sources; their original

have met responses in many quarters; the society has prospered; and it has its correspondents in Russia, Austria, Greece, Hungary, France, and England. Among other men of education and high social position who have been attracted to it, one of the most recent accessions was Baron de Palm, whose ancestors have been Barons for upward of a thousand years, and who had long resided in this country, and was a naturalized citizen. His baptismal register shows him to have been born May 10, 1809. He had been educated in the faith of his forefathers, but, like many other Germans, he had found nothing in it to satisfy him of a future existence. His high birth and official relations kept him constantly in the atmosphere of the Court and in association with courtiers. To gain promotion was his ambition, to receive new decorations a passionate longing.

As age crept over him, and the burden of existence pressed more and more heavily, he began to cast about in search of religious truth. "I could not see it when I looked in at the open church-door," was his expressive remark. "I wanted to believe in a future life. I was not satisfied to die and be obliterated. For such a fate as that, what was the use in being born at all!" So he turned to Spiritualism, in the hope of finding in its "circles" the inestimable treasure. From more than one medium in Chicago and New-York he received messages signed with the names of relatives and friends. But our brother was not satisfied with mere phenomenal Spiritualism. He did not undervalue its immense importance as a means to convince the materialist of the existence of an unseen universe, peopled with invisible entities; but he wished something additional. He desired to know the laws by which these phenomena are produced, and the rule, if such existed, by which the identity of the intelligences back of the physical phenomena could be unerringly determined. In this frame of mind he came to me, and this led him to apply for admission to this Theosophical Society. I rejoice to say that he lived long enough to express his joy that, after more than a half century of desultory wandering in the fields of thought, he had at last got into the straight path. He said that the clouds of the future were parting, and the light was shining through. When he realized the high standard of thought, word, and deed set up by the ancient Hermetists, he could not conceal his contempt for the frivolousness of the existence which he had passed. He broached and warmly advocated a scheme to plant a colony of Theosophists in some secluded district, where a round of satisfying philosophical occupations would be followed, and the greatest opportunity afforded for intellectual and spiritual improvement.

He died a Theosophist, and he made to me a most earnest request that the society should conduct his funeral services, and that I should pronounce this discourse. So much interested in our work had he become, that after making two special bequests, he left the residue of his estate to me with the unwritten understanding that I should administer it for the benefit of the Theosophical Society. And now it is the proper moment to give some account of the principles which this society represents. To begin with, it should be observed that it is neither a religious nor a charitable organization, as has been surmised; but, as was remarked before, it is a scientific body. In some respects it should be compared with the Geographical and Statistical Society, in others with the Neurological Society. Its title does not imply that its Fellows are all Theosophists but only that its aim is to acquire knowledge respecting theosophy. We have materialists of every shade, Spiritualists, (including mediums,) Christian clergymen, editors, lawyers, physicians, mesmerists, amateur and professional; Orientalists and Cabalists, theoretical and practical; geometers, and, in short, many thoughtful people. Among our correspondents we have university Professors, philologists, English barristers, professional diplomats, one Prince, Barons, Baronesses, and many others. It is surprising how wide and how profound an interest there is in this subject which we have projected into the arena of religious debate. Webster defines theology as a science which treats of the existence, character, and attributes of God, his laws and government, the doctrines we are to believe, and the duties we are to practice. Theosophy, on the contrary, he makes "a direct, as distinguished from a revealed, knowledge of God, supposed to be attained by extraordinary illumination." A very wide difference, you perceive, between the two. Theology bases itself upon revelation: theosophy, upon experiment and self-development. The one, in short, asks us to believe what some one else has seen and heard; the other urges us by every incentive to see and hear all we can ourselves. In the view of the one the fountains of revelation ran dry when the last Ecumenical Council adjourned; in that of the other those springs are perennial, and all who choose may drink their clear waters. Theosophy, whose origin must be sought in the night of time, asserts the broad principle that if man will but develop his inner faculties he may easily demonstrate his possession of godlike powers. It teaches that the price of this illumination described by the lexicographer is the entire subjugation of the baser passions, affections, desires, ambitions. It offers no compromises to the licentious, the glutton, the greedy, the idler, the seeker after worldly advantage. It is no fair-weather religion. It believes in no death-bed repentances. It issues no post-mortem fire insurance policies. It calls things by their right names; and a ruffian standing upon the top of a gallows is in its eyes a ruffian still, though he have said twenty *confiteors*, and twice as many *credos*. It does this because it cannot admit the possibility of such a thing as a miracle; and it asserts that the law of compensation is the supreme law of the universe.

Theosophy can no more conceive of a crime or a mistake going unpunished, than of a good deed going unrewarded. Its law is the law of personal responsibility—the law of cause and effect—the law of equilibrium, which means harmony. It believes that man is responsible for the effects of his acts, rather than for the motive which prompted them. It must have been a Theosophist who originated the saying, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions!" You see, therefore, that it is least of all a religion of professions, and most of all one of practices. In the Parsee catechism is a response which might stand for the doctrine of Theosophists in general. "What commands has God set us through his prophet, the exalted Zar-thrust?" is asked; and the answer is: "To know God as one * * *; to avoid evil deeds; to exert one's self in good deeds; * * * to believe on the reckoning and justice." The catechism continues: "Some deceivers * * * going among the laboring and ignorant people, have persuaded them that 'If you commit sin, I shall intercede for you. I shall plead for you, I shall save you,' and thus deceive them; but the wise among the people know the deceit."

To apply the rule to the case in point, there lies a Theosophist, a Fellow of this society, and, to the extent of his ability, its benefactor. He was a gentleman by birth, education, and profession; the companion and associate of our best citizens in this City and Chicago, and decorated with ribbons and orders. Shall we pronounce panegyrics over him? Shall we give him the *viaticum*, and promise him a future of anallayed happiness without knowing all his acts? Far from it. We bring his poor, worn-out body, in affection and tenderness, to its last resting-place, and we say that as he has acted so shall he suffer or rejoice. If he has been just, upright, pure, temperate, spiritual-minded; if he has lived a true life, and developed his capabilities for progression, then, with Aristophanes, may he repeat the apparent paradox, "Not to live is to live;" which Phryxus alters into, "To die is to live," for the physical death through which he has passed has but ushered him into a glorious immortal life. But, if under the mask of culture and rank, and fairness, he has concealed a career of misdeeds—if he has been a sensualist, usurer, an oppressor, a corrupter—then the Divine First Cause of the Theosophists, who is the beginning of all things, law included, cannot forgive the least of his offenses; for to do so would imply the plunging of the universe into chaos. There must be compensation, expiation, justice. I put it to every thinking person within the sound of my voice whether a religious code like this is or is not calculated to make one wary to do anything or say anything to injure one's self or his neighbor. No sin can be done in a dark enough corner to escape being recorded on the eternal tablets of justice, no veil thick enough to cover moral ulcers. The Supreme power of the Theosophist cannot be invoked as well from the velvet bench of a praying-desk, as from the hard rock of the mountain side or the hot sand of the desert. The ancient Theosophists held to two ideas immovably—the existence of a first cause and the immortality of the soul. Effect, with them, was always preceded by cause, and since they found themselves here, they believed their being here was the result of natural law. This law they regarded as general, not partial, and they accounted for the existence of the stone, the plant, the animal, man, his earth, all other earths, and the life principle actuating each and all these forms of matter—spirit—or spirit—matter, as you may chose to call it—upon the same principle. The flake of mica in their philosophy had as good a reason for being as the philosopher who speculated upon the profound problems

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the whole."

The soul they believed to have emanated from the divine central soul, and to partake of its attributes of omniscience and omnipotence. It only required that man should learn to free his soul from the thick casing of matter to have the manifestations of its god-like potency displayed. But, as has been observed, this subjugation of debasing nature must be personal, not vicarious. They believed that man could no more have some one else suffer for his moral sins, than for his gluttony, sensuality, or violence. They no more thought that a man could assume another's violations of the moral law, than that he could assume the blister when the other held his finger in the fire.

A little while and we will discover how paltry our original discoveries are by comparison with the men who played with the lightning as though it were a silken cord, and compelled the astral light (universal ether) to display the secrets hidden in its radiant depths. A little while and we may all agree with this departed Theosophist that that religion is best which subordinates profession to practice, and writes over the doors of its sanctuaries the legend, "Deeds, not words."

At the conclusion of the oration Mrs. Emma

Harding Britten, who professed to be "inspired," whatever that may mean, delivered a long and incoherent speech, which did much to mar the earliness of the proceedings. When she finished, the audience was dismissed by the master of ceremonies and quietly dispersed. The body of Baron De Palm was conveyed by an undertaker to a receiving vault in the Lutheran Cemetery. It is understood that the remains will be destroyed by cremation. One of the peculiarities of the ceremony was the unique form and color of the cards of admission. They were in the shape of a triangle, and bore this inscription in white upon a dead black ground: "Funeral obsequies of Joseph Louis Henry Charles, Baron de Palm, Grand Cross Commander of the Sovereign Order of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, Knight of St. John at Malta, Prince of the Roman Empire, late Chamberlain to his Majesty the King of Bavaria, Fellow of the Theosophical Society and a Member of its Council."