

**THE GHOSTS, AND
OTHER LECTURES**

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The ghosts, and other lectures by Robert G. Ingersoll

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ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

**THE GHOSTS, AND
OTHER LECTURES**

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AND OTHER LECTURES.

BY

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

THE IDEA OF IMMORTALITY, THAT LIKE A SEA HAS EBBED AND FLOWED IN THE HUMAN HEART, WITH ITS COUNTLESS WAVES OF HOPE AND FEAR, BEATING AGAINST THE SHORES AND ROCKS OF TIME AND FATE, WAS NOT BORN OF ANY BOOK, NOR OF ANY CREED, NOR OF ANY RELIGION. IT WAS BORN OF HUMAN AFFECTION, AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO EBB AND FLOW BENEATH THE MISTS AND CLOUDS OF DOUBT AND DARKNESS AS LONG AS LOVE KISSES THE LIPS OF DEATH.

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TO
EBON C. INGERSOLL,

MY BROTHER

FROM WHOSE LIPS I HEARD THE FIRST APPLAUSE,
AND WITH WHOSE NAME I WISH MY OWN
ASSOCIATED UNTIL BOTH ARE
FORGOTTEN,

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED.

CONTENTS.

- THE GHOSTS, - - - - - 9
LET THE GHOSTS GO. WE WILL WORSHIP THEM NO MORE. LET
THEM COVER THEIR EYELESS SOCKETS WITH THEIR FLESH-
LESS HANDS AND FADE FOREVER FROM THE IMAGINATIONS
OF MEN.
- THE LIBERTY OF MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD, - 73
LIBERTY SUSTAINS THE SAME RELATION TO MIND THAT SPACE DOES
TO MATTER.
- THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, - - 145
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO OUR FATHERS RETIRED THE GODS
FROM POLITICS.
- ABOUT FARMING IN ILLINOIS, - - - - 181
TO FLOW IS TO PRAY—TO PLANT IS TO PROPHECY, AND THE
HARVEST ANSWERS AND FULFILLS.
- SPEECH AT CINCINNATI, - - - - - 221
NOMINATING JAMES G. BLAINE FOR THE PRESIDENCY, JUNE, 1876.
- THE PAST RISES BEFORE ME LIKE A DREAM, 229
EXTRACT FROM A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE SOLDIERS' REUNION
AT INDIANAPOLIS, SEPT. 21, 1876.

P R E F A C E.

THESE lectures have been so maimed and mutilated by orthodox malice; have been made to appear so halt, crutched and decrepit by those who mistake the pleasures of calumny for the duties of religion, that in simple justice to myself I concluded to publish them.

Most of the clergy are, or seem to be, utterly incapable of discussing anything in a fair and catholic spirit. They appeal, not to reason, but to prejudice; not to facts, but to passages of scripture. They can conceive of no goodness, of no spiritual exaltation beyond the horizon of their creed. Whoever differs with them upon what they are pleased to call "fundamental truths," is, in their opinion, a base and infamous man. To re-enact the tragedies of the Sixteenth Century, they lack only the power. Bigotry in all ages has been the same. Christianity simply transferred the brutality of the Colosseum to

the Inquisition. For the murderous combat of the gladiators, the saints substituted the *auto de fe*. What has been called religion is, after all, but the organization of the wild beast in man. The perfumed blossom of arrogance is Heaven. Hell is the consummation of revenge.

The chief business of the clergy has always been to destroy the joy of life, and multiply and magnify the terrors and tortures of death and perdition. They have polluted the heart and paralyzed the brain; and upon the ignorant altars of the Past and the Dead, they have endeavored to sacrifice the Present and the Living.

Nothing can exceed the mendacity of the religious press. I have had some little experience with political editors, and am forced to say, that until I read the religious papers, I did not know what malicious and slimy falsehoods could be constructed from ordinary words. The ingenuity with which the real and apparent meaning can be tortured out of language, is simply amazing. The average religious editor is intolerant and insolent; he knows nothing of affairs; he has the envy of failure, the malice of impotence, and always accounts for the brave and generous actions of unbelievers, by low, base and unworthy motives.

By this time, even the clergy should know that the intellect of the Nineteenth Century needs no guardian. They should cease to regard themselves as shepherds defending flocks of weak, silly and fearful sheep from the claws and teeth of ravening wolves. By this time they should know that the religion of the ignorant and brutal Past no longer satisfies the heart and brain; that the miracles have become contemptible; that the "evidences" have ceased to convince; that the spirit of investigation cannot be stopped nor stayed; that the Church is losing her power; that the young are holding in a kind of tender contempt the sacred follies of the old; that the pulpit and pews no longer represent the culture and morality of the world, and that the brand of intellectual inferiority is upon the orthodox brain.

Men should be liberated from the aristocracy of the air. Every chain of superstition should be broken. The rights of men and women should be equal and sacred—marriage should be a perfect partnership—children should be governed by kindness,—every family should be a republic—every fireside a democracy.

It seems almost impossible for religious people