

# The Portal of the Unknown

By Andrew Jackson Davis, "The Seer"

When the hour of her death arrived, I was fortunately in a proper state of mind and body to produce the superior (clairvoyant) condition; but, previous to throwing my spirit into that condition, I sought the most convenient and favorable position, that I might be allowed to make the observations entirely unnoticed and undisturbed. Thus situated and conditioned, I proceeded to observe and investigate the mysterious processes of dying, and to learn what it is for an individual human spirit to undergo the changes consequent upon physical death or external dissolution. They were these:

I saw that the physical organization could no longer subserve the diversified purposes or requirements of the spiritual principle. But the various internal organs of the body appeared to resist the withdrawal of the animating soul. The body and the soul, like two friends, strongly resisted the various circumstances which rendered their eternal separation imperative and absolute. These internal conflicts gave rise to manifestations of what seemed to be, to the material senses, the most thrilling and painful sensations; but I was unspeakably thankful and delighted when I perceived and realized the fact that those physical manifestations were indications, not of pain or unhappiness, but simply that the spirit was eternally dissolving its co-partnership with the material organism.

Now the head of the body became suddenly enveloped in a fine, soft, mellow, luminous atmosphere; and, as instantly, I saw the cerebrum and the cerebellum expand their most interior portions; I saw them discontinue their appropriate galvanic functions; and then I saw that they became highly charged with the vital electricity and, vital magnetism which permeate subordinate systems and structures. That is to say, the brain, as a whole, suddenly declared itself to be tenfold more positive, over the lesser proportions of the body, than it ever was during the period of health. This phenomenon invariably precedes physical dissolution.

Now the process of dying, or the spirit's departure from the body, was fully commenced. The brain began to attract the elements of electricity, of magnetism, of motion, of life, and of sensation, into its various and numerous departments. The head became intensely brilliant; and I particularly remarked that just in the same proportion as the extremities of the organism grow dark and cold, the brain appears light and glowing.

Now I saw, in the mellow, spiritual atmosphere which emanated from and encircled her head, the indistinct outlines of the formation of *another* head. This new head unfolded more and more distinctly, and so indescribably compact and intensely brilliant did it become, that I could neither see through it, nor gaze upon it as steadily as I desired. While this spiritual head was being eliminated and organized from out of and above the material head, I saw that the surrounding aro-mal atmosphere which had emanated from the material head was in great commotion; but, as the new head became more distinct and perfect, this brilliant atmosphere gradually disappeared. This taught me that those aro-mal elements, which were, in the beginning of the metamorphosis, attracted from the system into the brain, and thence eliminated in the form of an atmosphere, were indissolubly united in accordance with the divine principle of affinity in the urn-verse, which pervades and destines every particle of matter, and developed the spiritual head which I beheld.

In the identical manner in which the spiritual head was eliminated and unchangeably organized, I saw, unfolding in their natural progressive order, the harmonious development of the neck, the shoulders, the breast and the entire spiritual organization. It appeared from this, even to an unequivocal demonstration, that the innumerable particles of what might be termed unpartided matter which constitute the man's spiritual principle, are constitutionally endowed with certain elective affinities, analogous to an immortal friendship. The innate tendencies which the elements and essences of her soul manifested by uniting and organizing themselves, were the efficient and imminent causes which unfolded and perfected her spiritual organization. The defects and deformities of her physical body were, in the spiritual body which I saw thus developed, almost completely removed. In other words, it seemed that those hereditary obstructions and influences were now removed, which originally arrested the full and proper development of her physical constitution; and, there, fore, that her spiritual constitution, being elevated above those obstructions, was enabled to unfold and perfect itself, in accordance with the universal tendencies of all created things.

While this spiritual formation was going on, which was perfectly visible to my spiritual perceptions, the material body manifested, to the outer vision of observing individuals in the room, many symptoms of uneasiness and pain; but the indications were totally deceptive; they were wholly caused by the departure of the vital or spiritual forces from the extremities and viscera into the brain, and thence into the ascending organism.

The spirit arose at right angles over the head or brain of the deserted body. But immediately previous to the final dissolution of the relationship which had for so many years subsisted between the two, the spiritual and material bodies, I saw—playing energetically between the feet of the elevated spiritual body and the head of the prostrate physical body—a bright stream or current of vital electricity. And here I perceived what I had never before obtained a knowledge of, that a small portion of this vital electrical element returned to the deserted body immediately subsequent to the separation of the umbilical thread; and that that portion of this element which passed back into the earthly organism instantly diffused itself through the entire structure, and thus prevented immediate decomposition.

As soon as the spirit, whose departing hour I thus watched, was wholly disengaged from the tenacious physical body, I directed my attention to the movements and emotions of the former; and I saw her begin to breathe the most interior or spiritual portions of the surrounding terrestrial atmosphere. At first it seemed with difficulty that she could breathe the new medium; but in a few seconds she inhaled and exhaled the spiritual elements of nature with the greatest possible ease and delight. And now I saw that she was in possession of exterior and physical proportions, which were identical, in every possible particular—improved and beautified—with those proportions which characterized her earthly organization. Indeed, so much like her former self was she that, had her friends beheld her as I did, they certainly would have exclaimed—as we often do upon the sudden return of a long-absent friend, who leaves us and returns in health—‘Why, how well you look! How improved you are!’ Such was the nature—most beautifying in their extent—of the improvements that were wrought upon her.

I saw her continue to conform and accustom herself to the new elements and elevating sensations which belong to the inner life. I did not particularly notice the workings and emotions of her newly-awakening and fast-unfolding spirit, except that I was careful to remark her philosophical tranquillity throughout the entire process, and her non-participation with the different members of her family in their unrestrained bewailing of her departure from the earth, to unfold in Love and Wisdom throughout eternal spheres. She understood at a glance that they

could only gaze upon the cold and lifeless form, which she had but just deserted; and she readily comprehended the fact that it was owing to a want of true knowledge upon their parts that they thus vehemently regretted her merely physical death.

The period required to accomplish the entire change which I saw was not far from two hours and a half; but this furnished no rule as to the time required for every spirit to elevate and reorganize itself above the head of the outer form. Without changing my position or spiritual perceptions I continued to observe the movements of her new-born spirit. As soon as she became accustomed to her new elements which surrounded her, she descended from her elevated position, which was immediately over the body, by an effort of the will-power, and directly passed out of the door of the bedroom in which she had lain, in the material form, prostrated with disease for several weeks. It being in a summer month, the doors were all open, and her egress from the house was attended with no obstruction. I saw her pass through the adjoining room, out of the door, and step from the house into the atmosphere! I was overwhelmed with delight and astonishment when, for the first time, I realized the universal truth that the spiritual organization can tread the atmosphere, which is impossible while in the coarser earthly form—so much more refined is man's spiritual constitution. She walked in the atmosphere as easily, and in the same manner, as we tread the earth and ascend an eminence. Immediately upon her emergence from the house, she was joined by two friendly spirits from the spiritual country, and after tenderly recognizing and communing with each other, the three, in the most graceful manner, began ascending obliquely through the ethereal envelopment of her globe. They walked so naturally and fraternally together that I could scarcely realize the fact that they trod the air—they seemed to be walking upon the side of a glorious but familiar mountain. I continued to gaze upon them until the distance shut them from my view,—whereupon I returned to my external and ordinary condition.

This account of the facts—of what actually happened at death—is confirmed by numerous other witnesses, who agree as to the main details.