



INSPIRATION.
A Sermon Delivered by Rev. H. H. Brewa at Unitarian Hall June 8, 1890.
(Continued from Saturday's JOURNAL.)

This experience of Longfellow's is a common one among the poets. That beautiful poem so often found in our papers and entitled "There is no Death" and credited to Bulwer, was written by J. L. McCreey, then city editor of the Dubuque, Iowa, Times. In the presence of his wife he told me the circumstance of its composition. He had been sick unto death with typhoid fever and while lingering in the balance, that poem forced itself into his mind. "I did not think of it. I did not plan it, but it came there and troubled me and I got no peace till wife sat by my bed and took it down as fast as I got strength to whisper it to her."

"How did you, a boy of 18, ever write it?" asked a lady friend of mine as she met Baily, the author of Fustis. He replied: "I did not. I wrote it myself." Had it been written in Hebrew 3000 years ago it would have been as sacred as Isaiah to day.

A similar reply was given by Thackeray when asked why he married a couple in one of his novels: "I did not; they married themselves."

E. P. Roe, in a preface to one of his novels, says: "I can honestly assert that I have never manufactured a novel." My stories have come with scarcely any volition on my part, and the characters control me."

The same is told of Scott and Dickens and of Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Edward Belamy tells in "The Nationalist for May '89 how he came to write "Looking Backward." "In undertaking to write Looking Backward I had at the outset no idea of attempting a serious contribution to the monument of social reform. The idea was of a mere literary fantasy, a fairy tale of social felicity." For a year or two this idea had been vaguely floating in his mind. He had made a list of his plat, his sketch, when he says: "No thanks to myself, I stumbled over the destined cornerstone of the new social order." This led to an entire change of motive and a recasting of the story. Does it not seem as if that power called in the church "The Holy Ghost" had brooded over him till he had prepared him for the full inspiration, and then he wrote because he must. He writes Newton says, he knows most of the bible are inspired because they inspire him. By this test and from the numbers it has inspired "Looking Backward" was also "an inspiration from on high."

Dr. Holmes was asked the history of "The Chambered Nautilus" and said: "It has none. It wrote itself, and so did the 'One Horse Shay'." That was one of those random conceptions that gallop through the brain and that you catch by the bridle. I caught it myself. It came in a sort of spasmodic mental condition that almost takes me out of my own self and I write only when under such influence.

Miss Lizzie Dutton, a spiritualist medium, who has written two volumes of beautiful poems, has a similar experience to that of Dr. Holmes, so that her case is not exceptional. Of one of her poems she says: "I was seized with an undefinable uneasiness. I wandered up and down the garden till finally an idea of what I was to do was clearly defined. Then with pencil and paper I hastened to a corner and there wrote. The Song of the North, so rapidly that it was not legible and I was obliged to copy it as once I lost the connection."

These cases are common literary experience to be paralleled in the life of almost every author, and in that of every orator, musician, painter, sculptor, inventor and artist.

There is one law under which they all come. From the simplest editorial to the grandest oration or poem it is only a question of degree. The city editor pens his local by an ordinary inspiration. Intensify that sufficiently, if the mental machinery is capable, and we have a poem, an essay or an oration.

There is no more need of introducing any new factor, any supernatural power, here than there is on the railroad if we would go 30 miles an hour when we are going ten.

It is only a little more presents on the level.

As said above, inspiration does not confine itself to literature. Since all manifestations of life are spiritual, we are inspired to do all of life's duties. The inventor is taken possession of as is the poet and orator.

A clergyman writing in one of our magazines of Edison says, "he has his mossy spots, his periods of trance, out of which he comes with new ideas and his difficulties solved."

The business man has his flashes of inspiration that show him when to invest, when to collect a bill, and when to trust. The farmer is inspired concerning his crops, the housewife about her work, and the mother to care for her child. God's Holy Spirit is by all and inspires all. It is only a question of receptivity. Sheridan inspired, inspires his army at Opequan. The inspired mother inspires her sons to lives of honor. To the scientific eye, effects in all these cases being alike, the cause must be one.

But how? What is the soul of man and how is it inspired? We do not know, we can only speculate.

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It is only a few years since man began to apply law to physical phenomena and how little he yet knows in that field, only a student of science realizes. Mental science is a new name. The student who in schools studies the text books upon it, knows less in explanation than when he begins. He has gathered some data and been misled by dogmatic theories. In the field of psychical phenomena we know still less. It has been considered sacred to study and has been pre-empted by theology as its rightful field, and students earnest off. And the church now opposes its investigations as it did those into the physical realms of astronomers and geologists. It foolishly fears if science demonstrates its natural religion is destroyed. For the reason of our present ignorance we must be, as yet, very careful of fixed opinions here. We can be sure of our facts, but opinions based upon them should be held tentatively, and we should be ever ready to change them as added knowledge shall make it necessary.

I have my opinions based upon a large amount of facts and wide experience. I give them for what they may be worth, believing I thereby add my little toward the solution of the question of the methods and laws of inspiration.

The solution of all questions in material science lies in statistics. This is not an art, but a science. To have them can be an "art" which, when used by an "artist," they must be as inflexible. Before evolving an opinion, before speaking, one should have a sufficient number of facts to justify one's statement. One must first find out what the facts are, and then only can one speak. This is the only way that "inspiration" can be used. It is not a matter of faith, but of fact. It is not a matter of faith, but of fact. It is not a matter of faith, but of fact.

Let us remember that before God, all are equal and that for us, if we will, there is an inspiration as grand and glorious as ever mortal had. Our great modern inspirer, Emerson, has told us that for us "there is at this moment an utterance as broad and grand as that of the colonial scholar of the past." The soul of Emerson is the soul of the man of today, and the difference between them is not that Emerson was a man of letters and Emerson was a man of letters, but that Emerson was a man of letters and Emerson was a man of letters.

Let us remember every effort, under whatever name, and whatever form, that seeks to familiarize people with this fact of communion with God, the inspiration of His Spirit, until all shall know that, by revolution from Him in their lives, and shall consequently provide for themselves the channels of a greater inspiration. Only by this device can we have more God-like lives. Only thus bring the kingdom of God on earth where we have taught to pray for its reign. Only thus can men be reformed. Only by this means.

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