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"LIGHT! MORE LIGHT STILL!"—GOETHE.

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INSPIRATION.

BY R. P. AMBLER.

The principle of inspiration lies at the very gateway of spiritual truth. It refers not only to the divine powers that reside in man, but also to the connection which those powers maintain with a superior sphere of existence. In the night of the primitive darkness, the world was illumined and hallowed with a celestial radiance. It was the inspirations of gifted minds which, in the more remote periods of human history, prevented the powers of materiality from attaining a universal supremacy; and now, as the race approaches its state of manhood—as it grows more strong and rich in its experiences, and is surrounded by new and more beautiful evidences of a higher life, it is the same spiritual power which continues to form the centre and basis of the religious sentiment.

The fact cannot be concealed, however, that the true nature of inspiration has been imperfectly comprehended. To be inspired has conveyed the idea of a special interposition of divine power; it has implied the bestowal of some miraculous and supernatural gift, which would almost entitle the recipient to the tribute of worship. This at least has been accepted as the theological significance of the term in question. The religious world has taken it for granted that inspiration is an endowment to be bestowed only on the special favorites of Deity; that it is a gift to be possessed exclusively by certain chosen individuals, on whom at a time far distant fell the mantle of divine authority, and whose sayings are to be accepted now as the only, sufficient, and infallible word of God. On the basis of this narrow view of inspiration has been reared one of the chief pillars of the theological temple.

But what is the natural tendency of such a view of this subject? In the first place, it perverts and degrades our conceptions of the divine nature. Deity pervades every portion of the illimitable universe—the atom and the world alike—his spirit is diffused throughout all matter as the eternal essence of being. If, therefore, we conceive of Deity as talking face to face with man—as narrowing himself down to the outlines of a human personality, and so withdrawing his presence from the universal whole to concentrate it all in a selected locality, for the purpose of imparting a special and miraculous inspiration, do we not in our conceptions lower Deity?—do we not mentally contract his being?—and while thus attributing to him the performance of a personal and partial act, do we not place him almost on a level with humanity itself? This is evidently the natural effect of such a conception. Whenever we contemplate Deity as bounded by the narrow outlines of the human form, and, with the wayward impulses of man, selecting certain persons, places, and times to which his inspirations are to be confined, then He is no longer an object of the soul's highest reverence—He is no longer the Universal Spirit, whose smile illumines the distant regions of space, but is rendered comparatively weak, and finite, and human, by being brought within the scope of earthly limitations.

Then again, the popular view of inspiration is detrimental to the highest interest of man. We may see its effect in a blind dependence on the powers and gifts of others, and a consequent indifference to the responsibility of personal development. Men have almost lost sight of their own individuality; they have failed to recognize the dignity of their own natures; they have been unmindful of the divine powers which are latent in every mind, and have indolently leaned on others for that bread of life which should come to themselves alone. And why is this? It is because the sentiment has prevailed that the truth of God can be directly imparted only to the few; that inspiration is a gift which cannot be intrusted to the masses—the common people—and which the individual himself has no privilege to seek, but that it was designed only for the selected dignitaries of the past, whose names are whispered in reverence and whose words are read with prayer.

Leaving, then, the perverted ideas of theological teachers, let us endeavor to conceive the true nature of inspiration. This term, derived from the Latin *inspiro*, signifies merely the act of breathing in. It indicates therefore a process which is entirely simple and natural in its character. In a comprehensive sense it may be said that Creation itself is inspired. The universe could not exist without the constant breathings of the Divine Soul. Were it deprived of these, the beautiful forms of Nature would be resolved to dust, and Chaos would reign where order and harmony now prevail. Matter is inspired when every pore is filled with the divine essence; the plant is inspired when the breathings of the invisible Life are thrilling all its fibres; the flower is inspired when the Spirit of Beauty clothes its petals with a mantling blush; and vast worlds are inspired when they glow in the intensity of the light that is breathed of God. So in the same general sense, it may be said that every human soul is inspired. Is not this the child of the Divinity, sustained by his constant influence?—does it not feed and live on the very breath of God?—and are not all its thoughts and loves the emanations that proceed primarily from the Spirit to which it owes its birth? If so, then, while material things are quickened with the pervading Life, the soul above all things else must feel the inspiring presence.

From these remarks it may be seen that inspiration exists as a necessary and universal principle. This principle is based on the relations which man sustains to the spiritual sphere. The interior being of man is allied to a corresponding interior world, in which thought, truth and wisdom are pervading elements,

and that world represents a positive sphere to which man on earth stands in a negative relation. Hence it follows that the human spirit must receive the breathings of Inspiration from the celestial heavens, as naturally as the earth receives its dew from the weeping skies. Indeed, the law of gravitation is not more fully established or more precise in its action, than the principle which is here involved. It is true that inspiration in its action on different minds, is manifested in various degrees. All are not inspired with the same kind or measure of truth. The degree of inspiration will always depend on the inherent capacity and development of the soul-form. So far as the inmost of man is unfolded and brought into connection with the primal Soul of being—so far as he sends forth his aspirations and enlarges the capacity of his divine nature, to precisely that extent will he be inspired. If David, Isaiah, or Paul possessed a larger measure of inspiration than others in their time, it was because they were lifted up towards the Divinity, and not because God came down to them. The same is true also of men in every age. The operation of the inspiring power is modified by the condition of the individual, and hence will be manifested in different degrees of spiritual influx. We should not lose sight of the fact, however, that inspiration is in itself a universal principle, a principle which is as deeply fixed in the methods of the Divine Mind as any other law of Nature. Light, sweet light of truth—is ever flowing down from the Spiritual Sun; and soft, gentle breathings—breathings of angel-minds—are always descending from the celestial sky. Then we have only to look up to see the light; we have only to become unfolded to be inspired.

THE LAW OF QUESTIONS.

Steam and stars are valuable, or not, as you learn the art of putting to them the right questions, and procuring from them the best practical replies. You may ask steam, "What can you do?" It answers, "Clothe me in an armor of steel and iron, give me a boat to push, a rail to drive, or a train to draw, with a skilful hand to hold my reins, and I will show what I can do."

But how long did steam go unquestioned? For millions of years it played, in the foolishness of imbecility, before the dreamy eyes of men, never answering a question, because a question was never put to it. Ask the stars, "What can you tell us, or do?" And they answer, "Study us, and we will tell you of the immeasurable magnitude of God's own glorious temple! Ask us truly, and we will tell you of gravitation, and the laws of tides, of light and heat, of the seasons, of prosperity, of summer and winter, and seed time and harvest; all of which you may write down in your almanacs, and sell them to the poor in purse and in spirit, who can find neither time nor comprehension to study at our school."

What I desire is, to impress you with the law of questions, so that evermore you will treat everything as if it could course or bless, in accordance with the use made of it. 'Tis said, "The commonest mind is full of thoughts, some worthy of the rarest; and could it see them fairly writ, would wonder at its wealth." * * * I may say that it is the main purpose of existence to tempt forth, by pure and appropriate questions, the great thoughts that lie buried in the mental essence. Every system of education, not based on this principle, is irksome to youth, because it is essentially erroneous, and fundamentally unadapted. A child is never ready for knowledge till its soul is moved to put questions; then comes the period to try the teacher, for only he is fit to teach who answers like a child, and can put fresh questions to tempt forth the child's intuition, and expand its native endowments."—Davis's "Penetralia."

BELIEVING WITH THE HEART.—Let no man suppose that the simple assent of the mind to the proposition that spirits communicate with us in this age will therefore make a man better or much wiser. Any logical mind, in view of the facts, must come to that belief; but withal there must be a logical heart, if we may say so, a heart willing to follow facts to their moral consequence, to make the mental assent available to progressive uses. Let a man feel assured that the pure eyes of a dear departed one are upon him, and his whole nature will be quickened, though he were touched at first by no higher motive than common shame and the desire of approval. Gradually that impulse would deepen, and a high standard of purity and truth would be set before him, where no accidents of this life could degrade it; and thus the eye of a watching lover would become like the omniscience of God, to hold him in the path of nobleness and virtue.—*Christian Spiritualist.*

DECLINE OF CONGREGATIONALISM.—A writer in *The New Englander* raises the question, Why is it that pure Christianity, under Congregational forms, has lost ground relatively, and given place to other ecclesiastical policies, and in some cases, to another Gospel which is not another? The answer is made out by the author of the article, is, 1: That, for a long time, the Congregational churches of New England have been giving their strength to Presbyterians; 2: The Baptists have drawn away many to their fold; 3: Episcopacy has gained over to its views a portion of the descendants of the Puritans; 4: Many of the Puritan descendants have joined the Methodists; 5: The Unitarians and Universalists of the Eastern and Middle States are, in a majority of cases, of Puritan descent. After mentioning these specific causes, the writer adduces some of a more general character, such as narrow views on points of interest, and an illiberal, exclusive policy in managing church affairs, and neglecting to make Congregationalists of their children.

PROPHECIES OF NOSTRADAMUS AND OTHERS.

The human mind undoubtedly possesses a faculty of foresight, the exact nature and limits of which are unknown. In the solar system, the astronomer is able to extend his prophecies, with probable correctness, for a great number of centuries. If no unforeseen disturbing agencies arise, we may determine the condition of the solar system a hundred thousand years hence.

In political affairs, vague prophecies may often be made by moderate capacity. It requires no extraordinary intellectual power to predict at the close of the last century, the greatness and power of the United States at the present time. Nor is it at all extraordinary, when a physician announces, for days and weeks or even months in advance, the inevitable death of his patient. But there are prophecies beyond these—presentiments of death, occurring to the individual or his friends, and other presentiments of personal or public events, which, when they assume sufficient dignity and importance, are entitled to be called prophecies.

Such were the D'Orval prophecies, the predictions of Nostradamus, and many predictions which are now being made, and which events are rapidly verifying or confuting. My own experience would lead me to believe that many individuals are sufficiently gifted in this way to have a general, if not a precise idea of future events, and to consider it worth while to take note of any remarkable prophecies which may appear plausible or worthy of notice. The following essay, from "Dickens' Household Words," though written in rather a jesting, sarcastic mood, possesses some interest.

A French writer, M. Barest, published, about fifteen years ago, a book called *Nostradamus*. It contained a life of that calumniated sage, and dwelt with considerable uncton on the prophecies by which his hero had achieved his reputation, and maintained the exactness of their fulfillment in a great many instances, not without an apparent conviction that some of his foretellings would yet come to pass. There is always great difficulty in ascertaining the date of these predictions. From time to time insertions take place. Events are plainly prophesied after they have occurred, and great ingenuity is used to twist events into an accordance with prophecy when the opposite process is ineffectual or difficult.

But as M. Barest's book was published so long ago, and we have the date before our eyes, we cannot run any risk of being imposed on, if a prediction, printed at that time, has received its completion since. Whether Nostradamus wrote down his prophecies in fifteen hundred and fifty-five or not, does not matter—whether another famous inspector of the future, of the name of Olivarius, saw visions and dreamed dreams in fifteen hundred and forty-two, gives us no uneasiness. We see certain things recorded as being anciently foretold in a volume printed in the first style of modern typography, in eighteen hundred and forty, and we don't care whether they were anciently foretold or not; we are satisfied with the knowledge that they are, at all events, as ancient as the publication of the book containing them. They were written before the event—for they were printed before the event—read before the event, and utterly unbelieved and forgotten; all before the event. Not that we consider M. Barest either a prophet or an impostor. He may believe or not the adulterated condition of the Quatrains of Nostradamus, and the more distinct enunciations of Maistre Dieudonne Noel Olivarius. We believe, and that is quite enough, in the year eighteen hundred and forty, and on seeing the difference between that and eighteen hundred and fifty-five, we cannot deny that some person, be he who he may, had an amazingly clear perception of what is going on just now—not that the prophecy is fulfilled—but the curtain is drawing up—the first act is begun, and the principal personages have taken their places upon the stage. Let our readers judge for themselves, and first of Nostradamus.

Nostradamus, the Latinized form of the French surname, Notredame, was born at St. Remi, in Provence, in fifteen hundred and three. Originally of a Jewish stock, his family had devoted itself to the sciences of law and medicine, and the young Michael, for that was his name, soon distinguished himself by his skill and learning. Having lost his wife at an early age, he tried to console himself by the study of the sciences. He visited Italy, among other places, where Leo the Tenth was physically and metaphorically placing the head of St. Peter on the shoulder of Jupiter; and having seen enough of Rome to inspire him with a philosophic knowledge of the speedy diminution of papal power, he returned to France after an absence of twelve years, married a second time, and became illustrious for his infallible prescriptions against fever and the plague. A man of poetic temperament, with morbid views of life—pursued with unrelenting animosity by his professional rivals, and driven for occupation in the solitude to which his pride compelled him, to the mystical writings of the time and his own meditations, he soon became persuaded that he was in possession of marvellous gifts. We do not suppose that he was a wilful deceiver. There was sufficient in his history and circumstances to account for the exaltation of his mind, without having recourse to the theory of his being a cheat. He collected his predictions in fifteen hundred and fifty-five. They are written in very obscure quatrains from which, in general, it would not be difficult to make out any meaning one chose. But the success of the book was extraordinary. The small town of Salon, in which he resided, was besieged by illustrious visitors. Catharine de Medicis sent for him to court, and employed him to draw the horoscopes for her sons. A second edition was called for in fifteen hundred and fifty-eight, and the apparent fulfilment of one of the principal pro-

phesies in the following year, placed him at the summit of his fame. This fortunate coincidence was the death of the king—Henry the Second—in consequence of a wound received in a tilting match with Montgomery. This event enriched the astrologer of Salon. Here is the quatrain, and four more misty lines it is difficult to imagine. Yet, through the mist, certainly looms a golden visor, a wound to the eye, and a death—

Le lion jeune le vieux surmontera
En champ de bataille par singulier duel
Deux plaies une, puis mourir, mort cruelle:
Le lion jeune le vieux shall reverse
In single combat on the warlike plain;
Within a cage of gold his eyes shall pierce,
Two wounds in one, then die, O, death of pain!

Notwithstanding the obscurity, and the difficulty of distinguishing between the lion conquering and the lion subdued, the prediction was hailed at once as a proof of Nostradamus's superhuman powers, and kings and princes were proud to visit the divinely-gifted man. The Duke of Savoy and his wife made a pilgrimage to Salon, and Charles the Ninth sent him a purse of two hundred golden crowns. But crowns and reputation could not prolong the philosopher's days. He died in fifteen hundred and sixty-six, and is supposed, or was lately supposed by his fellow-citizens at Salon, to have merely pretended to die, but to be in reality comfortably sitting up in his tomb, with pen, ink and candles, and surrounded with his books of grammar. The epitaph, however, above him, declares solemnly the fact of his death; and in this instance an epitaph probably speaks the truth. But living or dead, little or nothing was probably ever heard of Nostradamus except in the Lives of the Astrologers, and sometimes even in the Histories of Imposture, till he was suddenly reinstated in all his glory in eighteen hundred and four. The prophets began to be honored, and in that year a copy of the Centuries, as they were called, of Nostradamus, was presented to Napoleon. There also fell into his hands a volume purporting to have been written by a certain Maistre Noel Olivarius, a cotemporary of Nostradamus, which, if authentic, puts the powers of his more famous countryman to shame. Its date was fifteen hundred and forty-two. It was discovered in seventeen hundred and ninety-three, in the midst of a large pile of volumes condemned to the flames by the enlightened Montagnards, who were desirous of putting an end to the very memory of priests and nobles and kings. A valorous gentleman, of the name of Francois de Metz, having no fear of Montagnard vengeance before his eyes, and scarcely believing that the liberty of his country depended on the destruction of a little duodecimo, bound in vellum, and written in the crankiest kind of hands and palest of inks, rescued it from the revolutionary flames, and found it to contain a great number of prophecies, about all manner of subjects, and particularly one which it needed no very brilliant interpreter in the first years of this century, to refer to the great soldier on the throne. What became of this marvellous prediction all the time from its rescue from the Montagnard fire till it appeared in the *Tuilleries*, we are not told. In what state was it when it met the despot's eyes? Up to what point of his history did the prophecy at that time extend? It is not likely that a prophet in livery, as the modern sayer probably was, would go beyond the establishment of the empire, or dwell on Moscow and Waterloo. But there seems little reason to doubt that the prediction, as it exists at present, was printed in eighteen hundred and fifteen. It was inserted in the memoirs of Josephine (editions of eighteen hundred and twenty and eighteen hundred and twenty-seven), and stretched its glance far into the future; for it clearly foresaw the revolution of eighteen hundred and thirty, the expulsion of Louis Philippe, and the accession, prosperity, and finally the death of—some one whom the reader may fix on for himself.

Even if the whole story was a mystification at first, how shall we account, we repeat, for the latter part of the pretended ancient manuscript, when we read it in a book published in eighteen hundred and forty?—years before the time of Louis Napoleon—while the most sagacious of monarchs was writing out in text hand for all generations of kings and governors, the difference between cunning and wisdom, but viewed as firm in his seat, as if honor and courage had finally disappeared from the heart of France. How are we to account, we say, for the enigmatical, but very unmistakable foreshadowing of events going on before our eyes? Whether the foreshadowing was cast from the magic lantern of Nostradamus or Olivarius, or the magic mirror of some seer of visions in the palmy days of Louis Philippe; take what date we choose—whether eighteen hundred and four, as M. Barest does, or eighteen hundred and fifteen, as recorded proofs invite us—the fact of its being an actual prediction cannot admit of a doubt. But to make clear its connections with France and her fortunes, it will be necessary to give the whole prophecy; and as we submit the matter to the critical decision of the reader, we will give it in as close a translation as we can of the ancient language in which Olivarius delivered it:

"Gaulic Italy will see, far from her bosom, the birth of a supernatural being. That man will come out, quite young, from the sea; will come to acquire tongue and manners among the Celtic Gauls; will open, still young, through a thousand obstacles, among the soldiers, a path, and will become their first chief. That winding path will leave him many griefs. He will come to war near his land for a lustre or more. Beyond the sea will be seen warring with great glory and valor, and will subdue afresh the Roman world.

"Will give laws to the Germans, will pacify the troubles and fears of the Gallie Celts, and will then be

named not king but imperator, by grand enthusiasm of the people.

"Will battle in all parts of the empire; will chase princes, and lords, and kings, for two lustres or more. Then he will call to life new princes and lords, and, speaking on his estrade, (raised dais) shall cry, 'O! sidera—O! sacra!' Will be seen with an army numbering forty-nine times twenty thousand foot soldiers, armed, who will carry arms and horns of irons. He will have seven times seven thousand horses, mounted by men who will carry, in addition to the former, great lance or sword, and body armor of brass. He will have seven times seven thousand men who will play terrible machines, and will vomit sulphur and fire and death. The total amount of his army will be forty-nine times twenty thousand men. Will bear in his right hand an eagle, sign of the victory to win. Will give many countries to nations, and to each one peace. Will come into the great city ordaining many great things, buildings, bridges, harbors, aqueducts, canals; will do, himself alone, by great riches, as much as a Roman, and all in the dominion of the Gauls. Will have two wives and one son. Will go warring to where the lines of longitude and latitude cross, fifty-five months. There his enemies will burn with fire the great city, and he will enter there and depart from thence with his men, from under ashes and great ruins; and his men, having no longer either bread or water, through great and extreme cold, will be so unfortunate that two thirds of his army will perish, and, moreover, the half of the remainder being no longer in his dominion.

"Then the man abandoned, betrayed by his friends, will be changed in his turn, with great loss, near to his native soil, by the great European population. In his place will be put the kings of the old blood of the Capet.

"He, forced into exile in the sea from which he came so young, and near to his native soil, remaining for eleven moons with some of his men, true friends and soldiers, and not amounting to more than seven times seven times seven times two times in number. Immediately the eleven moons are past, will be and his men take ship and set foot on the Celtic-Gallie."

"And he will march to the great city, where is seated the king of the old blood of the Capet, who rises, flees, carrying with him royal ornaments. Puts kings in his ancient domination. Gives his people many admirable laws.

"Then, cleared away again by a three-fold European population (par trinite population Europeenne) after three moons and the third of a moon. The king of the old blood of the Capet is put back in his place; and he, believed to be dead by his people and soldiers, who during that time will keep his memorial on their breasts. The Celts and Gauls, like tigers and wolves, will destroy each other. The blood of the old king of the Capet will be the plaything of black treasons. The discontented will be deceived, and by fire and sword put to death; the lily maintained; but the last branches of the old blood still menaced.

"So they will quarrel among themselves."

Up to this point the prophecy seems to point to the fortunes of Napoleon, the old Bourbons, and the commencement of Louis Philippe's reign. But now comes the end of it. After the mutual animosity of the old and young blood of the Capet, and the discontent of the French nation, we may suppose ourselves arrived at the end of 1848.

"Then a new combatant will advance towards the great city. . . . He will bear lion and cock on his armor. Then the lance will be given him by a great prince of the East. (Ainsi la lance lui sera donnee par grand prince d'Orient.)

"He will be marvellously seconded by the warlike people of Gaul, who will unite themselves to the Parisians to put an end to troubles; collect soldiers, and cover themselves with branches of olives.

"Still warring with such glory seven times seven moons, that a three-fold European population, with great fear, and cries, and tears, and their sons in hostage, bend beneath laws sound, just, and beloved by all."

The new combatant, whoever he is, who comes in so apropos to put an end to civil dissension, is evidently supported by the soldiers—no less than by the people of Gaul—he bears for his cognizance a lion and a cock; which, without any great stretch of ingenuity, may be taken to represent an alliance between France and England; and immediately on this being arranged, a lance is given him by the great prince of the Orient. We may venture to interpret this, "a cause of war is furnished to the allied Lion and Cock, by the Sultan of Turkey."

The war, we are sorry to see, is to last longer than we hoped; it is not to be concluded till the entire submission and humiliation of three European states, and that is not to occur for forty-nine months. However, the triumphant conclusion will justify any little delay, and we only regret that the indemnity for the expenses of the war is not more distinctly expressed. But the sons deposited as hostages will give the allies an immense power over the royalties of Berlin, Vienna and Petersburg.

External glory, is, however, to be followed by great calamities at home. Peace is only to endure for twenty-five moons.

"In Lutetia (Paris) the Seine, reddened with blood (the consequence of struggles to the death) will widen its bed with ruin and mortality. New seditions of discontented mailloins (factions.) Then they will be chased from the palace of the kings by the man of

