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Henry W. Longfellow,
of Cambridge.

THE MINISTRATION

OF OUR

DEPARTED FRIENDS.

A NEW YEAR'S REVERIE.

(By Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe.)

Ryde Tracts, No. 2.

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"It is a beautiful belief,
That ever round our head
Are hovering, on viewless wings,
The spirits of the dead."

WHILE every year is taking one and another from the ranks of life and usefulness, or the charmed circle of friendship and love, it is soothing to remember that the spiritual world is gaining in riches through the poverty of this.

In early life, with our friends all around us, hearing their voices, cheered by their smiles, death and the spiritual world are to us remote, misty, and half-fabulous; but, as we advance in our journey and voice after voice is hushed, and form after form vanishes from our side, and our shadow falls almost solitary on the hill-side of life, the soul, by a necessity of its being, tends to the unseen and spiritual, and pursues in another life those it seeks in vain in this.

For, with every friend that dies, dies also some especial form of social enjoyment, whose being depended on the peculiar character of that friend; till, late in the afternoon of life, the pilgrim seems to himself to have passed over to the unseen world in successive portions half his own spirit; and poor, indeed, is he who has not familiarized himself with that unknown bourne wither, despite himself, his soul is earnestly tending.

One of the deepest and most imperative cravings of the human heart, as it follows its beloved ones beyond the veil, is for some assurance that they still love and care for us. Could we firmly believe this, bereavement would lose half its bitterness. As a German writer beautifully expresses it, "Our friend is not wholly gone from us; we see across the river of death, in the blue distance, the smoke of his cottage;" hence the heart, always creating what it desires, has ever made the guardianship and ministration of departed spirits a favourite theme of poetic fiction.

But is it, then fiction? Does revelation, which gives so many hopes which nature had not, give none here? Is there no sober certainty to correspond to the inborn and passionate craving of the soul! Do departed spirits in verity retain any knowledge of what transpires in this world, and take any part in its scenes? All that revelation says of a spiritual state is more intimation than assertion; it has no distinct treatise, and teaches nothing apparently of set purpose, but gives vague, glorious images, while now and then some accidental ray of intelligence looks out—

"Like eyes of cherubs shining

From out the veil that hid the ark."

But out of all the different hints and assertions of the Bible, we think a better inferential argument might be constructed to prove the ministration of departed spirits, than for many a doctrine which has passed in its day for the height of orthodoxy.

First, then, the Bible distinctly says there is a class of invisible spirits who minister to the children of men: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation!" It is said of little children that "their angels do always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven." This last passage, from the words of our Saviour, taken in connection with the well-known tradition of his time, fully recognizes the idea of individual guardian spirits, for God's government over mind is, it seems, throughout, one of intermediate agencies, and these not chosen at random, but with the nicest reference to their adaptation to the purpose intended. Not even the All-Seeing, All-Knowing One was deemed perfectly adapted to become a Saviour without a human experience. Knowledge intuitive, gained from above, of human wants and woes was not enough; to it must be added the home-born certainty of consciousness and memory; the Head of all mediation must become human. Is it likely, then,

that, in selecting subordinate agencies, this so necessary a requisite of a human life and experience is overlooked? While around the throne of God stand spirits, now sainted and glorified, yet thrillingly conscious of a past experience of sin and sorrow, and trembling in sympathy with temptations and struggles like their own, is it likely that He would pass by these souls, thus burning for the work, and commit it to those bright abstract beings whose knowledge and experience are comparatively so distant and so cold?

It is strongly in confirmation of this idea that in the transfiguration scene (which seems to have been intended purposely to give the disciples a glimpse of the glorified state of their Master) we find Him attended by two spirits of earth, Moses and Elias, "which appeared with Him in glory, and spake of His death which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." It appears that these so long departed ones were still mingling in deep sympathy with the tide of human affairs, not only aware of the present, but also informed as to the future. In coincidence with this idea are all those passages which speak of the redeemed of earth as being closely and indissolubly identified with Christ, members of His body, of His flesh, and His bones. It is not to be supposed that those united to Jesus above all others by so vivid a sympathy and community of interests, are left out as instruments in that great work of human regeneration which so engrosses him; and when we hear Christians spoken of as kings and priests unto God, as those who shall judge angels, we see it more than intimated that they are to be the partners and actors in that great work of spiritual regeneration of which Jesus is the head.

What then? May we look among the band of ministering spirits for our own departed ones? Whom would God be more likely to send us? Have we in heaven a friend who knew us to the heart's core? A friend to whom we have confessed our weaknesses and deplored our griefs? If we are to have a ministering spirit, who better adapted? Have we not memories which correspond to such a belief? When our soul has been cast down, has never an invisible voice whispered, "There is lifting up?" Have not gales and breezes of sweet and healing thought been wafted over us, as if an angel had shaken from his wings the odours of paradise?

Many a one, we are confident, can remember such things. And whence come they? Why do the children of the pious mother, whose grave has grown green and smooth with years, seem often

to walk through perils and dangers fearful and imminent as the crossing Mohammed's fiery gulf on the edge of a drawn sword, and yet walk unhurt? Ah! could we see that attendant form, that face, where the angel conceals not the mother, our question would be answered.

It may be possible that a friend is sometimes taken because the Divine One sees that his ministry can act more powerfully from the unseen world than amid the infirmities of mortal intercourse. Here the soul distracted and hemmed in by human events and by bodily infirmities, often scarce knows itself, and makes no impression on others correspondent to its desires. The mother would fain electrify the heart of her child; she yearns and burns in vain to make her soul effective on its soul, and to inspire it with a spiritual and holy life; but all her own weaknesses, faults and mortal cares cramp and confine her, till death breaks all fetters, and then, first truly alive, risen, purified, and at rest, she may do calmly, sweetly, and certainly what, amid the tempests and tossings of life, she laboured for painfully and fitfully. So, also, to generous souls who burn for the good of man, who deplore the shortness of life, and the little that is permitted to any individual agency on earth, does this belief open, a heavenly field. Think not, father or brother, long labouring for man, till thy sun stands on the western mountains, think not that thy day in this world is over. Perhaps, like Jesus, thou hast lived a human life, and gained a human experience, to become, under and like Him, a Saviour of thousands; thou hast been through the preparation, but thy real work of good, thy full power of doing, is yet to begin.

But again: there are some spirits (and those of earth's choicest) to whom, so far as enjoyment to themselves or others is concerned, this life seems to have been a total failure. A hard hand from the first, and all the way through life, seems to have been laid upon them; they seem to live only to be chastened and crushed, and we lay them in the grave at last in mournful silence. To such, what a vision is opened by this belief! This hard discipline has been the school and task-work by which their soul has been fitted for their invisible labours in a future life, and when they pass the gates of the grave, their course of benevolent acting first begins, and they find themselves delighted possessors of what through many years they have sighed for—the power of doing good. The year

just passed, like all other years, has taken from a thousand circles the sainted, the just, and the beloved ; there are spots in a thousand graveyards which have become this year dearer than all the living world ; but in that loneliness of sorrow how cheering to think that our lost ones are not wholly gone from us ! They still may move about in our homes, shedding around an atmosphere of purity and peace, promptings of good and reproofs of evil. We are compassed about by a cloud of witnesses, whose hearts throb in sympathy with every effort and struggle, and who thrill with joy at every success. How should this thought check and rebuke every worldly feeling and unworthy purpose, and enshrine us in the midst of a forgetful and unspiritual world, with an atmosphere of heavenly peace ! They have overcome, have risen, are crowned, glorified ; but still they remain to us, our assistants, our comforters, and in every hour of darkness their voice speaks to us : "So we grieved, so we struggled, so we fainted, so we doubted ; but we have overcome, we have obtained, we have seen, we have found ; and in our victory behold the certainty of thy own."

Inspirational Poems.

INTRODUCTION.

As it may be deemed necessary, by some of our readers, that we should preface these poems with a few remarks and explanations, we will endeavour so to do.

There are, perhaps, few subjects on which more crude and conflicting views are entertained than on what is called inspiration. We are too apt to forget that it is various in kind, in degree, in purity, and in power ; and that even when in the highest kind and fullest measure which human nature is capable of receiving, it must still fall short of a *perfect* transfer of ideas and language.

All inspiration in its external unfolding, must of necessity partake of the imperfection and peculiar quality of the medium through which it is transmitted, as the sun's rays are coloured and refracted by the atmosphere through which they pass.

The highly gifted lady, to whose mediumistic powers we are indebted for many beautiful thoughts set in grand, gracefully flowing, and most musical language, thus refers to her experiences:—"Under these influences I have not necessarily lost my individuality, or become wholly unconscious. The avenues of external sense, if not entirely closed, were at least disused, in order that the spiritual perceptions might be quickened to the required degree. Certain it is that a physical change took place, affecting both my breathing and circulation, and my Clairvoyant powers were so strengthened that I could dimly perceive external objects from the frontal portion of my brain, even with my eyes closed and bandaged; also, in that state any excess of light was far more painful than under ordinary conditions. I was, for the time being like a harp in the hands of superior powers, and just in proportion as my entire nature was attuned to thrill responsive to their touch did I give voice and expression to their unwritten music. They furnished the inspiration, but it was of necessity modified by the nature and character of the instrument upon which they played, for the most skilled musician cannot change the tone of a harp to the sound of a trumpet, though he may give a characteristic expression of himself through either.

"The first poem, 'Resurrexi,' delivered by Poe, came to me far more unexpectedly than any other, oftentimes however, and particularly under his influence, I would awake in the night from a deep slumber, and detached fragments of those poems would be floating through my mind, though in a few moments after they would vanish like a dream, I have sometimes awakened myself by repeating them aloud.

"The influence of Poe was neither pleasant nor easy. I can only describe it as a species of mental intoxication. I was tortured with a feeling of great restlessness and irritability, and strange, incongruous images crowded my brain. Some were bewildering and dazzling as the sun, others dark and repulsive. Under the earlier periods of his influence, particularly, I suffered the greatest exhaustion of vital energy, so much so, that after giving one of his poems, I was usually quite ill for several days.

"I have been informed, by these Spirit influences, that all their poems are as complete and finished in spirit-life as they are in this, and the only reason why they cannot be repeated again and again is because of the difficulty of bringing a human organism into the same state of exaltation—a state in which mediums readily receive inspiration, and render the poems with the least interference of their own intellect.

"A supposition has been presented, that I, or the person who wrote the poem, 'Resurrexi,' must have been very familiar with the writings of Poe. As no one wrote the poem for me, consequently I am the only one who can answer to the supposition; and I can say, most conscientiously, that previous to that time I had never read, to my knowledge, any of his poems, save the 'Raven,' and I had not seen that for several years."

The foregoing will afford a brief outline of the experience of her through whose organism have flowed poems which have struck, a deeply sympathetic chord in the hearts of the hundreds who have, to use the words of those who have described to us the scene, "been held, as it were, spell-bound during their wondrous delivery."

Taking into account the high moral and religious tendency of these poems, that the medium through whom they are given solemnly avers, that, "in whatsoever I purpose or perform, I 'can do nothing against the Truth—only for it.'" It surely becomes us to exercise much careful deliberation before we stamp her as an imposter. It may be that some charitably disposed sceptics will ascribe these productions to natural genius, and her explanation of them to self-delusion. But many of our profound thinkers have expressed the opinion, that, those who have startled the world with their extra-human powers were individuals open to the influx of the spirit-world. A careful reference to the biography of those who have ravished the ears of humanity with their songs and their music would scarcely fail to lead to more comprehensive views, and a recognition of the identity of the ecstatic state with that of genius in activity. The reader will find an illustration in the following account of Mozart's own moments of, what we must designate as inspiration. He says: "When I am in a carriage, or walking, or when I cannot sleep at night, the thoughts come streaming in upon me most fluently. Whence, or how, is more than I can tell. What comes, I hum to myself as it proceeds.....then

follows the counter-point and the clang of the different instruments, and if I am not disturbed, my soul is fixed, and the thing grows greater, and broader, and clearer; and I have it all in my head, even when the piece is a long one, and I see it like a beautiful picture, not hearing the different parts in succession, as they must be played, but the whole at once. That is the delight! The composing and the making is like a beautiful and vivid dream, but this hearing of it is the best of all."

Here, then, we have a narrative of experiences which few will venture to question, and, to us, they appear to offer confirmatory evidence of the truthfulness of Miss Doten's statements. But we have no need to fall back upon the rich stores of the past for experiences of a similar character. In London, Miss Emma Hardinge, a countrywoman of our own, is now delivering a series of inspirational discourses which are described as transcending in interest and in power the efforts of our foremost men, and most practised speakers. The erudite and undaunted William Howitt thus refers to the marvellous powers of Miss Hardinge:—

So far as I know any thing of modern orators, there is not one who is fit to carry Miss Hardinge's shoes after her. In her you have none of the hums and ha's and repetitions which try your nerves so dreadfully in many of the best of them, though, thanks to the reporter, they read pretty well in the next morning papers. Her language is free, flowing, without a limp, a halt, or a shuffle; and that is the least of her perfections. On whatever subject she speaks, though proposed on the instant, she gives you a grand *coup d'ail* of it. ...Rising from a simple but solid proposition, she ascends by a truly musical scale to the very highest reach of the theme, and leaves you at once enlightened, charmed, and astonished.

In Paris, M. Sardou is said to be recognized as one of the most successful and celebrated of modern dramatists, and who has moreover long been known as a "drawing medium." Lately he has produced a comedy, "*Le Famille Benoiton*," which has recently been selected for performance before the Emperor and a distinguished company. M. Sardou has publicly announced that not a line of this comedy is the genuine production of his own brain, on the contrary, he asserts that it is entirely the inspiration of departed dramatic celebrities, with whom he is in constant communication. If these assertions be not true, what strange and unaccountable infatuation is leading these individuals to deprive themselves of such honor as their productions would secure, preferring that the world should deem them the mere humble instruments through which an independent intellect signals its existence and manifests its powers?

INSPIRATIONAL POEMS, No. 1,

RESURREXI.

"The following striking poem was recited by Miss Lizzie Doten, a Spiritual trance-speaker, at the close of a recent lecture in Boston. She professed to give it impromptu, as far as she was concerned, and to speak under the direct influence of Edgar A. Poe. Whatever may be the truth about its production, the poem is, in several respects, a remarkable one. Miss Doten is apparently, incapable of originating such a poem. If it was written for her by some one else, and merely committed to memory and recited by her, the poem is, nevertheless, wonderful as a reproduction of the singular music and alliteration of Poe's style, and as manifesting the same intensity of feeling. Whoever wrote the poem must have been exceedingly familiar with Poe, and deeply in sympathy with his spirit. But if Miss Doten is honest, and the poem originated as she said it did, it is unquestionably the most astonishing thing that Spiritualism has produced. It does not follow, necessarily, in that case, that Poe himself made the poem,—although we are asked to believe a great many spiritual things on less cogent evidence,—but it is, in any view of it that may be taken, a very singular and mysterious production. There is, in the second verse, an allusion to a previous poem that purported to come from the spirit of Poe, which was published several years since, and attracted much attention, but the following poem is of a higher order, and much more like Poe than the other."

FROM the throne of Life Eternal,
 From the home of love supernal,
 Where the angel feet make music over all the starry floor—
 Mortals, I have come to meet you,
 Come with words of peace to greet you,
 And to tell you of the glory that is mine forevermore.

Once before I found a mortal
 Waiting at the heavenly portal—
 Waiting but to catch some echo from that ever-opening door;
 Then I seized his quickened being,

And through all his inward seeing,
Caused my burning inspiration in a fiery flood to pour!

Now I come more meekly human,
And the weak lips of a woman
Touch with fire from off the altar, not with burnings as of
yore;
But in holy love descending,
With her chastened being blending,
I would fill your souls with music from the bright celestial
shore.

As one heart yearns for another,
As a child turns to its mother,
From the golden gates of glory turn I to the earth once
more,
Where I drained the cup of sadness,
Where my soul was stung to madness,
And life's bitter, burning billows swept my burdened being
o'er

Here the harpies and the ravens, —
Human vampyres, sordid cravens, —
Preyed upon my soul and substance till I writhed in anguish
sore;
Life and I then seemed mismated,
For I felt accursed and fated,
Like a restless, wrathful spirit, wandering on the Stygian
shore.

Tortured by a nameless yearning,
Like a frost-fire, freezing, burning,

Did the purple, pulsing life-tide through its fevered channels
pour,
Till the golden bowl—Life's token —
Into shining shards was broken,
And my chained and chafing spirit leaped from out its prison
door.

But while living, striving, dying,
Never did my soul cease crying,
“Ye who guide the Fates and Furies, give, O give me, I
implore,
From the myriad hosts of nations,
From the countless constellations,
One pure spirit that can love me—one that I, too, can
adore!”

Through this fervent aspiration
Found my fainting soul salvation,
For from out its blackened fire-crypts did my quickened spirit
soar;
And my beautiful ideal—
Not too saintly to be real—
Burst more brightly on my vision than the loved and lost
Lenore.

’Mid the surging seas she found me,
With the billows breaking round me,
And my saddened, sinking spirit in her arms of love
upbore;
Like a lone one, weak and weary,
Wandering in the midnight dreary,

On her sinless, saintly bosom, brought me to the heavenly shore.

Like the breath of blossoms blending,
 Like the prayers of saints ascending,
 Like the rainbow's seven-hued glory, blend *our* souls forevermore;
 Earthly love and lust enslaved *me*,
 But divinest love has saved me,
 And I know now, first and only, how to love and to adore.

O, my mortal friends and brothers!
 We are each and all another's,
 And the soul that gives most freely from its treasure hath the more;
 Would you lose your life, you find it,
 And in giving love, you bind it
 Like an amulet of safety, to your heart forevermore.



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IS IT TRUE?—

Intercommunication between the Living and the (so called) Dead.

"Apart from the numerous and well-selected quotations on this 'vexed question,' the appeal on behalf of modern spirit manifestations or 'Intercommunication between the Living and the (so called) Dead' is carefully written in a plain straightforward manner. Without holding the convictions of the writer, it is easy to see that he is not only earnest but honest."—Public Opinion, March 24th, 1866.

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