

EDUCATION BY INSPIRATION.

BY

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Nothing is more astonishing than what can be done by one person, yet how few compared with the many around us ever accomplish any thing at all. We need not restrict this to the building of some great city, or the overthrowing of an Empire; but we may also apply it to the making the best of our own lives and surroundings.

The greater part of the world who would never take the trouble (and trouble is three fourths of power) to accomplish any thing themselves, are very anxious to prove that in the case of those who do accomplish, all was in their favor. On the contrary, history proves that the greatest minds and the most successful people were originally the most common place.

Workers are beings in real power. Honor has been spoken of as only the shadow of which they have in their lives held the substance. It should be shown in school and public education that personality is in itself an influence and even a direct power, which held at its height, nothing can overthrow or resist.

The indolent and cowardly are only too ready to say, "I can't," but of what good are ability and great power, if the will and the conscience do not open a channel for them. Great powers are to us a marvel and an inspiration; the more of an inspiration, the more they prove themselves natural and possible to human beings.

One of the greatest victories over the tyranny of unpaid labor was won by the moral force of opinion; one might say by the cannon ball, but what was war but the resistance by the South of those forces which it saw could not help but abolish Slavery.

Education by inspiration is not restricted to any age or any cause. It is the education which fits us for words and deeds by which more or fewer individuals may be benefited.

We have many cases where men have accomplished wonders thru selfishness, but they have always used violence of some kind. In many cases, their work was undone, or at least the gain at last went to another.

There has been no great advance in this world without inspiration. Take for example the discoveries or inventions. We say, "He just stumbled on to it." But in all these cases, haven't these certain things been needed and sought after for some time? Wouldn't it then be better and more natural to say, "He was inspired, some unseen power, some uncontrollable force caused him to do as he did."

In this time of the world as well as in the past, work is a matter of necessity; but it is the manner in which people enjoy themselves that shows their capacity for good. In one sense, education is the separation between childhood and maturity. A thoroughly educated person is at the height of his power. "If we take for example the Society of Friends, we can see what inspiration has done for an ignorant people. Their underlying principle was ideality, and as it was not checked by creeds, it expanded to its height, and those unlearned people ascribed the effects of inspiration to the immediate and special interposition of the Deity."

Emerson says that power is what we all seek. Money is only second best, and any one of us would jump to buy power with it; that is, intellectual perception moving the will. There are times when the intellect is very active, but these times are more the exception than the rule. In bright moments, every thing seems easy and free, our intellect carries us on to greater and grander achievements. Every thing which we hear for the first time was expected by the mind. This foresight we call inspiration. Man's insight and power are but occasional. What we are working for is consecutiveness.

"Inspiration has been likened to yeast. No matter in which of a half dozen ways you procure the infection, you can apply one or the other equally well to the purpose, and secure your loaf of bread." Power is the first good. A rush of thoughts is the only conceivable prosperity that can come to any of us. Fine clothes and social consideration cannot cover up real poverty and insignificance. Thoughts lead us into realities. "No miracle or magic, or even the immortality of the soul is incredible after we have experience and insight a thought." It comes to some men but once, to few men often. comes as a religious impulse and intellectual insight. It is but a flash, then a long darkness, then a flash again. What we want is a continuation, a line instead of a point, and a circle instead of the line.

The great question is, are these moods within control? We know that the mind and intellect can be trained to a wonderful degree. If we are enthusiastic and in earnest, what can't we do? What is a man without enthusiasm, and what is enthusiasm but a daring to risk all for the object in view. All poets are conscious of times when they are capable of things above themselves. Their master piece was written at some time under some great inspiration, caused often by anger, love, sorrow, ambition, or sympathy. All are conscious of times when the intellect seems dead, and it is impossible to form our thoughts. Aristotle said, "No great genius was never without some mixture of madness, nor can any thing grand or superior to the voice of common mortals be spoken, except by the agitated soul." We might say of these moments that we are in them not they in us. We pass out as quickly as we entered, altho against our will, and when the spell is broken, by no mechanical means can it be forced to return. There are as many sources of inspiration as our affinities. One of the greatest of these is health. That is, health comprising the magic

benefit of air, landscape and physical exercise, upon the mind. Exercise can do much to lengthen our lives, clear our conscience, and spur us on to do better. How much we feel we could accomplish after a long walk in some secluded spot, our minds having been occupied with noble and pure thoughts.

Sleep is the second condition of health. Sleep benefits mainly by the sound health it produces. A rest for the mind as well as for the body, the intellect is freshened and renewed, ready for active work. Often in the dreams some lesson is put, some insight into a future that might be, which leads us on with new enthusiasm and fervor. A man must be able to escape from his cares and fears as well as from hunger and want of sleep. The mind must be in perfect unison with the body.

Very few realize the benefit and good derived from the writing of letters. We may feel dull and uninspired, but in writing a letter to a friend we find our thoughts rise to a power of expression which costs us nothing and no matter how often it is repeated, it does not lose its effect. Thoughts of the past join with thoughts of the future and carry us above ourselves.

The power of the will is almost sublime. Men of very strong will power have compelled themselves to do wonders. In the case of serious illness, if one gives up hope, he is as good as lost: but on the contrary we may by mere force of will compel ourselves to get well. Each victory of the will builds it up and makes it strong and more capable of accomplishing the next task set before it. Plutarch affirms that, "souls are endowed with the faculty of prediction, and the chief cause that excites this faculty and virtue is a certain temperature of air and winds." We have the effect of the early morning's freshness upon the ^hwhole day's work. In the morning, the mind is fresh and clear, ready for new thoughts, new insights, and

new discoveries; how important then is the habit of planning each day's work at the close of the last. If each morning the freshened invigorated mind is taken up with planning the little details of the day, what room is there for new thoughts? Eminently thoughtful men have insisted on an hour each morning to study their minds and see what lesson they have to teach.

The solitude of nature is very important to the poetical, the beauty loving. If one has trained one's self to study and read nature, he receives many a great inspiration from it. But more essential than the solitude of nature is the solitude of habit. A change, new surroundings and then seclusion from the business and bustle of the world, alone with oneself; otherwise difficult problems seem easy and simple. No matter how much force some picturesque scenery may have, some prefer the plainest chamber, with one chair and a table. Here the imagination has full sway.

The imagination, if properly trained, is one of the greatest sources of inspiration. There is a great difference between mere fancy and imagination. A real poet has power to see beyond and above the natural things of this world. Poetry shows to us the sublime and good. Their imagination carried them away. Poetry has no force unless the writer sees vividly and understands how to show to his readers that he saw and felt all. He must have a very strong imagination and an inspiration at the same time.

Thus we see that all good, all above the material things of life, are gained thru inspiration. All new things great and wonderful may be traced back and their source found in inspiration.

A life without inspiration differs in its effect from one influenced by it, much as the voyages of the old Norsemen who stumbled against America and then edged away again, without any benefit to themselves or anyone else; differed from that of Columbus, who proved that there was a reality greater and vaster than his ideal of it.