

Our Contributors.

FOR DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

Sub-Conscious Activities of the Mind in the Growth of the Sermon.

BY REV. W. H. JAMIESON, PH. D., D. D.

That there are mental operations, of which we are not immediately cognizant, going on, often with great rapidity, the products of which, at times, spring up into consciousness, is now generally accepted. Whether called, as in Psychology "latent consciousness," or, as in Physiology, "unconscious cerebration," the meaning is practically the same. These two realms come close together, and there is a point at which they touch, the brain being the organ of the mind.

Investigation in the region of the sub-conscious is impossible; hence conclusions, such as implied in the statement of our subject, must be regarded as partaking of the nature of inference; and yet, they often appeal to the mind with a strength of conviction that renders belief irresistible. One, for instance, has been perplexed, and utterly baffled, by some problem that had to be given up, but, after a period of relaxation or sound sleep has had the solution thrust on his consciousness, in a moment of time, like an unexpected vision of truth. How is it accounted for? The mind in a sub-conscious state, or the brain, as the organ of the mind, had continued the work that was supposed to have been given up, until, successful, the result rose to consciousness and was recognized as the object sought. It is unnecessary to multiply cases, or cite particular incidents from real life. Enough that, perhaps, most of the sound judgments given, and common sense views expressed, depend more upon this sub-conscious process than upon the conscious reasonings of the mind. It might not be too much to say that the swift-footed intuitions that outrun the logical syllogism are results of the same process.

There are fields in which the sub-conscious activities of the mind are particularly fruitful. The world's great inventors, so called have owed their success, more than they knew, to these secret workings. Days of unsuccessful toil and nights of brain-torturing thought, and, in some moment of careless diversion, visions rose before them and they cried "Eureka!" and thought themselves fortunate. Poets have had barren days of struggle and mental pain, but, in some quiet, restful hour, their inspiration came, and the brightest of gems glided from their pen. One instance, Kipling had engaged to write a national poem. Effort seemed vain. The hour had nearly come when the promised word was required. Rising to a last attempt, he took his pen, and swiftly it sped, until, in an incredibly short time, on the white sheets before him lay the "Recessional" as it is to day, and as it will live while the British Empire lasts. In the wider field of literature another case, that of Charlotte Bronte, as told by her Biographer, Mrs. Caskell, in one short paragraph:—

"She said that it was not every day that she could write. Sometimes weeks

or even months elapsed before she felt that she had anything to add to that portion of her story which was already written. Then, some morning she would waken up, and the progress of her tale lay clear and bright before her in distinct vision, its incidents and consequent thoughts being at such times more present to her mind than her actual life itself."

In all these cases the product was a living growth in the mind rather than a dead creation by it. Oliver Wendell Holmes, with deep insight wrote thus:

"I question whether persons who think most—that is, have most conscious thought pass through their minds—necessarily do most mental work. The tree you are sticking in will be growing when you are sleeping. So with every new idea that is planted in a real thinker's mind: it will be growing when he is least conscious of it. An idea in the brain is not a legend carved on a marble slab: it is an impression made on a living tissue, which is the seat of active nutritive process. Shall the initials I carved in bark increase from year to year with the tree? and shall not my recorded thought develop into new forms and relations with my growing brain?"

The laws that obtain in the world of invention and of literature are the same as those that operate in the work of preparation for the pulpit. The great preachers have been those whose best thoughts have grown without their knowing it, and have sprung up spontaneously from the soil of the sub-conscious mind. The brightest and best products of any brain are those that come without effort. Mental activity and struggle may, perhaps must, be a previous condition, but the seed germinates, unforced, in the secret depths. What cultivation and fertilizers are to the land, such are training and culture to the mind. The intellect, well disciplined and stored with varied knowledge, in the genial atmosphere of active and social life, with now and then a seed thought falling into the mental soil, cannot fail to be productive. The mind should never be compelled to do its work, but, rather, let perform its part, proper conditions being supplied. The vegetable in its growth, appropriates the mineral matter that is necessary; so the living organism, called a sermon, in the progress of development, takes to itself many a particle of knowledge long since absent to consciousness, the re-appearance of which, in the symmetrical form of the growing address, is a genuine surprise to the preacher; and the more nearly the time of the full growth of spontaneous thought corresponds with the movement of delivery, the fresher and more powerful the sermon. Blenheim, Ont.

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Young People's Societies and The Reading Camp.

BY REV. A. GRAHAM, B.A.

The readers of the DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN are more or less familiar with the effort to establish reading and recreation rooms at lumbering, mining and railway construction Camps. The movement was

begun by Rev. A. Fitzpatrick, B.A. and its increasing success is in a large measure due to his untiring efforts in practical work at the Camps, and in the wider field of interesting the public in the welfare of those men, whose lives are more or less spent away from the humanizing and educating influences of true home life. Recently, a deputation of employers, public educators and clergymen, headed by Mr. John Charlton, M.P., interviewed the Premier of Ontario, and with him, the Minister of Education, and asked that the same concessions accorded to public libraries in towns and cities be extended to reading Camps, and especially that the grant of \$100 for evening classes be given for supervision and instruction in these Camps.

It is gratifying to know that the Premier promised to give the matter the fullest consideration.

Now that this movement has been fairly launched, because one man saw the great need, one wonders that these men in camp have been so long neglected. The wonder grows in view of the fact that one half the public revenue comes from the forests and mines. Surely the Government and Legislature can well afford to be generous in this matter. If any of the public money is to be spent on public education, the men who exploit these vast sources of wealth are entitled to first and large consideration.

Here is a field attractive enough to enthuse Societies of Young People all over our fair Province, indeed throughout the Dominion. As yet the movement is depending upon the generosity of the public at large, and any Society devoting part of their funds to this object, may rest assured that whatever is contributed will be well spent.

It is sometimes said that expenditure of money on objects of this kind constitutes a direct drain upon the Mission Schemes of our Churches. This is true in many instances, but a close study of the matter before us ought to convince any fair-minded observer that this is not one of those instances.

Many of those engaged in these Camps have gone out from the Churches scattered up and down our land. Because they have gone where little or no opportunity has been given for reading, recreation of refining nature, or religious instruction, are they to be dropped from the thought and care of those enjoying all these privileges, often with too little appreciation?

Shall we not, rather, strengthen the hands of those who are seeking to do the work that for the time being, has passed beyond our personal reach, so that when those brothers of ours return to settle in life, they may come back to us better prepared to be true citizens of a great and growing nation?

Some Societies have contributed to this interesting experiment.

Glengarry C. E. Union the winter before last, donated \$50 to furnish a Glengarry reading Camp. This reading room has been in operation all fall and winter, and the Secretary assures us that a cut of it will appear in the next annual report of the Reading Camp Association.

This movement deserves the heartiest support, and we commend it to the thoughtful, prayerful consideration of all Young People's Societies, feeling assured that this given, something more tangible will follow.

The treasurer for the movement is Mr. W. J. Bell, Cartier, Ont., Lancaster, Ont.

Truth, like bread, must be assimilated if it is to give strength.