

ministers were priests, educated at Cambridge and Oxford, who sold righteousness to the people at so much per hour—as George Fox puts it—then people were led to see that an education at one of the leading universities could not fit a man to preach that divine truth which is only revealed in the heart and has no market value, but must be given out to all mankind in the fullness of love. No preparation was necessary to enter the ministry excepting in one's daily life. His example must coincide with his precepts. But Janney tells us that learning was not at all scorned by our forefathers. They made the most of their opportunities.

We read that these simple people met together in the most trying times, and by their exhortations called many away from the vain glories of the world, and converted them to this genial and unassuming worship, and taught them that simplicity in all things is best. The Friends became noted for their honesty and uprightness, and their devotion to all good work.

So much for the meetings of the early Friends. Let us look at those of to-day.

We still meet together twice a week in our plain meeting houses. A few of us wear the costume of our ancestors, and most of us use the plain language among ourselves. Our principles are much the same as those held in earlier times, though some of us read novels and once in a while enter into harmless amusements. We are becoming more and more interested in good works, and among our members we have some of the best and most enlightened minds of the age.

What about our meetings for worship? We still believe in an inspired ministry, and there is much silence in our meetings. It is the living silence that we read of in the writings of the earlier Friends, and is our ministry calculated to call others to come into the stillness with us? To both these questions I should answer Yes and No. There is

much life still left in both the silence and the ministry, but why, if our religion is the one that gives us most peace and seems to bring man nearer to God than any other, do not more people find it so? If our ministry is the only true kind, as we believe it is, why do we have so few ministers, and, I grieve to say, so few good ones? Why do many of our best men and women fail to speak in our meetings for worship, while in our business meetings and social gatherings we hear from them words of wisdom that can come only with right living and thinking? Why, when we gather into the stillness on First-day mornings, does not God speak to his people through his best teachers? It is George Eliot who says:

“I say, not God himself can make man's best without best men to help Him.”

Can it be that inspiration itself is withheld? I cannot think so, but rather that we do not know what inspiration is. A man is inspired when he is made to feel that he has something to say. In talking with preachers on this subject, I have been assured that the call is not necessarily a loud one; and one minister told me at the Conference last summer that so much has been said upon the subject of inspiration that we have come to think of it as something strange and awful, while it is not so at all. And he believed we are inspired to speak on a subject when we feel that we have something to say about it. John W. Chadwick says, “The only test of inspiration is, does the thing inspire?” If that is true, we may think some of our ministers are seldom inspired. But we must remember that some one in the meeting may be strengthened even by what seems to us the poorest of sermons.

At any rate, I firmly believe inspiration is not lacking, and if all of our members who have something to say should speak, we could not complain of long, dull sermons. The long sermon should