



CHAPTER V.

SUBJECTIVE MEMORY (*continued*).

Practical Illustrations. — Reasons for Limitations of Subjective Power. — Its Practical Significance. — Its Application to the Solution of Problems of Insanity. — The Mental Phenomena of "Genius." — Napoleon Bonaparte. — Shakspeare. — Poets. — Artists. — Macaulay's Estimate of Poets and Poetry. — Dangers of Subjective Control. — Lord Byron. — Socrates' Estimate of Poets. — His Recognition of the Subjective Element in Poetic Composition. — Occasional Inconveniences. — Unconscious Plagiarism. — Observations of Holmes. — Improvisation. — Solution of the Shakspeare-Bacon Problem. — The Subjective in Art. — Madness in Art. — Great Orators. — Webster. — Clay. — Patrick Henry. — Incidents. — Practical Conclusions.

IT is thought that the facts related in the preceding chapter are sufficient to demonstrate the substantial correctness of the proposition that the memory of the subjective mind is practically perfect. Before leaving this branch of the subject, however, and proceeding to detail other peculiarities which distinguish the two minds, it is deemed proper to offer a few practical illustrations of the principles involved, drawn from common observation, and incidentally to apply those principles to the solution of various problems of every-day experience. It will be remembered that thus far we have confined our observations to the operations of the subjective mind when the subject is in a diseased or in a deeply hypnotic condition, with the objective senses in complete abeyance. This has been done for the purpose of more clearly illustrating the fundamental

propositions. The phenomena of purely subjective mental action, are, however, of little practical importance to mankind when compared with the action of the subjective mind modified by the co-ordinate power of the objective intelligence.

It is not to be supposed that an All-wise Providence has placed within the human frame a separate entity, endowed with such wonderful powers as we have seen that it possesses, and hedged about by the limitations with which we know it to be environed, without so ordaining its relations with man's objective intelligence as to render it of practical value to the human race in its struggle with its physical environment. It might at first glance seem incongruous to suppose that the subjective mind could be at once the storehouse of memory and the source of inspiration, limited as to its methods and powers of reasoning, and at the same time subject to the imperial control of the objective mind. A moment's reflection, however, will show that in the very nature of things it must necessarily be true. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." There must be a controlling power in every well-regulated household, municipality, nation, or organism. There is a positive and a negative force in the greatest physical power known to mankind. There is a male and a female element in every race and order of created organisms; and those philosophers who hold that there appertain to every man a male and a female element have dimly recognized the duality of man's mental organization.

Why it is that the objective mind has been invested with the controlling influence, limited as are its resources and feeble as are its powers, is a question upon which it would be idle to speculate. It profits us only to know the fact and to study its practical significance, without wasting our energies in seeking to know the ultimate cause. We may rest assured that in this, as in all other laws of Nature, we shall find infinite wisdom.

If any one doubts the wisdom of investing the objective mind with the controlling power in the dual organization,

let him visit a madhouse. There he will see all shades and degrees of subjective control. There he will see men whose objective minds have completely abdicated the throne, and whose subjective minds are in pursuit of one idea, — controlled by one dominant impression, which subordinates all others. These are the monomaniacs, — the victims of false suggestions. These suggestions may be given from without, in a thousand different ways which will be readily recognized by the student of insanity, or by auto-suggestion. Long and intense concentration of mind upon one subject, and inordinate egotism, will be readily recognized as striking illustrations of the power of auto-suggestion as a factor in monomania. The maniac is one whose objective mind is disorganized by disease of its organ, the brain; the result being distortion of objective impressions, and consequent false suggestions to the subjective mind.

Those who study the subject from this standpoint will find an easy solution to many an obscure problem. The subject is here adverted to merely to show the consequences arising from allowing the subjective mind to usurp complete control of the mental organization. It will be readily seen that human society, outside of lunatic asylums, constantly furnishes numerous examples of abnormal subjective control. So generally is this fact recognized that it has passed into a proverb that "every man is insane on some subject."

The question arises, What part does the subjective mind play in the normal operation of the human intellect? This question may be answered in a general way by saying that the most perfect exhibition of intellectual power is the result of the synchronous action of the objective and subjective minds. When this is seen in its perfection the world names it *genius*. In this condition the individual has the benefit of all the reasoning powers of the objective mind, combined with the perfect memory of the subjective mind and its marvellous power of syllogistic arrangement of its resources. In short, all the elements of intellectual power

are then in a state of intense and harmonious activity. This condition may be perfectly normal, though it is rarely seen in its perfection. Probably the most striking examples which history affords were Napoleon Bonaparte and Shakspeare. The intelligent student of the history of their lives and work will not fail to recall a thousand incidents which illustrate the truth of this proposition. True genius is undoubtedly the result of the synchronous action of the two minds, neither unduly predominating or usurping the powers and functions of the other. When the subjective is allowed to dominate, the resultant acts of the individual are denominated "the eccentricities of genius." When the subjective usurps complete control, the individual goes insane.

There are certain classes of persons whose intellectual labors are characterized by subjective activity in a very marked degree. Poets and artists are the most conspicuous examples. So marked is the peculiarity of the poetic mind in this respect that it has become almost proverbial. Lord Macaulay, in his Essay on Milton, uses language which shows that he clearly recognized the subjective element in all true poetry. He says: —

"Perhaps no man can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind, — if anything which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness. By poetry we mean not, of course, all writing in verse, nor even all good writing in verse. Our definition excludes many metrical compositions which on other grounds deserve the highest praise. By poetry we mean the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination; the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colors. Thus the greatest of poets has described it, in lines universally admired for the vigor and felicity of their diction, and still more valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled.

"As imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."

"These are the fruits of the 'fine frenzy' which he ascribes to the poet, — a fine frenzy doubtless, but still a frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry, but it is the truth of madness. The reasonings are just, but the premises are false. After the first suppositions have been made, everything ought to be consistent; but those first suppositions require a degree of credulity which almost amounts to a partial and temporary derangement of the intellect. Hence, of all people, children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion. Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by Hamlet or Lear as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red-Riding-Hood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet in spite of her knowledge she believes; she weeps; she trembles; she dares not go into a dark room, lest she should feel the teeth of the monster at her throat. Such is the despotism of the imagination over uncivilized minds."

In other words, such is the despotism of suggestion over the subjective mind. No truer statement of the methods of subjective mental action could be written. "The reasonings are just, but the premises are false," says Macaulay. True, the deductive reasonings of the subjective mind are always just, logical, syllogistically perfect, and are equally so whether the premises are false or true.

Macaulay's remark concerning children is eminently philosophical and true to nature. Children are almost purely subjective; and no one needs to be told how completely a suggestion, true or false, will take control of their minds. This is seen in perfection when children are playing games in which one of them is supposed to be a wild beast. The others will flee in affected terror from the beast; but the affectation often becomes a real emotion, and tears, and sometimes convulsions, result from their fright.

The remark elsewhere made regarding the eccentricities of genius applies in a marked degree to poets. It is probable that in all the greater poets the subjective mind often predominates. Certainly the subjective element is dominant in their works. The career of Lord Byron is at once

a splendid illustration of the marvellous powers and the inexhaustible resources of the subjective mind in a man of learning and cultivation, and a sad commentary on the folly and danger of allowing the subjective mind to usurp control of the dual mental organization.

Many of the poems of Coleridge furnish striking examples of the dominance of the subjective in poetry. His readers will readily recall the celebrated fragment entitled "Kubla Khan; or, a Vision in a Dream," beginning as follows: —

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree, —
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea."

It is unfortunately true that the subjective condition in his case was often brought about by artificial means; and it is expressly stated in a prefatory note to "Kubla Khan" that this fragment was written while under the influence of an anodyne. As an illustration of the principle under consideration it is, however, none the less valuable; while the career of the gifted but unfortunate poet should serve as a warning against the practices in which he indulged.

Macaulay further remarks: —

"In an enlightened age there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, — and even of good ones, — but little poetry. Men will judge and compare; but they will not create."¹

In other words, this is an age of purely objective cultivation. All our powers of inductive reasoning are strained to their highest tension in an effort to penetrate the secrets of physical Nature, and to harness her dynamic forces. Meantime, the normal exercise of that co-ordinate power in our mental structure is fast falling into desuetude, and its

¹ Scott's poems are good illustrations. They are not ranked as first class for the sole reason that they are too objective.

manifestations, not being understood, are relegated to the domain of superstition.

Socrates, in his Apology to the Athenians, seems to have entertained opinions in regard to poets similar to those of Lord Macaulay. In his search for wiser men than himself he went first to the politicians. Failing there, he went to the poets, with the following result:—

“Taking up, therefore, some of their poems, which appeared to me most elaborately finished, I questioned them as to their meaning, that at the same time I might learn something from them. I am ashamed, O Athenians, to tell you the truth; however, it must be told. For, in a word, almost all who were present could have given a better account of them than those by whom they had been composed. I soon discovered this, therefore, with regard to the poets, that they do not effect their object by wisdom, but by a certain natural inspiration, and under the influence of enthusiasm, like prophets and seers; for these also say many fine things, but they understand nothing that they say.”

Words could not express more clearly the recognition of the subjective element in poetic composition; and it exactly accords with Macaulay's idea regarding the poets and the poetry of the ancient days.

The subjective mind once recognized as a factor in the mental powers of the poet, it follows that its resources are all at his command. Its perfect memory, its instant command of all the acquired knowledge of the individual, however superficially attained or imperfectly remembered, objectively, is a source of stupendous power. But, like all other gifts of nature, it is liable at times to be a source of inconvenience; for it sometimes happens that in ordinary composition a person will unconsciously reproduce, *verbatim*, some long-forgotten expressions, perhaps a whole stanza, or even an entire poem. It may, perchance, be of his own composition; but it is just as likely to be something that he has read years before and forgotten, objectively, as soon as read. In this way many persons have subjected themselves to the charge of plagiarism, when

they were totally unconscious of guilt. Many of the great poets have been accused of minor plagiarisms, and much inconsiderate criticism has been the result. Oliver Wendell Holmes mentions unconscious reproduction as one of the besetting annoyances of a poet's experience. “It is impossible to tell,” he says, “in many cases, whether a comparison which suddenly suggests itself is a new conception or a recollection. I told you the other day that I never wrote a line of verse that seemed to me comparatively good, but it appeared old at once, and often as if it had been borrowed.”¹

A certain class of trance-speaking mediums, so called, are often called upon to improvise poems, the subject being suggested by some one in the audience. Often a very creditable performance is the result; but it more frequently happens that they reproduce something that they have read.

Sometimes whole poems are thus reproduced by persons in an apparently normal condition. This accounts for the frequent disputes concerning the authorship of popular verses. Instances of this kind are fresh in the minds of most readers, as, for example, a recent controversy between two well-known writers relative to the authorship of the poem beginning, “Laugh, and the world laughs with you.” The circumstances of such coincidences often preclude the possibility of either claimant deliberately plagiarizing the work, or telling a falsehood concerning its authorship. Yet nothing is more certain than that one of them is not its author. Possibly neither is entitled to that credit. When, in the nature of things, it is impossible for either to prove the fact of authorship, and when the evidence on both sides is about equally balanced, we may never know the exact truth; but as the theory of unconscious subjective reproduction is consistent with the literary honesty of both, it may well be accepted as the true one, aside from the inherent probability of its correctness.

¹ Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

The solution of the great question as to the authorship of Shakspeare's works may be found in this hypothesis. The advocates of the Baconian theory tell us that Shakspeare was an unlearned man. This is true so far as high scholastic attainments are concerned; but it is also known that he was a man of extensive reading, and was the companion of many of the great men of his time, among whom were Bacon, Ben Jonson, Drayton, Beaumont, Fletcher, and others. It is in evidence that the Mermaid Tavern was the scene of many an encounter of wit and learning between these worthies. In this way he was brought into constant contact with the brightest minds of the Elizabethan age. He was not only familiar with their works, but he had also the benefit of their conversation, — which familiarized him with their thoughts and modes of expression, — and of close personal relations with them in their convivial moods, when wit and eloquence, learning and philosophy, flowed as freely as their wine.

The internal evidence of his works shows that Shakspeare's mind, compared with that of any other poet whose writings are known, was the most harmoniously developed. In other words, his objective and subjective faculties were exquisitely balanced. When this fact is considered in the light of what has been said of the marvellous powers of subjective memory, and in connection with his intellectual environment, the source of his power and inspiration becomes apparent. In his moments of inspiration — and he seems always to have been inspired when writing — he had the benefit of a perfect memory and a logical comprehension of all that had been imparted by the brightest minds of the most marvellous literary and philosophical age in the history of mankind. Is it any wonder that he was able to strike a responsive chord in every human breast, to run the gamut of every human emotion, to portray every shade of human character, and to embellish his work with all the wit and learning of his day and generation?

Artists constitute another class in whom the subjective faculties are largely cultivated, and are often predominant.

Indeed, no man can become a true artist whose subjective mind is not cultivated to a high degree of activity. One may become a good draughtsman, or learn to delineate a figure with accuracy, or to draw a landscape with photographic fidelity to objective nature, and in faultless perspective, by the cultivation of the objective faculties alone; but his work will lack that subtle something, that nameless charm, which causes a canvas to glow with beauty, and each particular figure to become instinct with life and action. No artist can successfully compose a picture who cannot see "in his mind's eye" the perfected picture before he touches his pencil to canvas; and just in proportion to his cultivation of the subjective faculties will he be able thus to see his picture. Of course these remarks will be understood to presuppose an objective art education. No man, by the mere cultivation or exercise of his subjective faculties, can become a great artist, any more than an ignoramus, by going into a hypnotic trance, can speak the language of a Webster. All statements to the contrary are merely the exaggerations of inaccurate observers. Genius in art, as in everything else, is the result of the harmonious cultivation and synchronous action of both characteristics of the dual mind.

In art, as in poetry, the undue predominance of the subjective mind is apt to work disastrously. No better illustration of this is now recalled than is furnished by the works of Fuseli or of Blake: —

"Look," says Dendy,¹ "on those splendid illustrations of the Gothic poets by the eccentric, the half-mad Fuseli. Look on the wild pencillings of Blake, another poet-painter, and you will be assured that they were ghost-seers. An intimate friend of Blake has told me the strangest tales of his visions. In one of his reveries he witnessed the whole ceremony of a fairy's funeral, which he peopled with mourners and mutes, and described with high poetic beauty. He was engaged, in one of these moods, in painting King Edward I., who was sitting to him for his picture. While they were conversing, Wallace sud-

¹ Philosophy of Mystery, p. 93.

denly presented himself on the field, and by this uncourteous intrusion marred the studies of the painter for that day. . . . Blake was a visionary," continues our author, "and thought his fancies real; he was mad."

The writer once knew an artist who had the power to enter the subjective condition at will; and in this state he could cause his visions to be projected upon the canvas before him. He declared that his mental pictures thus formed were perfect in detail and color, and all that he had to do to fix them was to paint the corresponding colors over the subjective picture. He, too, thought his fancies real; he believed that spirits projected the pictures upon the canvas.

The foregoing cases represent a class of artists whose subjective faculties are uncontrolled by the objective mind, — an abnormal condition, which, if it found expression in words instead of pigments, would stamp the subject as a candidate for the lunatic asylum.

Fortunately, most artists have their fancies more under control; or, more properly speaking, they are aware that their visions are evoked by their own volition. This power varies with different individuals, but all true artists possess it in a greater or less degree. An extraordinary manifestation of this power is reported by Combe. The artist was noted for the rapidity of his work, and was extremely popular on account of the fidelity of his portraits, and especially because he never required more than one sitting of his patron. His method, as divulged by himself, was as follows: —

"When a sitter came, I looked attentively on him for half an hour, sketching from time to time on the canvas. I did not require a longer sitting. I removed the canvas and passed to another person. When I wished to continue the first portrait, I recalled the man to my mind. I placed him on the chair, where I perceived him as distinctly as though really there, and, I may add, in form and color more decidedly brilliant. I looked from time to time at the imaginary figure, and went on painting, occasionally stopping to examine the picture exactly as though the original were before me; whenever I looked towards the chair I saw the man."

In this way he was enabled to paint over three hundred portraits in one year.

It is seldom that subjective power is manifested in this particular manner. It may be added, however, that, given an artist for a subject, the same phenomena can be reproduced at will by the ordinary processes of hypnotism. The most common manifestations of the power are not so easily recognized or distinguished from ordinary mental activity; but every artist will bear witness that there are times when he works with extraordinary ease and rapidity, when the work almost seems to do itself, when there seems to be a force outside of himself which impels him on, when, to use the common expression to define the mental condition, he feels that he is "inspired." It is then that the artist does his best work. It is under these mental conditions that his work is characterized by that subtle, indefinite charm vaguely expressed by the word "feeling."

Another class of persons who possess the faculty of evoking at will the powers of the subjective mind are the great orators, such as Patrick Henry, Charles Phillips the Irish orator, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and many others, to say nothing of that numerous class of purely subjective orators known to spiritists as trance, or inspirational, speakers. The student of the life of Patrick Henry will not fail to see that his whole history is an illustration of the pertinency of these remarks. It is related of Clay that on one occasion he was unexpectedly called upon to answer an opponent who had addressed the Senate on a question in which Clay was deeply interested. The latter felt too unwell to reply at length. It seemed imperative, however, that he should say something; and he exacted a promise from a friend, who sat behind him, that he would stop him at the end of ten minutes. Accordingly, at the expiration of the prescribed time the friend gently pulled the skirts of Mr. Clay's coat. No attention was paid to the hint, and after a brief time it was repeated a little more emphatically. Still Clay paid no attention, and it was again repeated. Then a pin was brought into requisition; but Clay was by

that time thoroughly aroused, and was pouring forth a torrent of eloquence. The pin was inserted deeper and deeper into the orator's leg without eliciting any response, until his friend gave it up in despair. Finally Mr. Clay happened to glance at the clock, and saw that he had been speaking two hours; whereupon he fell back into his friend's arms, completely overcome by exhaustion, upbraiding his friend severely for not stopping him at the time prescribed.

The fact that Mr. Clay, on that occasion, made one of the ablest speeches of his life, two hours in length, at a time when he felt almost too ill to rise to his feet, and that his body at the time was in a condition of perfect anesthesia, is a splendid illustration of the synchronous action of the two minds, and also of the perfect control exercised by the subjective mind over the functions and sensations of the body.

There is, perhaps, no better description on record of the sensations of a speaker, when the synchronous action of the two minds is perfect, than that given by Daniel Webster. A friend had asked him how it happened that he was able, without preparation, to make such a magnificent effort when he replied to Hayne. The reply was (quoting from memory) substantially as follows: "In the first place, I have made the Constitution of the United States the study of my life; and on that occasion it seemed to me that all that I had ever heard or read on the subject under discussion was passing like a panorama before me, arranged in perfectly logical order and sequence, and that all I had to do was to cull a thunderbolt and hurl it at him."

Two important conclusions are deducible from the premises here laid down. The first is that it is essential to the highest mental development that the objective and subjective faculties be cultivated harmoniously, if the latter are cultivated at all.

The second conclusion is of the most transcendent interest and importance. It is that the subjective mind should never be allowed to usurp control of the dual mental organi-

zation. Important as are its functions and transcendent as are its powers, it is hedged about with such limitations that it must be subjected to the imperial control of the objective mind, which alone is endowed with the power to reason by all methods.

To sum up in a few words: To believe in the reality of subjective visions is to give the subjective mind control of the dual mental organization; and to give the subjective mind such control is for Reason to abdicate her throne. The suggestions of the subjective mind then become the controlling power. The result, in its mildest form of manifestation, is a mind filled with the grossest superstitions, — a mind which, like the untutored mind of the savage, "sees God in clouds, and hears him in the wind." Its ultimate form of manifestation is insanity.