

Written for this Paper.

## MEMORIES OF THE PAST.

Time flies. The unceasing rush of events, the changes which occur, obliterate from the memory that which is past, and even to the active participants in that, there comes a vagueness, a forgetfulness which makes half mythical, facts, circumstances and experiences. We live in the present. The duties and responsibilities of today crowd out what we have seen, known and experienced. There is a hazy, dreamy kind of memory of some prominent things, perhaps, but it is only in the seldom recurring moods when these shadows of the past flit before our mental retrospective mirror. Some special circumstances, some unexpected conversation, the meeting with an old associate, an early friend, or a long hidden relic generates again somewhat of forgotten, buried things, which in their time were all-absorbing, full of interest, and pregnant with possibilities in a future coming our individual way.

Some very early things seem easily reproduced. Later ones come with effort, and other things seem to have been lost beneath the waters of oblivion. There are unnumbered things we would like to recall, to remember; details which we cannot summon from "the vasty deep." We cannot bring back our individuality, our feelings, our aspirations, our efforts. We have little to aid us. We have become denizens of a new land; our kindred are far from us, familiar scenes do not prompt to recollection, only in a very indistinct way. Yet on revisiting old localities, places linked with past association, there comes (as we have experienced) a flood of memory. No effort is required. Rambles had, visits made, conversations held, persons met, have come back with strange particularity, and much of the later interval has lost for the moment its vivid reality, in the renewal of a semi-remembered past.

To wander in the places of our youth, across the old fields, by the brawling stream, in the quiet village streets, over the once fancied interminable moors, along the highways or byways, past plantations and country seats, into the old churches and among the old graves where the fathers have long since mouldered into dust, these all have their charm, their special color and memories. But while familiar and sacred, there is an unexpected sense of littleness and insignificance which comes with a feeling of disappointment. Everything looks dwarfed and unimportant, nay almost creating a thought of regret, that an illusion so sacred, so cherished, so beautiful and poetic, should be so easily dispelled.

Now if personal experiences fade so easily in the flight of time, how little impression can they have upon our successors. If these things were all clear, distinct and vivid in our own minds, if made familiar, by ever-recurring conversations to our families, still there are impossibilities in the way which prevent these memories and experiences coming home to them. It is but the reading of history, the half dry record from which the glow has faded, and from which the magnetism has in

great part fled. It is a story at best but second-hand, and like all second-hand things must be republished and presented by a masterhand to have that attraction and fascination which history should possess. The world has had an illustration of this delineation in the New Testament, in Shakespeare's works, in John Bunyan's allegory, in Macaulay's history, and similar productions of a specific inspiration which makes the poetic or literal past to live and move again.

Some have thought that there will come a time and place where all the past of an individual can be reviewed; not the past of this life alone perchance, but the entirety of our being since personal organization was our heritage. But the intellectual man, the spiritual man, does not want to confine himself to himself. There are episodes of history, grand epochs when giants trod the earth, who were special instruments in remolding, creating or using creative periods for the blessing and progress of the human race.

Every reader is familiar with the names and work of these supreme characters, and most would like to know such men and the forces of revolution which they commanded or used, as their mission required in their feverish generation. We need not mention these further than to consider them as secondary to those more remarkable periods of history when great changes were inaugurated under what are deemed special instances of divine interposition, such as the paradisaical epoch, the peopling of the earth, the limits and features of the deluge, the call of Abraham, the condition of his posterity in Egypt, that marvelous deliverance and the journeying in the wilderness, their settlement in the land of promise and after consolidation, the building of that Temple with all the attendant manifestations of acceptance, and then the after subjugation and dispersion of a people appointed to hold the oracles, and for whom and in whose lineage the Great Deliverer and Messiah was to come.

How a loving student could linger over and reread so marvellous, consecutive and efficient exhibition and realization of that program which, arranged before the beginning, was enacted through the generations of half unconscious participants, down to the era of promise and prophecy, until the dispensation of the meridian of time. Fragmentary as is that history inherited from the fathers, and treasured as it has been, there is little comparison between that, if of admittedly inspirational origin, and that more graphic record kept by angel scribes and preserved among the archives of the eternities for the eager student in the cycles yet to come.

But those wondrous records would surely pale before the fulness and grandeur of that which is doubtless preserved of the life of "the man Christ Jesus." His youth, manhood, work, miracles, sorrows and death, have filled the world with its richest literature. Yet these were but recorded in part, and on reading what there is, thousands of queries instinctively arise that nothing which is written on earth can begin to satisfy; though writers like Canon Farrar have, as it were, so absorbed the spirit of that life and its surroundings in the holy land,

that its freshness, vigor, beauty and sublimity almost re-clothes the dead, wakes again the verdure, the teeming life, the strange surroundings, until you come in contact with the multitude who saw His wondrous works, you catch the enthusiasm of that crowd which strewed palms along His path, and you drink in sadness from the sorrows of the Master, and with His death on Calvary you taste the disappointment of the disciples, who turned disheartened to their avocation of nets and fishing.

But after all, this is but reading and reflection upon that which has inspired the orator, the artist, the religionist, and the would-be disciple, down through the ages until now. There must, however, be some way in which the devotee can bring home to more enduring consciousness that greatest life of all the ages, outside of books, sculpture, painting, oratory and song. These cannot suffice for that craving of the soul which asks familiarity with that resplendent history of near two thousand years ago.

So we return by a circuitous route to the thought of our introduction, to the fact that memory, however tenacious, that testimony, however fervid, that love for the later Prophet, however profound, in the thought and heart of our best and most esteemed veterans is but second-hand to their successors. Barely fifty years have passed away since the Prophet's death, and sixty-five since the organization of the Church; yet the rising generation know nothing of this save from hearsay. The Church has not yet had its historian. The material for the Prophet's life is but meager and no man has yet arisen to make the leading character and his surroundings and times, with the strange phenomena of those early years, so attractive as to rivet the interest of our multiplying youth. The lives, trials, sorrows, labors of his grand successors are not yet as familiar as they should be to our increasing Israel. Everything pertaining to the past is truly commonplace in its presentation, devoid of fervor, poetry, and those elements which so glorify character as to make biography one of the most potent factors in education, and the most effective stimulant for the heart of youth.

A few more years and the scattered Saints who grew with the Church, and were familiar with Joseph, will all have passed away. Those who knew Brigham Young when he was a stalwart and full of projects for Israel are decreasing. Thousands of our children never bear his name now with any degree of familiarity and probably his immediate successor is less thought of and quoted than he. President Woodruff fills the public eye; for him and his associates prayer is offered in every meeting and at every hearthstone in this favored land. But this prominence seems to be ephemeral; children yet to come will offer prayer and raise the hand for others. The works of men to come will absorb attention, and the grand equally with the sorrowful episodes of a wonderful history will have become dim, faded, obliterated, only as some may become so interpenetrated by the Spirit as to render in undying graphic pages the story now receding, nay in great part lost.