

Written for this Paper.

GLAD MEMORIES OF THE PAST.

What a wonderful thing memory is! How strange a faculty of the mind, the resurrecting, as it were, from years long past of thoughts, acts, incidents to which we were subject, or in which we took a part! Strange, too, that the earliest memories are the most vivid. Ten thousand things since manhood or womanhood have escaped us; they appear to be absolutely forgotten; they never intrude themselves; they do not come at our bidding, even when they were interesting and important, and would be of great value if remembered. But unless some special train of thought, conversation or circumstance, (magician-like) gives them back again, they are ours no more, at least in this probation.

Yet old age is a ten garrulous of that far, far past. We know a blind old lady whose memory is prodigious in this way. Over forty years a journeyer in the old world and for forty years a denizen of these valleys, half of which is near forgotten, yet ask her about the old home, the native village, the adjoining town, and there is a perfect torrent of reminiscences which roll through the floodgates of memory to the loquacious tongue. Let but a breath from the present sweep through the belfry of the past, and there comes the music of the Sabbath bell, the old church prayers, and the crude versification by Sternhold and Hopkins of the wonderful Psalms, until one after another is repeated with all the unctious enjoyed in the morning hours of life.

From the long deserted corridors of time come the echoes of a joyous experience, the quiet home, the preparation for the Sabbath; its rigid, yet ever sacred hours, the bliss of youthful worship, and the Sabbath school. What a genial, loving, sunny world was that; how when the organ prelude had attuned the heart, the voice would break out in the juvenile choir with the "morning hymn," afterward with the chant, the litany and the prayers; surely heaven was near to that old organ loft; surely the Lord heard those ardent youthful voices, and accepted that hearty, innocent and earnest praise and prayer!

Then think of the red-letter days in the calendar that we all well used, days growing out of religion and constituting its festivals, like Christmas Day, Easter Sunday and Whitsuntide; the church decoration of the first; the joyous jubilate of the second, and the general looking for solemn confirmation of the last. These involved new clothing for both sexes, and though the heart was young, the smile of the opposite sex was never more looked for or more enjoyed than then; shy, bashful boys and girls, but in sunshine or in winter that fascination was as potent as in later and maturer years.

Often, too, came what might be called the social side of religious life and training, when there was less reserve, though never boisterous mirth. Preparations for and the consummation of anniversaries were a wonderful time. The conning our catechism, the scriptures, a reading or a recitation, then the public presentation of our great effort. The crowded meeting, the grand platform, parental preparation, the whirlwind of applause

or the silent tear, the obituary of liberal souls as the collection box went around. Oh! but those were rare old times! We embalmed them and laid them away in the strange chambers of the heart; but they well up now and again from thence, in all their old glory and significance. Were they not much to us?

The exhilarating tea party was long-locked for, and always received with strange emotion; in some public hall, perchance, or in some gentleman's grounds or park, where the old trees stood as probably they had done for centuries before, beech and walnut, horsechestnut, elm or ash, their gnarled trunks and spreading branches and welcome shade. Surely childhood, and incipient youth and budding manhood and womanhood, were full of rare opportunities, of glad surprises, and of sanctified memories, long ere the facilities of modern life gave the seashore trips, the visit to some antiquated ruin, or the liberty of a nobleman's castle and its well preserved domain!

Secular as well as Sabbath schools had their undoubted charm, had their holidays as well as their times of intense study and review. Think of standing at the head of the class, of the master's approval or that of visitors; fancy "going up higher," the coveted prize, new books, a new seat and new associations. Think of the consciousness of progress, of looking forward to apprenticeship, to manhood and travel; how the untrod vistas of life seemed to reach out under the restless imagination of those all unclouded years.

We turn to our mental struggles, our social chances, our religious scruples, our love episodes; to our awakening powers, our selfhood, and our day dreams of prospective happiness and enjoyment (as it seemed) of eternal youth. Life's sun soared to a matchless zenith, and none would have dared suggest the possibility of change, to say nothing of disaster, trial, or failure of promises unfulfilled.

Yet change was in the very atmosphere even then. Kaleidoscopic combinations were forming under more than human agency, and preparing a destiny to affect the earth until "time shall be no more." Beautiful and iridescent the past had been; scarce a cloud had flecked the limited horizon of a semi-rural life. But the voice of a new idea saluted a not unwilling ear, and the pictured experiences and memories of a priceless past sunk to almost insignificance, nay for the moment faded near away.

The tocsin of a new Gospel from the herald of a new dispensation had the power of a soporific as to the past and an intoxicant as to the future. Thoughts, theories, dreams obliterated in quietude and trepidation, became surcharged with a positive spirit; life tingled in veins deemed bloodless and as belonging to the vagaries of calm if enthusiastic youth. To hear was to listen; to listen was to believe; to believe was to obey. The barren idea in a fruitful soil watered by the dews of inspiration, budded with tropical luxuriance and even now the glance backward deems those first impressions as neither more nor less than a recovered memory, a subtle restoration of things once already understood, reproduced by contact with a simple

first thought which was the key to the ever unfolding philosophy of the heavens.

Just as thousands taste and enjoy again the memories of a distant youth, forgetting a thousand intermediate things, so the soul remembers the Gospel lessons of its primary school life on the other side; while principles, problems and experiences of a maturer condition wait in silence the suggestive tones of inspiration and revelation, when the advanced principles would become as clear and certain of a response to truth, as is prepared humanity to the fulness of the Gospel as received.

If human nature could be as free from sin as was the immaculate Nazarene; if it had the Spirit as He had it, "without measure," memory quickened would be able to restore the part, if not to the extent of saying, "Father, glorify thou me with the glory I had with thee before the world was," at least to the solution of many problems which now provoke query and baffle the wisdom of the highest spiritual manhood in God's Israel of today.

Quite likely the associations of memory in our posterity will be less brilliant and entrancing than was ours. No such pleasant, beautiful and enduring memories may be theirs, for the stern facts of subsistence and colonization were impressed upon their passive souls. Nevertheless, as the generations pass, as homes are founded and culture sows its fecund seed, so will the susceptible of Zion become "dreamers of dreams;" the ideals of time and eternity will be imprinted upon a plastic organization, and these will be reproduced where the Spirit dwells and then prevail.

Doubtless there are homes in Zion now where the Spirit of God and peace is felt and loved—homes where parental virtues and untinted affections mold the character and enlarge the soul. No doubt there are memories being stored today as precious as our experience ever shined, and where there is no positive ideal of satisfying surroundings, the young heart may glorify all that was, just as the missionary in a foreign land forgets the cruelties and sacrifices, the worries and trials now all left behind; through the glamor of distance and of deprivation the log cabin becomes a palace, its rude surroundings a paradise of beauty, his paltry acres a grand domain, and his little family his household gods.

Yes, memory has its witcheries and its preferences. Mind forgets its sorrows and its struggles. The commonplace becomes illumined by fancy, and a return to old surroundings may be all that is needed to dissipate the radiant dreams. We have known a shade of this, yet we cling to that beauty, sunshine, peace of early years, as if life were one of perennial glory and its skies without a cloud.

Yet this perchance hath no place yet on this ever-rolling earth. The illusions of youth and the fancies of age, precious and sunny though they be, are but realized fully as to one home and one condition—that from whence we came and to which we shall yet return. We have partly forgotten that the veil of flesh hides its undoubted grandeur and beauty. Yet when we think of heaven and heavenly things,