Als ik kan
THE SPRINGTIME OF MEMORY

A GOOD and wise man has said that memory is the great conso1er of age—making youth eternal by recalling and vivifying the experiences of youth. As the receptive period of our life passes by, more and more we find ourselves turning to the comfort of that system of multiplying joys known as memory. We forget with our brains and remember with our senses; boundaries and figures learned in youth go down before the increased weight of years; but the sensations experienced in our early days, the smell of wet grass, the fragrance of arbutus borne on March winds, the bloom of crabapple trees in the twilight—what eternal measure of joy they bring! As memory thus touches our emotions we are children or lovers again with an intensity of happiness scarcely known in the actual days of childhood or realized romance. So through memory one experienced joy swells into a multitude of joys, stirred into life by the cry of a child, the color of a rose petal, the velvet sound of running water over smooth stones.

Happily for this memory of the senses—we do not wait for logic to turn our way or reason to release her stiff grasp. The joys of memory are ours for the having. A sensitive spirit will find them ready to shower blessings on every hand. Indeed age seems to vanish where the sensuous memory stirs to refresh and invigorate us. Memory can do what books fail utterly to accomplish; she leaves us the hero of our sweetest romance. Books exact our appreciation of the virtues (those stilted literary virtues) of others; memory thrills us with the splendid recollection of our own early hopes and our occasional achievements. Memory has but one vital rival in her power to bring swift, safe pleasure, namely, the companionship of very little children who are at once frank and wise, tender and serene.

And to have memory in our old age to call upon when impulse is waning a little and our capacity for material joys lessening we must fill our youthful days with fresh strong beauty. Young life must be full of wonder and romance, storing up impression which through memory will furnish us enslavement and profit in the years to come.

The days when life is new to us, and so our impressions strongest should necessarily be spent in surroundings that will stimulate the imagination, enlighten the character and infuse the spirit; thus only do we fill our wonder house. Nature should perform be the background for these receptive days, for Nature holds the illimitable romance of all times. Nature is emotional as youth is, and as years go by we remember through our emotions rather than our intellect. It is indeed the quickening of our imagination in the emotional creative period that gives us a living fineness of joy even after the possibility of material enjoyment is past. In the early days of alert comprehension, swift responsiveness, the body and the soul alike are susceptible to all shades of attack from life. To the young mind glowing with enjoyment; appreciation, enthusiasm, “God is in His temple” merely because the sun is high, and rapture winds rose veils about the eyes of those who would gaze upon love.

It is during the creative years, mental, spiritual and physical, that the emotions are most flexible and the capacity for response most sensitized and whatever vision we possess most awake and eager. Then, what so natural as to fill heart and soul with indelible impressions of beauty from Nature, the foundation of beauty? What are all our metropolitan achievements along artistic lines but reproductions of nature? What is art, music, literature, drama, but a re-presentation of phases of nature that have poured into the heart of man through his vision and out again to the world through his mastery of mediums. Then why not seek the whip for our inspiration and the food for our memory from visions of beauty at first hand? The boy and girl who would enrich memory as a treasure house for age must seek real joys through intimate contact with life, and Nature is indeed the only joy that never fails. But you must know her well when your imagination is young. You must arise as she beckons you from the East in the early morning. You must rejoice and sorrow with her intimately and understandingly, you must sleep peaceful in her divine stillness—or later in life you will seek in vain to find her raptures through memory. Keith, the great painter of the Western oak, says that he learned to know the trees by sleeping under them, and then he painted them from memory.
BOOK REVIEWS

In this feeding of memory we find a vital, if not the most vital, reason that all young life should be lived in the country. There are other reasons, too, for country life in childhood,—health, sympathetic understanding of animal life, knowledge of the importance of manual labor, a sense of responsibility toward progress, respect for strength and simplicity. But valuable as these are as a foundation for a sane, wholesome, useful life, the development of the imagination through country living and nearness to nature and consequent storing of the soul with new, joyous experiences for memory to reproduce in years to come seems the supreme gift that real rural living has to offer our children.

"But I don't want my children to become farmers, James is going to be a great lawyer and Marguerite cannot live without society." This is supposed to be an argument against country life for young folks. As a matter of fact it is only one more in favor of it. If James is going to shut himself up in a law office for the whole of his business life, he more than almost any other needs to enrich his early years with those ineffable experiences that only Nature can give. He far more than the average man will need to draw upon his memory for the joy that in age life will withhold from him. So let James in particular have the opportunity of getting the soil ready to bring forth good gifts. Let him some time in his youth catch a glimpse of a bluebird in March, let him listen to the robin at sunrise of a gleaming April day and above all let him rest at noon with the wide hillsides pale green, all the orchards fragrant and the orioles nesting under his very eyes. James has been cheated indeed if he has not, with rushing feet, brought cherry blossoms to his mother, the first that unfolded from the very branch he had been watching with loving, eager eyes. For with this experience how often, at what disastrous hours the thought of the orchard and the hillside and the branch of blossoms will return to him; perhaps in the crowded courtroom scene or at the day of some bitter failure or in the midst of defeat memory will bring back with her delicate, loving hands those wonderful joys of boyhood when James had the great opportunity of his life to live in the country.

And Marguerite too, will have a much richer life with country days at the beginning of it. What is this society that is offered her in place of the wildrose in bloom, the fields yellowing with the harvest, the bird calls in her waking moments, her first love borne out of the tender romance of spring, of which she is the living symbol? Can telephone calls and silly school gossip, new fashions in manners and dress, her hair banded low enough on her forehead, her silk stockings cobwebby enough—can these things and their daily discussion really count in her life against intimacy with Nature, a knowledge and love of her wonderful ways, a response to sky, wind, rain, sun, perfume, and in addition a friendship with the kind farm animals, a training for work because it links her with the progress of life, a developed love of peace and a sure, physical poise? What girl in truth has really received her birthright who has not lived happily, vigorously, sanely for a time at least in the country?

We do not advocate too strenuous a life—that every child shall be a pioneer in rural conditions, a life filled with hardship and bleakness—although this is better than the completely enervated false life of many city and village children; but with all our heart and soul out of the fullness of conviction, borne of experience and observation we say to all parents give your children country life, a knowledge at least of springtime in the land of growing, flowering nature, that memory in later life may give them in turn her treasures of exquisitely renewed joys.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE REEF: BY EDITH WHARTON

"THE REEF" is not a strikingly imaginative story, not like "The House of Mirth," wherein Mrs. Wharton knew the value of her material and used it a trifle sensationally, nor does it touch the high art note struck in "Ethan Frome." It is a clever book written from the viewpoint of one knowing life well, regarding it with semi-cynical indulgence; of one past the time of expecting it to unfold with the concentrated energy of the drama.

From beginning to end the story goes on much like life. Agreeable or not its consequences follow each other relentlessly. There is no reprieve from its details; its cup of bitter presented with the draught of love.

Within the souls of its principals there