

SPECIAL  
ARTICLES

## Our Contributors

BOOK  
REVIEWS

## THOUGHTS FOR SPRINGTIME.

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Springtime, glad Springtime, has come! A short time ago our earth was mantled with snow, the streams were bound in Winter's icy chain, the fields were bare and barren, the forests were stripped of every trace of foliage, and a spirit of desolation and death brooded over the face of Nature. But gradually, as our earth turned its face to receive the warm rays of the sun, a resurrection took place. The huge banks of snow disappeared, the streams, breaking loose from their icy fetters, bounded along their accustomed channels, the grass began to sprout and the flowers to unfold, the forests are putting on their vernal dress, the birds warble forth their songs in the grove, and the heart of universal Nature rejoices. The springtime has its lessons. God speaks to us by the seasons of the year.

Every bird that sings,  
And every flower that decks the  
elastic sod,  
And every breath the radiant summer  
brings  
To the pure in spirit is a word of  
God."

First, then, among the lessons which springtime teaches is a lesson of beauty. Spring is one of the most beautiful, perhaps the most beautiful season of the year. Beauty may be defined to be those qualities in certain objects which excite in our minds pleasurable emotions. It is because of these agreeable feelings that certain objects are capable of exciting that we call them beautiful. Now we come to associate such pleasurable feelings with Spring, with the fresh green grass, the opening flower, the rippling rill, the budding forests, the balmy breath of spring, and for this reason we call them beautiful. In this way the various objects of nature not only afford us benefit but minister to our pleasure. God might have given us all that is necessary to our existence here without having added beauty; but He has not only made provision for our warmth, clothing, and food, but also for the gratification of our esthetic sense. He has made the objects we behold not merely useful, but also beautiful. We see this combination of utility and beauty in the pleasing variety which finds expression in His works, in the varied seasons of the year, in the budding beauty of Spring, the maturing fruits of Summer, the golden glory of autumn, and the bracing airs and mantling snows of winter. What variety in the majestic river as it glides along, "now calm or convulsed with breeze or gale or storm," or in the broad deep-heaving sea as it goes forth "boundless, endless, and sublime," with its wonderful tides, ever ebbing and flowing, its calms and storms, its myriad iridescent colors, its heaving bosom as it lies silvered by the moonlight or kindled by the sun into a molten sea of gold. What variety in the sky, with its broad blue dome, its everchanging clouds, now white and fleecy, or again dark and storm-laden—in the splendor of its morning and evening sunsets. It would seem that God in nature were putting forth ever new efforts to delight the eye, to minister to our pleasure, so boundless and beautiful is the variety which He is constantly spreading before us. Nor should we forget that there is a moral element in the beautiful. The form of the beautiful, as Plato puts it, is also the form of the Good. For this reason the immoral man, the slave it may be of some bestial habit, who is alive to the beautiful in nature,

is not so coarse or vicious as he would be without that esthetic taste. Beauty of form and feature, of flower and field, of hill and dale and stream, the beauty of the Spring or Summer landscape—these are all morally educative. They are important factors in moral or spiritual training. They are dim reflections of Him who created them, and reveal His character. They raise our thoughts to Him who is the divinely beautiful, to Him "who is the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely."

Springtime, we notice again, is a time of revival. All Nature at the present time is being revived. A process of revival is silently going on. Gradually, as our earth turns itself towards the sun, a new life is beginning to pulsate through the heart of Nature, a miracle is being performed before our eyes. And so, in the spiritual sphere, as our hearts are turned towards Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, a revival takes place in our hearts and lives, the hard heart softens and warms as the snow-clad plains before the breath of Spring; the flowers of faith, hope, and love unfold; the fruits of patience, meekness, gentleness, forbearance, and forgiveness, sympathy and charity appear, and the pulsations of a new life are felt. We believe in genuine revivals. There are, of course, revivals and revivals. There are, we admit, spurious revivals, followed by violent hysterical manifestations, long-drawn sighs, and exhausting prostrations, which are regarded as evidences of spiritual powers when they are only symptoms of physical weakness, the result of sensuous excitement. But there are genuine revivals, and they are known by their fruits, by a stronger faith, a brighter hope, a warmer love, a larger charity, by more Christ-like living, and more Christ-like loving. And just as sometimes the Spring is slow in coming, the cool winds blow, the night frosts linger, the chilling rains descend or the long drought continues. So, too, spiritually, the revival of spiritual life does not come all at once. Despite the special efforts put forth it is sometimes long delayed—results do not instantly appear; the new convert is conscious of but little growth, the chill blasts of temptation blow, the frosts of unbelief nip the young buds of faith, old habits reassert themselves, and the pulsations of spiritual life are but feebly felt. But what is needed in such cases is more faith in God, and in His promises, a faith which shall turn our souls towards God in prayer, for, as at this season of the year, the more our earth turns its face to the sun and receives his life-giving rays, the sooner shall Springtime be ushered in, the sooner shall verdure and beauty and fruitfulness clothe farm and garden. So, the more our souls turn to Christ in prayer (for prayer is simply the turning of the soul to God), the sooner would a Springtime of soul-revival be experienced, the fault-finding spirit would disappear, evil thinking and evil speaking would cease, the spirit of graft and greed in public and in private life would depart, and in their place would spring up the lovely fruits of righteousness, peace, and joy, and the life of God flowing and filling its dark chambers would expel all envy, jealousy, and malice from the heart, and clothe the life with the fruits of right feeling, right thinking, and right living; and were each family throughout the land, parents and children, as each morning dawned, to bow the knee to God in prayer, there would be less need of the spasmodic efforts sometimes resorted to, or the periodic

revival meeting, and such a Springtime of spiritual refreshment and revival would dawn upon us, such a quickening of spiritual life, as would gladden the heart and strengthen the hands of all Christian workers, and an era of spiritual prosperity unique in the history of the church would be ushered in and enjoyed.

Springtime, we observe further, is to look at the subject from a more homely, practical standpoint, a time of housecleaning. There is a spiritual side to the commonest acts of life, and that of housecleaning forms no exception. When Springtime dawns we overhaul our houses, remove away the dust, turn out the furniture, place it back again, and set the house in order from top to bottom. So should we do to our souls. There are times when we should do to our hearts and homes what in Springtime we do to our houses, times when we should overhaul ourselves and put things to right. We may dislike the process, as we do that of housecleaning, but it should not be neglected. As we proceed we may discover some dust of selfishness or sin hidden away in some corner of our heart. As we look into ourselves more closely we may further detect that our devotion to Christian work, our liberality in giving, our attendance at God's house, are not what they used to be; that our temper, our sympathy, our brotherly love and Christian charity have become soiled. It is well and wise, therefore, that we frequently examine ourselves. This process of personal soul-cleaning is a duty which devolves upon us, and no one who values his spiritual life will neglect it. And what better time than the present for this examination? Why should our lives be out of harmony with this season of the year, when we are so sensitive to our houses? Why be slow so much pains in cleaning our homes when our hearts remain uncleansed? Why make clean the outside of the platter while within we are dead or dusty with worldliness and sin? Or why pay so much heed to the laws of outward propriety or propriety while we neglect the weightier matters of the law—the practice of charity and love? These are questions of vital importance which each one of us should seek to answer at this season of the year on these bright Spring days, when all Nature is entering upon a new life, reminding us of that higher, diviner life to which Christ summons us, and which, if we receive, shall bring glad Springtime into our souls.

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Recent novels by the Macmillan Company are:—"The Romance of a Plain Man," by Ellen Glasgow; "The Three Brothers," by Eden Philpotts; "Sebastian," by Frank Danby; and "The White Sister," by the late Marion Crawford, which promises to be the most sought-after novel of the year.

The first woman Rhodes scholar has arrived in London to pursue her studies. Miss Clara Howard, for that is her name, is from Columbia University, and has a brilliant record. The scholarship, which is established on the same principle as the Rhodes scholarships of men, was raised by the Society of American Women in London. Miss Howard's career is another proof that women are in no wise intellectually inferior to men. Every university should throw open their doors to both sexes on similar terms.