

# THE VARSITY

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## WORD MEMORIES.

Words that bring back the glad and peaceful hours  
That watched our frolics in the sun and shade,  
When ev'ry wind seemed whisp'ring to the flowers  
Of lovelier worlds where happier children played.

Words that recall the feelings of our youth,  
The garden where our names in emerald grew ;  
The truth we loved when fairy tales were truth,  
When god and goddess, fay and faun, were true.

The tiny words that grew from tiny acts ;  
The low love-language of the childish heart ;  
The stammer that interpreted strange facts,  
Or strove some schoolboy legend to impart.

The names our playmates gave in mossy bower,  
When Mab and Ariel for our sponsors stood ;  
Names haply borrowed from some Greek-called flower,  
Or given in praise by Love when we were good.

Nor less the words our statelier years record,  
By Fancy coined, yet bearing Reason's stamp,  
Words with which Wit has played, or Life adored,  
Slaves of the king, or servants of the lamp.

The words of men who clothe our thoughts with speech,  
Gay proverb, sparkling jest, or patriot song ;  
Words which, like sunbeams, through the darkness reach,  
Show lowly worth, or brand imperial wrong.

The words of men that walked in war's red ways,  
Or spake their fireside thoughts to child or wife ;  
The simple words that giving blame or praise  
Ring down the echoing avenues of life.

Glad words that breathe of sunshine and of morn ;  
Sweet words that on the wings of evening fly ;  
Kind words that greet the child when he is born,  
And loving words that bless us when we die.

Berlin.

JOHN KING.

## EARLY REMINISCENCES.

It seems of late to have become a weakness of great minds, or of minds possessed of an established conviction of their greatness, to let the public into the secret of long-past school days,—to trace for others' benefit, instruction, and interest, the early history of the development of individualities not of common mould ; as if to give the world to know how possible it is that great and brilliant futures should be the result of ignominious pasts, and how small causes, rightly directed, may lead to great results. Perhaps proneness to autobiographical reminiscence is a pardonable conceit. In some it is. It certainly is in those whose whole lives and life-work interest us. What would we not give to be able to build from lines of Shakspeare a history of his early life ! How we would rejoice in an authentic account of Socrates' boyhood, and trace him year by year from Phaenarete's nursing of him to his unhappy fall into the matrimonial clutches of Xantippe ! But the god-

dess of history seems to have cast a veil over the early life of great men ; even Paul of Tarsus is little known, and that little not altogether authenticated as worthy of credence. But if the goddess is unkind in this, she makes up for her ill-humor by telling us all that is worth knowing—and much that is not—about the babyhood and boyhood of hosts of others not of so great importance, except to themselves. These glimpses of knowledge are valuable only when they are valuable ; which, interpreted, means that they are worthy of attention only when they attach to themselves, apart from the passing and accidental individual who happens to be the medium of intelligence, an interest which is founded on an appeal to the remembered universal or frequent experience of others. There are very few people in the world at present whose personal history we are interested in, simply because they are who they are. If a man's history is interesting in itself, if the recital of it is instructive or even amusing, we welcome it, not, however, as a rule, because it is his, but because it is worth knowing. So it is with reminiscences of school-days, of which we have of late had an overflow. These are worth reading only if they are worth telling in themselves, if they appeal to our sympathies, and especially to those sympathies founded on our own experience. Abstractly, no one cares to know that John Smith received what little education has been furnished him, at Smith's Corners, and Smythville, and at Smythe's Academy in the county-town of his county. But if John Smith can tell us anything about these important periods in his career—important to him, I mean, of course—that is worth hearing, and can tell it in such a way as to make himself worth listening to, we are glad to listen. But only then. Those who tell us tales of simple things must make their tales good in the telling. It is in the telling of simple things that one most easily becomes a bore.

Any person who has read thus far in my statement of a harmless, but, I think, reasonable, impression on the subject of the recital of school day reminiscences, will naturally suspect that I am about to enter upon a detailed tabulation of my own. I'm not. But it is not modesty that prevents the perpetration. I believe my early experiences were not more monotonous than others that have been recalled and related with even painful particularity of detail. But the very recalling of them to myself in reverie,—a recalling caused by the waste of many valuable minutes in reading a magazine-writer's account of his early school days, entirely devoid as it was of any element interesting or even amusing,—brought to my mind the pleasing fact that there is in every memory a chord which the natural and feeling recital of school-day lore never fails to touch,—that there is to all of us a common ground whereon it is pleasant to wander, arm-in-arm, as if the passing acquaintanceship of the moment were a friendship extending backwards till memory becomes a shadow,—that there is a common influence which can draw us away from the present into a happy past. I say a happy past, because in memory of early days the mind dwells more on the bright features of the picture than on the dark, which but give them greater prominence. Few of us have had a youth as unhappy as that which Anthony Trollope would have us to believe was his ; and even in his there was a ray of sunshine, if it was only the thrashing of a boy who had to be taken home to be cured.

But even were I to justify the suspicion entertained of me, that I am desirous of telling my early history, I believe there could be found material there, monotonous as it generally was,