

Long Ago and Far Away

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A few weeks ago my sister and I spent an evening remembering the days when I was very young. My sister is seventeen years older than I, (as our mother was just seventeen years older than she) so she could fill in some of the details which my memory dredge could not bring up. I have the type of memory which retains almost everything that is considered unimportant by factual-minded folks and completely discards dates, time-limits and a lot of other practical things. Now the Big Boss can recall the year, month and often even the exact

day when something happened. A most amazing man. No wonder he can't understand my peculiar mental processes, for they are not the least bit orderly. Time, to me, is something that exists only in our consciousness, so why bother about exact dates?

For instance, they tell me it was in 1897 when I lived on the "Old White Farm" in Indiana, but the year is not important to me. I prefer to remember the old harp leaning in one corner of the big attic, whose three strings gave forth a ghostly whispering music as I touched them, and the sugar-maple grove where a chubby three-year-old in a red hood tasted the sweet thick syrup. I can still see the fireflies lighting the evening dusk, and recall the very pattern—a little white flower with three white leaves dotted over a black calico ground—of the long dress my mother made for me to wear when I was playing "grown-up lady" in my palace built in a corner of the rail fence. The dress had a tight bodice, a long full skirt with a ruffle around the hem, and I was never Rona Morris when I had it on. I was "Mrs. Jones," and no one could ever figure out why I chose that name, nor can I at this late date.

The child mind is a strange receptive medium. Sometimes in dredging into the soil of memory you unearth the festering roots of imbedded fears which have brought forth strange blooms in later life. The other night I unearthed the memory of a visit my parents and I had made when I was only three. We had gone to visit with some family friends. They were not at home, but in a tiny one-room shack with a barred window their insane daughter was kept. One cold winter her hands and feet had frozen and dropped off. My mother went toward the little

prison room to speak to her and I followed. As I neared the window I heard a scuffling, scrabbling sound from inside, and I fled, screaming with frantic terror, to the refuge of my father's arms. To this day the thought of contact with a deranged person or a scuffling, dragging noise from an unseen source, brings that same sickening impulse toward instant flight. And once, on the long journey to Oklahoma by covered wagons, my mother and I climbed down a mossy bank to a rocky ledge jutting out over a deep, green pool of water fretted with white from the waterfall above. She held me back from the edge, warning if I fell in I would be sucked under and would die. Through the years, that unreasoning fear of green, foam-flecked water has kept me from swimming with freedom. So long as I can glimpse the bottom of river or tank I move with sure strokes, but when the water grows dark, fear wipes out my strength and skill. To put fear into a child's mind is to install a poison that life and time often fails to eradicate.

However, those are my only rooted fears, for I had a loved and happy childhood. Ah, the long, lovely days as I see them through the golden haze of time. Once, in a little river-threaded valley in Oregon, I whittled the top from a young fir tree which stood in the high hill-pasture and made a seat to which I often climbed. There, with some beloved book, I would stay through the long warm afternoons, the wind swaying the fragrant boughs about me, the sheep drifting and grazing on the grassy slope below, while I dreamed strange and lovely dreams of the magic years to come. "A child's will is the wind's will, and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts," and though my dreams were of strange and wonderful lands, at the foot of the gentle pasture slope lay the little gray house which held for me all of love and security. At this moment as I write, although the skies are gray, and few of the dreams I dreamed have been realized, I can feel the soft sweet warmth of those summer winds, can smell again the perfume of fir boughs in the sun, and hear the murmur of the river and the far sweet sound of my mother's voice calling to me.

During that journey my sister and I took into the vanished years, we commented upon the fact that we have found it difficult to recall our mother's face as it was when we were young. I can remember the atmosphere of her presence, the touch of her hands, the rustle of her heavy silken gowns, the crisp sound of her stiffly-starched house-dresses and the flutter of her white

aprons, but I can never see her face. By the time I was old enough for my memory to retain a visual impression of her, the dark hair was snowy white and she was no longer slim and young, though very lovely, with a gracious quiet dignity, a lady to her work-worn fingertips. I think this inability to remember their mother's appearance as it was in their first years is true of most children. I know that my own gaze at me with puzzled eyes when the Big Boss tells them how I used to look twenty-five years ago. This does not trouble me too greatly, for I remember when Bob, our youngest son, was about twelve. I had shown him a photograph of me at eighteen and had said, with I suspect, a note of wistful regret in my voice, "Your mother was pretty then, wasn't she?" He looked a long time at the picture of that laughing dark-haired girl, then lifted thoughtful boyish eyes to my face.

"Yes," he agreed slowly, "you were pretty then, but now you are beautiful—beautiful like a mother."

Perhaps that is our recompense. If we keep our children's love, in their eyes we shall be always beautiful — beautiful like a mother.

Sunday and Week End Guests Visit at Riverview Homes

RIVERVIEW—Mr. and Mrs. Iver Rydell, their daughter, Mrs. Betty Franz, and her son, Grant, all of Evanston, Ill., Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rydell of Portland and Mr. and Mrs. Olof Jacobson

were Sunday dinner guests at the Herman Wood home and all later enjoyed a lunch at the Jacobson home. The Woods and Jacobsons were neighbors of the Rydells in Evanston for many years.

Week end guests at the Rex Normand home were Mrs. Nina Helland and daughter, Charlotte, Norman Helland and Albert Helland all of Elensburg, Wash. Mrs. Helland is a sister of Mrs. Normand and Mrs. Normand accompanied the group on their return to assist in caring for her mother, Mrs. Albert Helland. She will be away a week or more.

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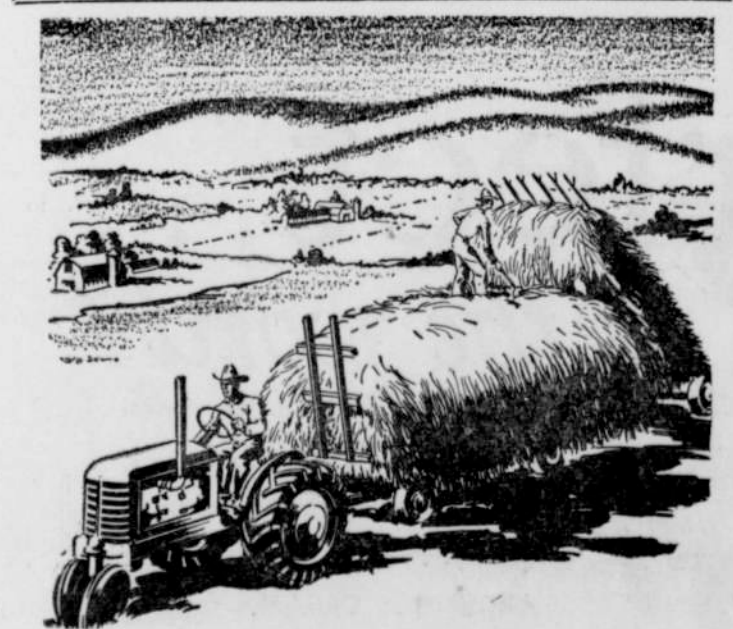
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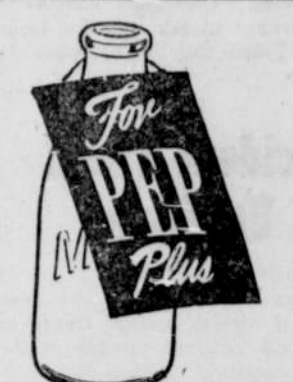
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