

A BACKWARD LOOK

by L. E. Granlie

The golden gates of childhood are slowly turning on their hinges, and will soon be closed on a past that is gone forever.

I am eighteen years old today.

It is said that when a girl reaches the age of eighteen, she is no longer a child, but stands on the threshold of womanhood and is therefore a young lady.

Now I must bring to an end that part of "Leaves of Yesterday" that I have dedicated to the eighteen years of my childhood. They have been gloriously carefree and happy years, but there have been many sad days as well. As I look back, I know that my seventeenth year was the darkest of them all. In every aspect, it has been veritably a succession of unfortunate events, wrought by my inconsistent nature as a child and through the influence of others who have prompted me to those actions that I will regret as long as I live. The consequences of that seventeenth year have thwarted my hopes, my reputation, and even my life. Now that it is over, I am happy that I have not lost my ideals, and that it has strengthened my determination to be kind, courteous, and beautiful in soul. All I ask is that I might forget the mistakes of the past and all the "old, unhappy face of things ... and battles long ago."

Whatever the past has held, we cannot know what lies ahead. No one knows what it will hold. I alone am the proprietor of the soul that is mine to build up to my ideals of sterling character. It is my duty to acquire the poise, personality, charm, and character that I desire -- even

though I am lacking in physical beauty. Life is short. It is foremost, the essentials of happiness are health, love, fame, and wealth -- and in my constant work to obtain these, I shall strive to remember and live up to my ideals of virtue. Then in whatever lies beyond this world, all will be well.

Out of the leaves of this book have arisen several memories that are the highlights of all others. Above all, I remember the various changes of nature, in every season, that I have learned to love, look, and wait for. I think of the warm autumn winds that came sweeping over the prairies, whispering a soothing lullaby to the seared grass.

I think of countless things -- of many outstanding, important moments, such as the time I saw the first ship. I stood on the rocks on the shore of Stump Lake, Michigan, and gazed at the little pleasure schooner with large white sails. The waves rolled and danced at my feet and "roared their challenges the winds above them." It was a momentous moment to me that I cannot forget. I was enraptured, exultant, just as I was on my first train trip last year, and also my first ride in the new stream-lined automobile. Ever since, I have hoped that I will have an opportunity to ride in an airplane.

Then, too, I think of the day that I was recognized in the local newspaper as an author. Though I know that I did not merit all that praise, I was quietly and serenely happy and saved that article among my souvenirs.

Among these, I think of the night that my name was read over the radio with my letter to a broadcasting orchestra, "Rhythmic Solo" [?].

I think back to the time, very recently, that I undertook to write the neighborhood news for our weekly paper. I am still doing that today. Out of the haze that separates the by-gone days from the present, I see myself again as a little child. Perhaps I would be lost in the enhancement of a story book, or be transported in ecstasy and anticipation on Christmas Eve -- and I know deep in my aching heart that I will never, never be that child again.

Somehow, as I write these reminiscences, dark forebodings enter my heart when I think of the future. I will have to conquer the faults, complexes, and wrong inhibitions that I have built up in the past. That in itself, is the most difficult task of all. I have grown to love solitude and to be alone with my thoughts and dreams. None of my acquaintances or even the members of our family know me as I truly am, as I am so reserved and cannot bring out my true personality in actions or speech. Still, all that matters is that I know myself. There is so much in the world about me that is sordid, even aside from the attractions of sex and daily cares, that I almost despair reaching that idealistic mansion of success.

So far, the quality of all my literary work in this book has been the idealistic, poetic sentiment type. From now on, I study the technique of writing to bring out my own individual style of realism. Appreciating that fact, this book is still the most precious of all my possessions, the most valued and cherished book that I have written or will ever write in years to come.

* * * * *

The shadows of the closing gates of childhood have fallen across the page. That last silent hour of farewell has come when I must pay a final tribute to the years that have gone down the pathway of life. In the dim light that lingers, I lay a wreath of withered leaves of yesterday on the grave of the past that is dead and gone ... and tomorrow when the dawn of resurrection has come, its memories shall awaken and arise, and shall live on forever -- a shining pillar in my sacred mansion of Remembrance.

L. E. G.