

## ARBOR-DAY MUSINGS.

How expressive is nature in all her various forms and features; how eloquent are her many voices!

The soul of William Cullen Bryant was keenly responsive to all her breathings and romantic mystery. What deep insight had he into the unwritten lore of mountain, forest, and sea, and how well could he translate to duller minds their various moods.

"To him, who, in the love of nature, holds Communion with her visible forms, she speaks A various language: for his gayer hours She has a voice of gladness, and a smile And eloquence of beauty; and she glides Into his darker musing with a mild And gentle sympathy, that steals away Their sharpness, ere he is aware,"

How pleasing is her voice of gladness in our gayer hours, and how grateful, in our darker musings, is her gentle sympathy! Well may we cultivate, then, the love of nature and acquaintance with her visible forms. Well may we teach the child to love the flowers and birds and trees, for that love softens the asperities of human nature and brings us into closer sympathy with our fellows.

All hail to Arbor Day! Let everyone note well its lessons, and plant a tree. The grass, the herb, the shrub, the tree—the most ancient classification—all occupy a place of peculiar interest and dignity in the kingdom of nature. The essence of life first made its appearance in the vegetable kingdom. The vegetable stands as a mediator between the lower mineral kingdom and the higher kingdom of animal life, a mediator between the living and the dead. Who shall explain to us the mystery of nature's chemistry by which the delicate rootlets dissolve the organic minerals of the earth, and the leaves decompose and absorb the carbonic acid taken from the surrounding air? Who shall tell us the hidden processes by which plants breathe, and perspire, and assimilate, and sleep? Vastly important to us are all the functions of the plants. They take up the poisonous gases, and replenish the air we breathe with the blood-purifying oxygen. They transform the crude elements of earth and air and sunshine into food to nourish our bodies. They spread a mantle of bright tints over the dull landscape and fill the soul with gladness. How restful to the eye is the vision of green fields; how soothing to weary minds are the whispering leaves and the fragrance of the woods—nature's lullabies.

History records the story of many notable trees. Mount Lebanon has been known from early Biblical times for its famous cedars. In 1696 there were sixteen cedars on that historic mount, which measured more than thirty feet in circumference. The island of Ceylon boasts the most magnificent tree of all India. It is the gigantic banyan on

Mount Lavinia, seven miles from Colombo. Two roads wind between its many drooping stems, and its shadows, at noontide, covers four acres. The great linden in Wurtemberg was eight hundred years old when it fell in the gale of 1832. This grand old tree, which had inspired the poet's muse, was more than thirty-seven feet in girth. Near Balaklava, in the Baidar valley, stands a giant walnut tree which is one thousand and two hundred years old. It is owned by several Tartar families, who gather from it some years nearly a hundred thousand walnuts.

The old world has its venerable trees, but none less notable are some of the giants of the new. What school-child does not know the story of the "Treaty Elm," on the banks of the Delaware, beneath whose boughs William Penn signed his treaty with the Indians in 1682? It perished in 1826. The "Charter Oak," of Hartford, has been venerated as a faithful friend of American liberties, for it was long the secure hiding place of the charter of the colony. The wide-spreading elm in Cambridge will long be remembered in song and story, for beneath its branches the peerless Washington took command of the forces of the patriots.

What soul is not stirred with emotion, when gazing upon the towering firs and cedars of Oregon! Last summer, while enjoying an outing in the coast mountains, I saw several spruce trees that measured more than ten feet in thickness. Three-hundred-foot firs are common in the mountains. What mind is not startled and amazed when contemplating the ponderous redwoods of California? How suggestive are the noble trees of the towering characters of human history. But if these ancient patriarchs of the forest and mountain slope could only unbosom to us the story of life and decay, of romance and tragedy, of which they have been silent witnesses, how thrilling and fascinating would be the reminiscence.

Did you ever reflect how desolate and uninviting this world would be were it not for the trees? Lands denuded of their forests become subject to the greater extremes of summer heat and the cold of winter. Rob a country of its trees, and it is robbed of many charming features, for it becomes a solitude unenlivened by the songs of the wild birds and by the rollicking creatures of the wood. Deprive the fields and hills of the spreading roots of trees and shrubs, and they become subject to the erosive power of rains and floods. Destroy the forests, and the parching drouth and the pinch of cold and poverty must soon be felt.

How delightful is a holiday in the woods in early autumn, when the ground is thickly strewn with richly tinted leaves. The sighing in the tree-tops, and the rustle of the dead leaves bring

to mind the memories of childhood days. But the dead and fallen leaves—they fulfill a most important office. They are nature's safeguard against cold and drouth. They spread like a thick matting over the roots of the trees, retaining the moisture and shutting out the frost or excessive heat, and so promote thrift and growth by preserving an even temperature. Surely wisdom is displayed in all of nature's ways. How refreshing is the shade of a leafy tree in the mid-day heat of a summer sun; how comforting is the protection of a barrier of trees against the wintry winds; and so, in the kingdom of plant life has nature ministered to our wants by supplying food and shelter and clothing and medicine and beauty and perfume to fill our days with health and gladness.

Every highway should be graced with thrifty trees. All the waste places in our domain should be planted with native trees of the forest. Every home should be within an encircling grove. And every little child should be taught to venerate the tree as a mediator standing between the living and the dead, and as typical of that higher mediation of Christ between man and God. There are many analogies between a treeless country and a Christless life.

The spring-time has its inspiration. What a beautiful picture then meets the eye. The grass spreads its velvet of bright green over the dark, uneven ground, and softens every hard and unkind feature; above the carpet of green, the flowers lift their smiling faces to the sun and fill every breeze with incense; shrubs, rich with bloom, dot the fields; and beyond, the hills are crowned with noble trees of more sombre hues. Who is not impelled at such a time, somehow, to purer thoughts and a better life, when looking out upon such a prospect spread beneath clear azure skies?

But the autumn is a time for reflection. The north wind has breathed upon this vale with its mellow tints, and a marvelous change is wrought. The setting sun pours his flood of light upon the fields and distant slopes, and they are bedecked with crimson and burnished gold. What thoughtful mind does not reflect at a time like this upon life and its coming autumn, and cherish the hope that its maturity may be resplendent in glorious ideals realized?

Tennyson saw a mystic bond of sympathy and unity binding the earth-born life with the heavenly, which is so aptly expressed in his lines:

"Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies;  
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is."

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## A Timber Famine.

Most of the warnings of the time come from Great Britain, where the people for good and sufficient reasons have had