

# Memories

A beautiful and happy girl,  
With step as light as summer air,  
Eyes glad with smiles, and brow of pearl,  
Shadowed by many a careless curl  
Of unconfined and flowing hair;  
A seeming child in everything,  
Save thoughtful brow and ripening charms,  
As Nature wears the smile of Spring  
When sinking into Summer's arms.

A mind rejoicing in the light  
Which melted through its graceful bower,  
Leaf after leaf, dew-moist and bright,  
And stainless in its holy white,  
Unfolding like a morning flower  
A heart, which, like a fine-toned lute,  
With every breath of feeling woke,  
And, even when the tongue was mute,  
From eye and lip in music spoke.

How thrills once more the lengthening chain  
Of memory, at the thought of thee!  
Old hopes which long in dust have lain  
Old dreams, come thronging back again,  
And boyhood lives again in me;  
I feel its glow upon my cheek,  
Its fulness of the heart is mine,  
As when I leaned to hear thee speak,  
Or raised my doubtful eye to thine.

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I hear again thy low replies,  
I feel thy arm within my own,  
And timidly again uprise  
The fringed lids of hazel eyes,  
With soft brown tresses overblown.  
Ah! memories of sweet summer eves,  
Of moonlit wave and willowy way,  
Of stars and flowers, and dewy leaves,  
And smiles and tones more dear than they!

Ere this, thy quiet eye hath smiled  
My picture of thy youth to see,  
When, half a woman, half a child,  
Thy very artlessness beguiled,  
And folly's self seemed wise in thee;  
I too can smile, when o'er that hour  
The lights of memory backward stream,  
Yet feel the while that manhood's power  
Is vainer than my boyhood's dream.

Years have passed on, and left their trace,  
Of graver care and deeper thought;  
And unto me the calm, cold face  
Of manhood, and to thee the grace  
Of woman's pensive beauty brought.  
More wide, perchance, for blame than praise,  
The school-boy's humble name has flown;  
Thine, in the green and quiet ways  
Of unobtrusive goodness known.

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And wider yet in thought and deed  
Diverge our pathways, one in youth;  
Thine the Genevan's sternest creed,  
While answers to my spirit's need  
The Derby dalesman's simple truth.  
For thee, the priestly rite and prayer,  
And holy day, and solemn psalm;  
For me, the silent reverence where  
My brethren gather, slow and calm.

Yet hath thy spirit left on me  
An impress Time has worn not out,  
And something of myself in thee,  
A shadow from the past, I see,  
Lingering, even yet, thy way about;  
Not wholly can the heart unlearn  
That lesson of its better hours,  
Not yet has Time's dull footstep worn  
To common dust that path of flowers.

Thus, while at times before our eyes  
The shadows melt, and fall apart,  
And, smiling through them, round us lies  
The warm light of our morning skies,  
The Indian Summer of the heart!  
In secret sympathies of mind,  
In founts of feeling which retain  
Their pure, fresh flow, we yet may find  
Our early dreams not wholly vain

by John Greenleaf Whittier