

## ALADDIN'S LAMP.

BY THE EDITOR.

MR. Frank P. Tebbetts's article on "The Land of Once Upon a Time" calls to mind Lowell's poem "Aladdin" which brings out most forcibly the yearning for the romance of childhood. It reads thus:

"When I was a beggar boy,  
And lived in a cellar damp,  
I had not a friend nor a toy,  
But I had Aladdin's lamp;  
When I could not sleep for cold,  
I had fire enough in my brain,  
And builded, with roofs of gold,  
My beautiful castles in Spain!

"Since then I have toiled day and night,  
I have money and power good store,  
But I'd give all my lamps of silver bright,  
For the one that is mine no more;  
Take, Fortune, whatever you choose,  
You gave, and may snatch again;  
I have nothing 't would pain me to lose,  
For I own no more castles in Spain!"

Mr. Tebbetts drives home to us the significance of our recollections of childhood, and the important part they play in our present life. No one of us would like to miss the sweet memories of home, and the innumerable associations connected with the first impressions we receive in our life, for they have become dear to us and they are mixed up with the fairy tales of the childhood of mankind. But in dwelling on the romance of past ages, we are apt to forget too easily that they had their unpleasant features. Distance lends enchantment, and bygone days are rarely as grand as they appear in our recollection. In fairy tales we always identify ourselves with the hero who slays the giant and delivers the captives; but we ought

to consider the many victims who have to suffer or are even slain and devoured by ogres.

The fairy tale of the past so far as it is genuine tradition, as for instance the German *Märchen*, is not a mere play of our imagination but reflects the reality of a past age. These tales are ancient myths and at the time of their origin were the expression of the religion of primitive mankind. In the course of time they were humanized, and though the marvelous element of myth has been retained, the background describes actual conditions of robbers, villains, evil doers, and also of heroes who take compassion on innocent sufferers, and help the good cause to triumph.

Having read Mr. Tebbetts's article I ask myself the question, What have we lost since we have grown up? He agrees with Lowell in thinking that the romance is missing in our present life, and insists on the necessity that we remain children. He does not forget to limit his statement by expressly declaring at the same time that this does not mean that we should not grow into men conscious of their duties, only we should not tear out from our hearts every shred of romance and imagination. In this sense we should remain "children for ever, and nothing less than children." It seems to me that the romance of childhood does not exist at the time when we are children, but is an addition which supervenes upon the recollections of childhood as they haunt us in later years.

The wonderful colors in the painted glass windows of ancient cathedrals can no longer be imitated, and industrial workers in the same line sometimes wonder how they have been produced. It appears that the peculiar glow of these tints is due to age, and it is not impossible that some of the artistic work of the present time will also be embellished by being exposed for a great length of time to the influences of sunshine and temperature, and perhaps by chemical changes which set in during the lapse of time. Is it not the same with our childhood memories?

When we were children we felt the limitations of childhood. A broken toy worried us as much as a serious loss of some kind does at present. Children are inconsolable about trifles, and all this is felt as real pain. When we grow older we look upon our little troubles in another light. We have developed a personality superior to that of the child, and in this way we have risen above ourselves. This attitude was not originally part of our childhood life; it supervenes upon it in the lapse of years, imparting to it that roseate glow of romance which we regret that we have lost. I do not mean

to say that this explanation is universally applicable, but I am inclined to believe that it covers very many cases.

So far as I can judge life remains in all ages to all practical purposes the same. Our cares and worries differ in significance and importance, but in childhood they appear to us quite severe. On the other hand we can easily be possessed of buoyancy if we can only rise above ourselves and can recognize the romance of life in the living present which is just as much brightened with visions of the future as were the days of our younger years. Our visions have expanded in real significance but the expansion is purely relative, for the toy is as important to the child as a man's vocation is to him, and childish pleasures correspond to the comfort, recreations and other enjoyments, which are perhaps positively needed as a relief from the daily labors of an adult.

In this sense the word remains true that we ought to remain children throughout our lives but the significance would be that we ought to be able to soar above ourselves, to rise beyond our own selfhood, and be able to look upon our present life from a higher standpoint in the same way as we can now look back upon bygone days when we still lived in the "land of once upon a time." There are not many who own Aladdin's lamp; and those who do must have possessed it in their childhood, for only a child, pure in heart and bright in mind can find it; and how many trade it off for a lamp of gold!