

mistrust that child, she is distinctly decadent. She seems to have a preference for the part of a distressed princess. Now, distressed princesses are always a drug in the market, no one wants to be a distressed princess. Only if you have a number of very masterful brothers, and you yourself are meek and small, are you reduced to act the dreary role of squaw with an uninteresting papoose, instead of ranging the wild woods as the noble Uncas or the wily Chichangook. It is only later in life, much later, that you care to play Andromeda to someone else's Perseus; when you are young and clean and unspoilt, you ardently desire to slay your own dragons, to charge personally for the golden shield. You are even secretly certain that nothing will really hinder you from donning a seaman's garments and becoming a gallant sailor in the future, if your tastes lie in that direction. It is only later, much later luckily, that you discover your unfortunate limitations.

I have always been thankful that the governors of my early childhood had a classical bent, and that I glowed for Leonidas and the pass of Thermopylæ, and followed breathlessly the battle of Salamis, long before I discovered Alfred and the burnt cakes. We learn soon enough that our own pump and our own backyard is superior to everybody's else's pump and backyard—why strive to impress the debatable fact on infants? It would be amusing if it were not pathetic, to watch the frantic modern efforts to stimulate patriotism in the "Child of the Empire." Children are naturally beautifully impartial, and admire courage and dash wherever they meet it with the blare of the trumpet and the "rush of squadrons sweeping, like whirlwinds o'er the plain." They never stop to inquire who the squadrons belong to. A red Indian is always a desirable character and a man and a brother, even if he has scalped a settler or two. For children emphatically appreciate the lines—

And one the bond of brotherhood
That binds the brave of all the earth.

The first sword I ever drew was as Leonidas, the bold defender of Thermopylæ. Make no mistake, I did not *act* Leonidas (at seven one does not act)—I *was* the noble Greek. Greek heroes, owing to our governesses' tastes, were then "all the rage." My cousins and companions rejoiced in the names (they stand out clear to this day) of Calicratides, Epaminondas, and Brasidas! For some unknown reason we despised Pericles and Themistocles. A charming and delightful Irish family we knew, who we dimly believed to be Fenians, whatever that might be, were dubbed Persians and sternly treated as hereditary enemies. I

have reason now to think that, acting on principle, we were distinctly rude to them. For in those days the shadows were real, and we were bound to live up to our convictions.

Later on we held the bridge "in the brave days of old" as noble Romans, whilst there was a distinct unpleasantness when we went to stay with my grandmother and built a wigwam in the shrubbery as an appropriate dwelling for the "Last of the Mohicans," and betrayed ourselves by lighting a fire which smoked atrociously. I am doubtful also whether the pony appreciated the "Lady of the Lake" as much as we did, when he was galloped wildly round the field as the "gallant grey" with trusty followers panting on foot behind.

A day was so long then, one lived a lifetime in one free day. One was so busy, there was so much to do, and it was all vastly important, much more so than the grown-up toys we call work, and that we play with as we grow older. Yet it is a great thing if, as we grow older, we retain some of the power of seeing our life not only as it appears to others—plain, uninteresting, commonplace, just ordinary work carried out with ordinary tools—but with the deeper understanding of childhood, grasping the pride and delight of heroic action. For if in our ears ring the echoes of the old trumpets, then our daily work becomes a glorious campaign to right the wrong, or a noble fortress that we hold for the truth, and we ride forth under some bold device to slay our own dragons as in the days of old. And if we never lose the power of living our life heroically, of seeing our surroundings in bold free outlines, the glamour of the higher life that really exists in the lower will always be with us. It is just this glamour that lures the young probationer into a nurse's cap and strings, and it is just this glamour that makes or mars our nursing life. For it will show us in the puling, sickly, whining baby, the whole tragedy of helpless, suffering childhood, doomed for another's sin, in the fretful, cantankerous man, old before his time, all the tremendous strain of modern work and competition, breaking its tools before they are worn out, in the neurotic, overstrung, woman, the victim of a decadent civilisation. And if we see it all with that larger vision that grasps the whole of which this is but a part, we shall be thankful that, as in our childhood, we are taking part in no mean war.

M. MOLLETT.

The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to Signor Ernesto Moneta (Italy), and M. Louis Renault (France).

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)