

village view

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Many a line's been written about home. Poetry and prose have extolled the virtues of home since language was written. From the pages of Thomas Hood, we find the verse, **Home at last**,

Peace and rest at length have come
All the day's long toil is past,
And each heart is whispering, "Home,
Home at last."

Sir Walter Scott, in **Lay of the Last Minstrel**, penned the words memorized long ago, at school,
Breathes there the man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,

This is my own my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?

In the wake of disasters, fire, flood, windstorm or earthquakes, come reports of hundreds homeless, and it's a hard heart, indeed, that doesn't ache for those who've lost their homes.

Among the literature pertaining to home, we also find the quotation "You can't go home again", which seems to negate all the yearning dreams of returning to that special place, unique to each of us. The message doesn't refute the possibility of physically revisiting the scenes of childhood; it does, however, deny the possibility of recapturing the essence of early experience.

Places and people, the statement seems to say, change and become unrecognizable; furthermore, you change as well, and in so doing, your ability to find pleasures you once enjoyed by returning home is bound to have diminished.

While there may be grains of truth in the notion, it's not necessarily so. It's a mistake to accept the statement at face value without testing it, and yourself. If your expectations are reasonable ones, it's fine to come home again.

Certainly home won't be precisely the same; if your absence has been one of many years, the people you find there won't be just as they were when you left; not all of them will still be around. As the years pass, their places will have been filled by another generation.

The high-spirited young woman you remember may have become a placid matron or an embittered recluse; the young man voted most-likely-to-succeed when he graduated from high school may not have lived up to the expectations of his peers; the ones you remember as competent community leaders may now be senile or physically frail.

And there'll be strangers. People who were but children when last you saw them will now be busy and active adults with families of their own; people who've moved into town from other areas may be running things their way, differently from the old ways. The Men's Club, the Ladies' Aid Society, the committees, the local government will all be operated by new faces, influenced by new ideas.

The landmarks and surroundings will have changed, too. The woodland where you wandered as a child may be a playground; the meadow where you gathered daisies and buttercups, chased fireflies in twilight evenings, may have sprouted a dozen houses; certain remembered buildings may have been so altered as to be unrecognizable, or they may have been razed entirely. It's reasonable to anticipate changes like these. Trying to return to a world that was and will never be again is expecting too much.

Some changes may be improvements, even though your emotions resist acknowledging the fact. A community that never had a library is certainly changed when one is built, and changed for the better.

A village boasting a new post office and grocery store is different from the old days when a somewhat ramshackle building housed them both inadequately. People are better served by the new.

An old hotel, modernized, offers comforts of heated rooms and private baths instead of the shivery quarters and

the trot-down-the-hall you may remember. You won't resent the conveniences.

There'll be roads cut through where no paths led before. Trees will have grown tall, obscuring a cherished and well-remembered view. An empty lot may now be a park where flowers bloom, where flagstone walks and brightly-painted benches welcome visitors, inviting a moment's peaceful rest and relaxation.

And still, with all the changes, many things will be the same. Beneath the graying hair that once was brown, you'll find the same quick merry eyes, the same bright laughter, the same questing mind you knew and loved in days gone by.

The hand that trembles with age will still grasp yours in a strong and steady grip of friendship, just as it did when you both were younger. The same things that tickled your funny bone, made you friends to start with will still amuse and entertain you both.

When friendships are based on mutual trust and similar patterns of thinking, they are renewable; the intervening years slip away as though they'd never been. You're soon taking up where you left off the last time you were together, sharing and enjoying one another.

Status changes? Certainly. The child-grown-to-adulthood can no longer be patronized. The adult-grown-old can no longer be leaned upon, must now lean on younger stronger people. You, yourself, are different; and those who knew you as a child, as a youngster, as a young adult, will see you today as you are today.

Do all the changes mean you'll be disappointed? Only if you expect things will be exactly as they once were; unrealistic expectations those would be. An open, friendly, acceptance of things and people, somewhat different from those you recall, will soon make your awareness of the changes fade away.

At home? Yes, it's easy to be at home again; not as it was, but as it is. You can go home again- if you bring with you acceptance of the inevitability of change, appreciation of the sameness, expectation of the differences.