

"Montauk"

by

Childe Hassam, N. A.

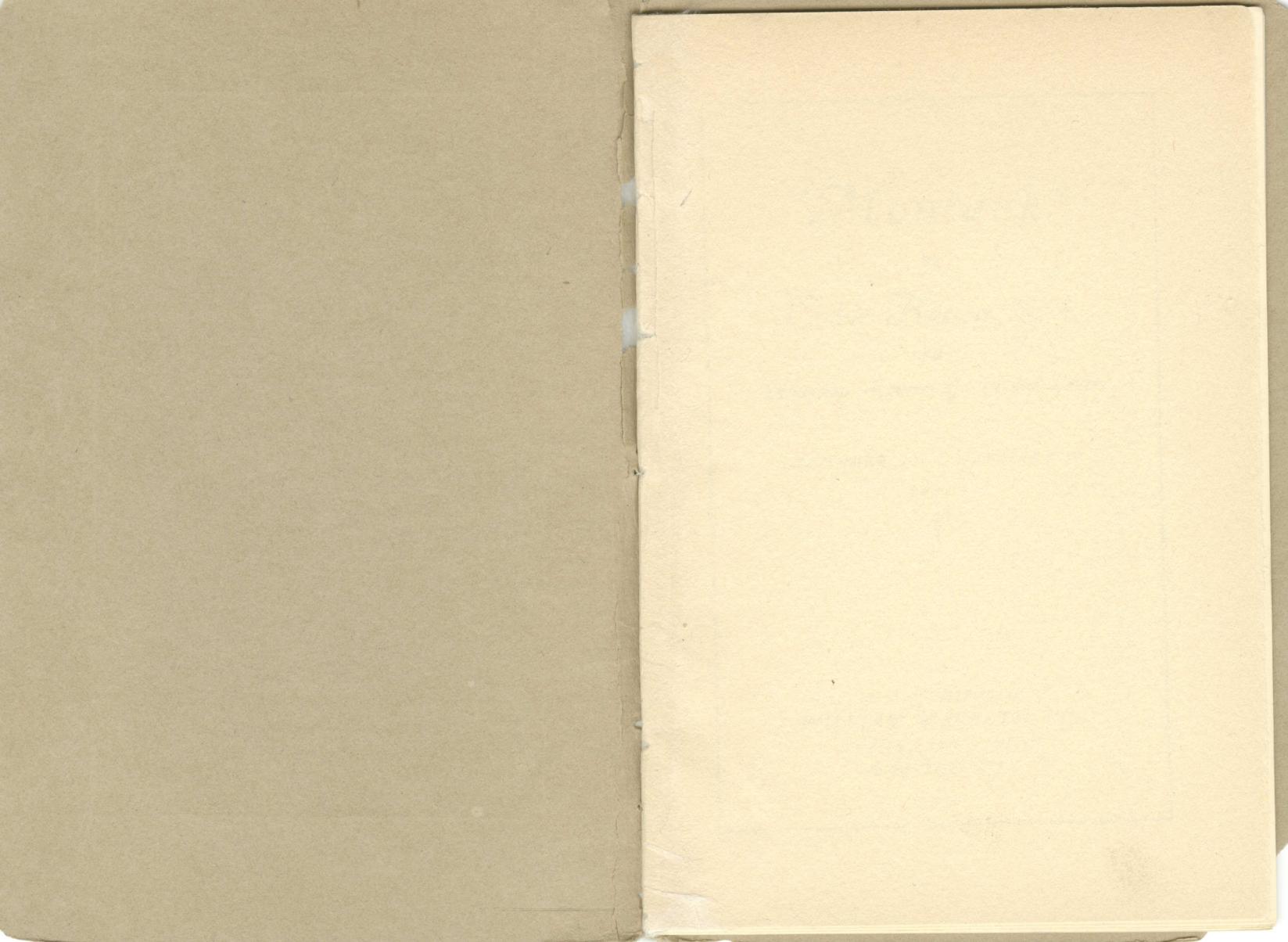
of the

American Academy of Arts and Letters

DECEMBER 30 :: JANUARY 19
1924-5



AT THE GALLERIES OF
WILLIAM MACBETH, INC.
15 EAST 57th STREET
NEW YORK CITY



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POMONA IN THE ROSE BOWER



The Greeks were boys in the sunlight, the Romans were men in the field, the Egyptians were old women in the cellar.

THOREAU

To say of a painting that it is impressionistic is the same thing as to say of a man that he is manly. In other words both have successfully fulfilled their intended function.

"The Enchantment of Art" by
DUNCAN PHILLIPS

Childe Hassam

Impressionism in art means much more than the rapid notation of an elusive appearance nor should it be associated in our minds with any one technique. It is doubtful however whether the term will ever be given its proper significance as it was necessary to coin such a word to classify the painters and writers who celebrate the luminous sensation of a moment. So, "Impressionists" they called themselves and "Impressionists" they will remain. The first impressionist pictures that Hassam saw, brought to Boston by his kinsman William Hunt, were Jongkinds. Childe Hassam took over Jongkind's method of laying on the paint in broken colors to produce effects of atmospheric vibration and more intense light, but he soon made it absolutely his own. He has always been an "Impressionist" in the restricted, generally accepted sense of the word. The evanescent beauty of the world has called to him for the exercise of his beneficent power to fix forever the fugitive instant. He is a predestined interpreter of the thrilling, sudden aspect,

the animated, quickly changing scene. At the outset he painted the alluring vistas and populous sidewalks of Boston, Paris and New York in every season, in all sorts of weather, by day and by night, with reflected lamplight on wet pavements, with such vivid snatches of impression as we get from people glimpsed in passing. Later he took us with him wherever he went—

To golden sands and pebbly beaches—
shimmering summer seas;

To woodland glades where leaves are silvered in a vagrant breeze, and to the snug harbours and steeples and elms and colonial doorways of old New England towns. There are no varying moods with all this change of climate. We respond to a sense of perfect health and equanimity. Such well being and rapture in sunshine shames us out of introspection. Here is a Pagan who exults in the energy, ecstasy and variety of life, expressing it all in much the same way, with the emphasis upon the universal dance of air and light. I have often called Hassam a Greek artist in spite of the fact that he boasts none of the usual

classic or Hellenic distinctions. He is not usually a monumental designer, not much more than an improvising, debonair draughtsman of the nude figure, and only occasionally occupied with plastic problems. Stylistic ornament and formal aesthetic conventions are not for him. Symmetry is not his aim nor is capricious linear melody his delight. And yet he too has lived in Arcadia. Through his senses and spirit the gods have blown inspiration. He is not an aesthete but an athlete, not a stoic but an epicurean. He is of Hellas because he is himself—a virile lover of life and nature as Monet and Renoir were before him.

But now we come upon some new canvasses by this same Childe Hassam which appeal to the mind as well as to the eye. They are impressionistic, but in the larger, truer sense. The heroic civilization which developed around the deep blue Mediterranean would naturally have a powerful appeal for artists of Hassam's type. He has always been aware of the spirits of dryads and nymphs in woods and waves and has added little figures to suggest his thought as well as to give

keynote incidents of color. But now we learn that for a number of years he has been camping out and painting at Montauk Point on the eastern end of Long Island with the eager desire to make us understand that, for all of us with perceptions fully awake, the Attica of the age of Pericles can be made to live again on the shores of North America. The bold contours and large, simplified ground forms of this region suggest the antique world. Hassam has painted a series of decorative landscapes on this classic coast, these unspoiled "fields of asphodel" knowing that soon the scene will change to just another American seashore settlement. Being a true artist he has changed his method to adapt it to the new inspiration, which is no longer merely sensuous but evocative of dreams. The key of light is pitched to its maximum of intensity and all the years in which this Luminist has studied and transcribed the sensation of the sun at its apex, in blazing noonday, have added to a knowledge now made synthetic if not abstract. The colors have been reduced to three, pure ultramarine for the encircling sea, a

golden green for the sunswept shores, and a rosy gold for the draped or nude figures. There is no definition of the details of the landscape—only a decorative marshalling of the boundary lines and of the forms in space, to convey a mood of combined tranquility and exhilaration. All the vivacity, the effervescence, is held in abeyance, and it is difficult to recognize the impressionistic illustrator of New York's awakening cosmopolitanism in "the Nineties," the clever painter of the Fifth Avenue of sparkling lights and of the American girl of changing fashions. The realism is still there but is subordinated to simplification in "the grand manner," and to the flat tones of the mural decorator. These pictures in praise of Montauk Point may be less amazing in veracity, less beguiling in color than the light lyricism of other years, but at least we see in Hassam an artist with something of the grandeur that was Greece as well as with the abounding vitality of the Greek point of view.

DUNCAN PHILLIPS

TITLES OF PAINTINGS

- 1
ADAM AND EVE WALKING OUT ON
MONTAUK IN EARLY SPRING
- 2
THE DANCE OF THE DRYADS
- 3
THE GROVE OF APHRODITE
The White Poplars on Great Pond
- 4
THE NINE MUSES CELEBRATING THE
INDIAN CORN IN FLOWER
- 5
ARIADNE AND ARTEMIS
- 6
DIANA THE HUNTRESS FINDING
GRAFFITI OF POSEIDON
- 7
A MONTAUK GARDEN IN THE AGE
OF PERICLES
- 8
THE LITTLE ALTAR TO CERES
- 9
THE GREAT ALTAR TO CERES AND THE
WEST WIND
- 10
DANCE OF THE AUTUMN ZEPHYRS
- 11
A MONTAUK VILLA IN THE AGE OF
PERICLES

TITLES OF PAINTINGS

- 12
POMONA IN THE ROSE BOWER
- 13
THE HOURS
- 14
THE LITTLE GARLAND FOR PAN
- 15
YOUNG APOLLO AND THE FLYING
SWANS
- 16
SUNSET FROM THE GROVE OF NEMESIS
- 17
THE STRANGE GALLEY
Old Hook Pond at Sundown
- 18
THE WILD SWANS, SACRED TO APOLLO
- 19
NEREID
- 20
DIANA AS SPRING
The Beach Plum and the Dogwood
- 21
GEORGICA
- 22
THE FESTIVAL OF POSEIDON
- 23
MONTAUK

FOUR FLOWER AND STILL
LIFE SUBJECTS

24

LACE OF THE GODDESSES
Queen Ann's Lace or Wild Carrot

25

THE BLUE OF THE EYES OF THE
GODDESSES
The Wild Chicory

26

GRAPES FOR THE GREAT ALTAR
A Window Frame of Swamp Cedar, out of the Old
Church hand hewn by the early English settlers of
Easthampton and Montauk

27

THE WILD FLOWERS OF MONTAUK
BY MOONLIGHT

A group of etchings and a portfolio of water colors
will be found in the West Gallery

Historical Note

IT was nearly thirty years ago that Childe Hassam made his first visit to Montauk—then an almost uninhabited wilderness where even those best acquainted with Long Island seldom penetrated. His visit was repeated at intervals until 1920. In that year, with his headquarters at his home in Easthampton for six months, he was a frequent visitor. In 1921, with Jack Roudebush and Albert Smith, later joined by Reynolds and Gifford Beal, he camped there for the whole month of September.

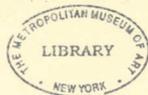
“Wild Flowers by Moonlight”—the clear autumn moonlight, is a record of the bodily closeness to nature that only sleeping-bag nights can afford. The view point is perhaps typical of the strenuous character of the camp where the sunrise plunge, whatever the weather, was the invariable rule, and hard work—tramping, painting, and more tramping,—was the order of the day.

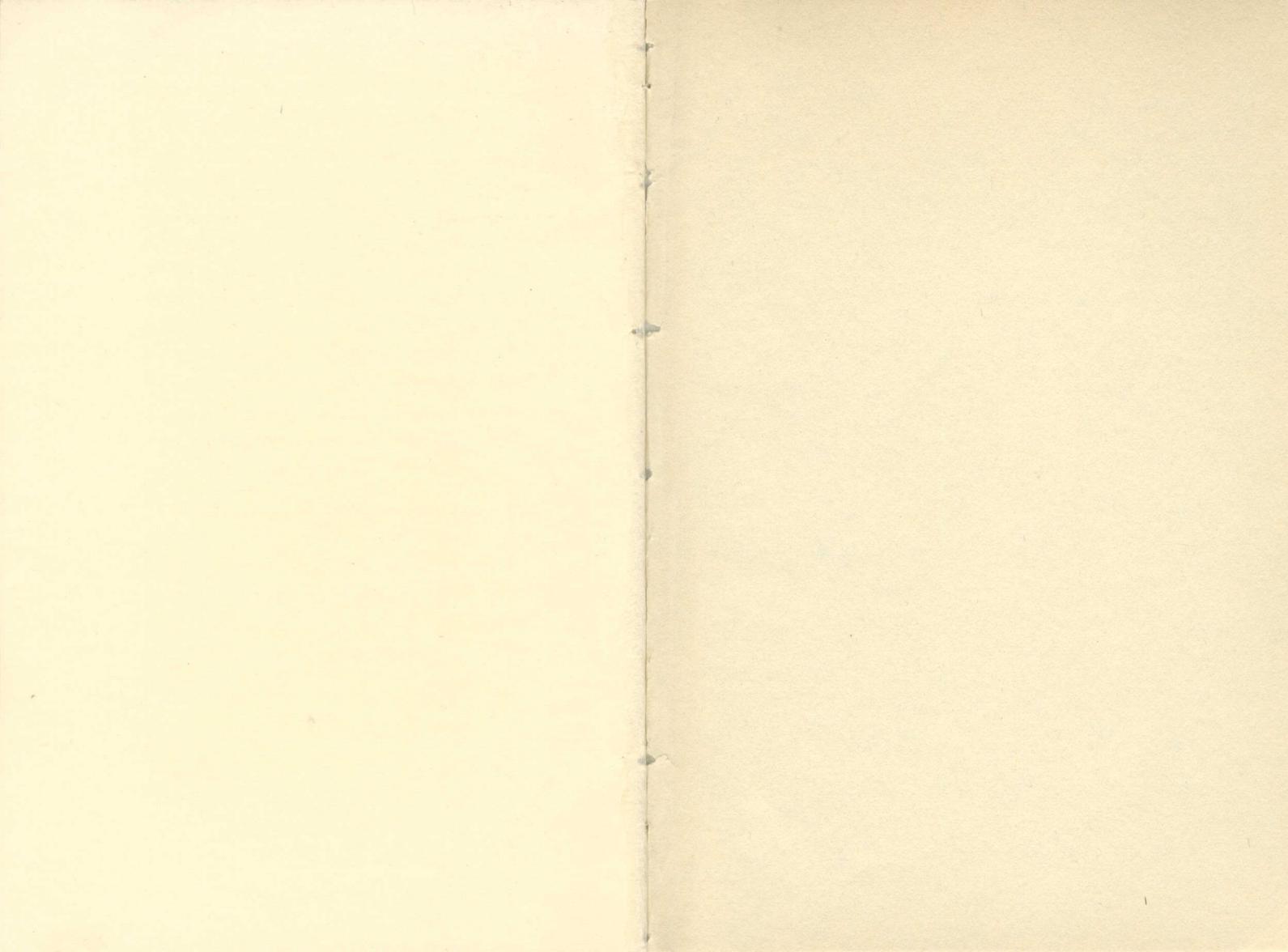
Of Montauk, Mr. Hassam says:

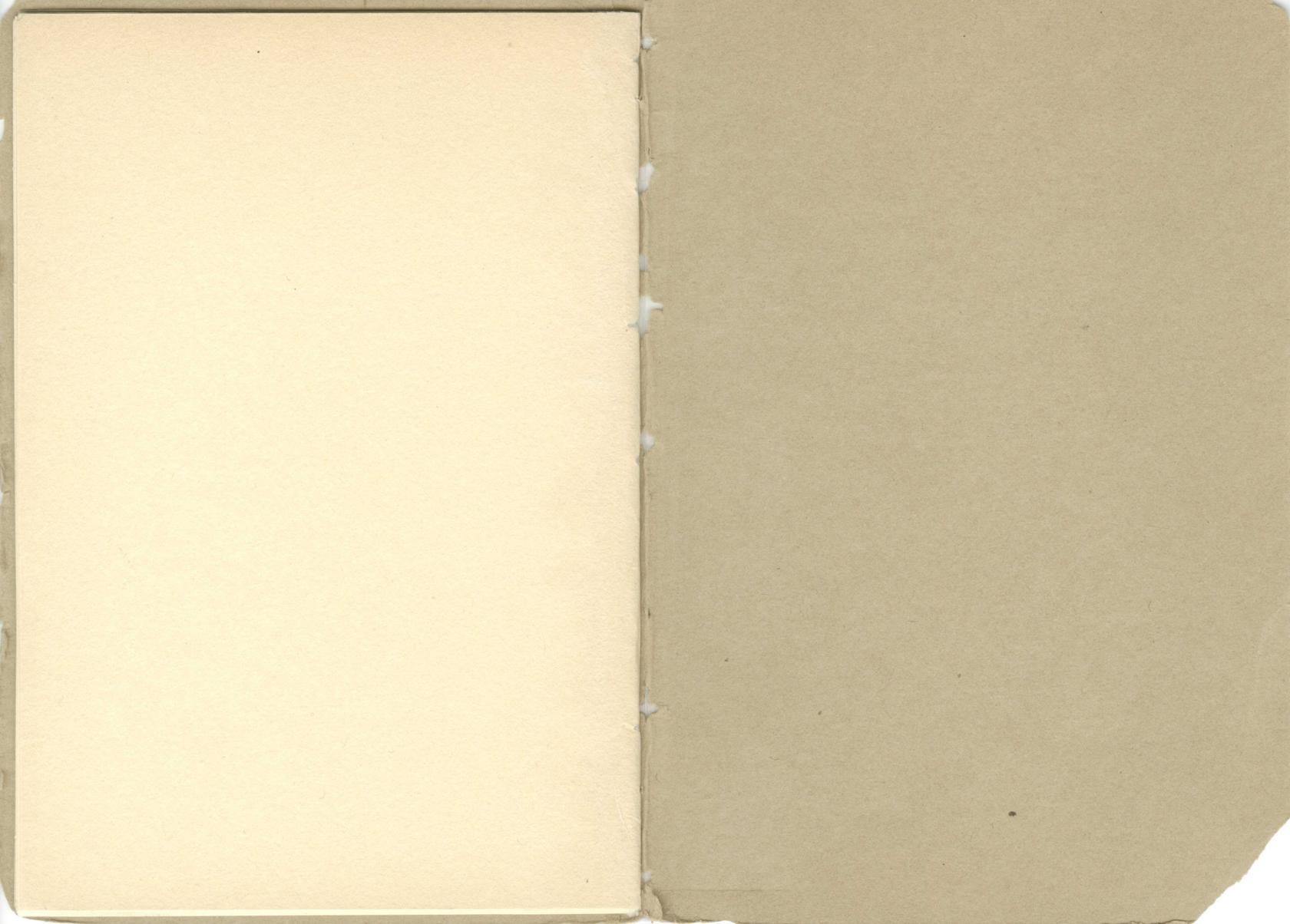
"Montauk must look now as it looked countless ages ago, when the first of the giant sequoias were shoots, with seas around the islands where they grew, the wind was sweeping across Montauk as it does now, the ice sheet has receded, the gods had played their last game of jack stones (the great boulders, erratics), the mosses and low flowers grew then as they do now and there could be no great forests, no higher than now, for the winds were always blowing."

"The gods were always there, too, and that favored people of the gods, the Greeks, were there. As for time compared to the ages that have passed since Montauk was made by the last glacial age or period, the age of Pericles was but day before yesterday."

R. W. M.







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