

AT SIXTY-FIVE.

[Ella W. Peatty in The Current.] Sixty-five is not so very old. No, indeed!

If one is still straight, with a serviceable eye and a tolerable hearing, in addition to a well-filled pocket book, why, what is 65?

To count sixty-five distinct summers, and sixty-five mellow autumns, that drowse into peaceful winters and awaken in refreshing springs, is a great privilege. Think of the accumulation of ideas and experiences, of friends and memories. A rare age, surely, to be enjoyed in spite of rheumatic twinges.

Ma. Weatherbeam; buttoning his elegant fall overcoat about him as he strode down the avenue under the maples, was sure he would not give his ripe perfection for the callow and tasteless experience of the past. He smiled up at the bright foliage, and knocked the head of a straggling aster in his complacency. He found a dime for a little boy peeping, wide-eyed, into a candy-shop, and stood still to watch the urchin as he bolted for the door, and nodded in good fellowship to a woman who watched with him amused.

The major's little terrier followed, for once, quite unrebuked, and turned with him up a broad macadamized street at the right. The firm stride traversed two blocks quickly, and paused before a brown stone mansion, with a pine-dotted lawn in front. One naturally pines a little at the end of a long walk, whether one is 65 or not, and if by nature discreet, pauses awhile to regain the breath before venturing to call on ladies. Any tidy man will dust his clothes a little with his handkerchief, and twist his moustache a trifle when he wishes to look well. The major presses the bell beside the stately door, and stands erect. A little pause follows, in which he listens to the wind running the gamut of elfin melody in those grouped pines; then the heavy doors uncoil; a salute no younger man could imitate; an inquiry, and closed doors again, with the major inside. The mansion is divided in quarters by two huge halls, and a wide fireplace gives forth a glorious radiation of heat and light over the statues and frescoed walls. The major seats himself before the blaze, and counts the tiles and decipher the inscriptions about the mantel. There is a rustle of silk skirts, and a tap of feet on the oak stairs. The major rises, with a sudden rush of blood to the head—not apologetic, surely—and salutes the red-draped figure through the interstices of the balustrade.

He handed the lady down the last steps, and led her across the hall, while a green parrot hopped at her heels. "Miss Margery"—his usual was like a business-man like myself to call on a lady of an afternoon. "Therefore, sir, is the honor all the greater," poising one toe on the fender to aid her balance in the high-seated leather chair. "Therefore is the need great, my dear young lady!"

"Oh! ha! ha! ha!" in musical staccato from the high-back chair. At 65 one is too dignified to like such a laugh in connection with one's self. "Yes, Miss Wheatcroft, I felt I could not, in justice to you or myself, remain longer without confessing to you my attitude toward you."

"Oh, how kind of you," very sincerely. "I looked—I looked for you all day yesterday, sir"—a little hurriedly, with the red deepening about the dimples. The major's head gave an involuntary jerk. Girls were, once, more decorous. His deceased Julia Ann would never have shown such impulsiveness. Yet it must be confessed 'twas extremely flattering; and then, good heavens, what eyes! The apologetic symptoms returned.

"Miss Margery, how gracious of you to say so. I'm sure I never hoped—" "Yes, and I was making all sorts of plans for us two. Poll, come down! Major, she's trying to pull your hair! Look out, sir; she'll scratch you! Here, give her to me! There, Miss Poll, you sit on my chair. You can't pull my hair, because I don't reach up high enough—ha! ha! ha!—eh, major?" her teeth gleaming out in the glow from the cedar fire. "Yes, I am thinking, you see, how proud I should be of you. You are so tall, and—now, don't mind, for I'm going to flatter you all the rest of your days—and so handsome! And how proud I hoped you would be of me!" (A half-rising attitude on the part of the major, who is forgetting decorum, and how girls were 40 years ago.)

"Oh, major, you are finding the blaze too hot. How stupid of me to let you roast in that manner. Here, let me put up the screen. Isn't it a pretty one? I embroidered it myself. See, it represents an Italian princess under an alex tree. I think she looks a trifle like your son. Ned, only, of course, he's not done in Kensington. Well, I was planning that once in a while, on very grand occasions, you might take me out with you—"

"Once in a while, madam!" The major was a vast substantial protest. "Oh, I know, of course, what you think you have to say. But don't do it. Besides, we couldn't leave Ned behind very often." A lurking laugh in the corners of two brown eyes. "Or, he might go with Aunt Maria, eh? Oh—o—o—o."

"The major couldn't see anything funny in that common-place arrangement. "My dear Miss Margery"—(Confound those chairs! A man couldn't move them an inch without getting red in the face, they are so heavy.)—"you are surely determined to defraud me of my share of the conversation, though I can not tell you how relieved I am to find you prepared to relieve my overtures. I confess there were moments when I feared you might be less fond of me on account of the disparity of our ages—"

"Why, goodness, it wouldn't seem half so lovely any other way! That's just the nicest part of it!" How that presumptuous fraught clambered up from her little feet to the dimples in her hands and the rosy folds about her neck, and climbing still, stopped at her rosy lips! Her last sentence, and the fire-light stopping right there, where it did, made the major gasp.

"This is one of the most delightful surprises of my life," he went on, when he could speak. "I want to tell you how fondly I shall cherish you; how earnestly you shall strive to gratify each wish that you can make; how truly proud I shall be of my beautiful young—"

"Oh, stop! You praise me more than I can ever deserve." Two limpid tears showed through the gathering gloom. "I never dared hope you would receive me so tenderly. I am a coming right over there, sir—and right behind your chair—so—on my tip-toes, and—put one—little kiss—like that—on your dear old forehead."

The major grew more agile than he had been for twenty years. Meanwhile Poll had got to screaming. "Lord! lord! lord!" and would not leave off. "Oh, yes, I'm so thankful you like me! And we will be so happy together, won't we? And we both are grateful, I assure you. Here's the ring he gave me. See! Two beautiful pearls and that twinkling diamond. Doesn't it look charming in the firelight? Ned said—don't think me silly for telling you—that if you are satisfied with the little wife he had chosen he believed he would go half mad with joy. But really I didn't think he'd tell you so soon, for he felt a little timid about it."

A long pause, during which the major relaxes his fatherly embrace somewhat. Then a venture from the girl: "I'm afraid I've talked too freely with you! Or perhaps you feel sad when you remember Ned is going to belong to me?" The dead bows so low that the light climbs to that now. "But we'll live somewhere near you, and see you every day. Why, must you be going? Can't you stay to tea. Well, button up your coat well. Now, please give your new child one more kiss, to tell her that you mean all you have said. Good-bye! Good-bye!" "Lord! lord! lord! lord!"

How that bird screams! The wind has risen very fast, and the pines strike at each other angrily. There is a promise of a dismal rain, and the dusk hides all of the autumn's beauty, and leaves only its leafless aspect.

Sixty-five, sixty-five! At that age it is hard climbing a hill in the teeth of the wind!

The Old Geographical Engaboo. (World of Wonders.) The most celebrated of whirlpools is that called the Maelstrom, which lies to the southward of the Lofoden islands, off the coast of Norway, near a large rock in the middle of the strait dividing the islands of Vaer and Moskenes. It is produced by the conflicting currents of one of the great Norwegian fords. There are most extraordinary and romantic legends concerning the Maelstrom, but careful observations have shown that the peril has been magnified.

At flood or ebb tide in summer it offers no danger even to small boats. But in winter, and during stormy weather, even large ships and steamers do not dare to venture near it. At certain states of the wind and tide during this season the whole stream boils in mighty whirls, against which the largest vessels would contend in vain.

These whirling waters would not suck vessels down in their vortex, however, as formerly believed, but would infallibly dash them on the rocks, or, in case of small ships, swamp them with water. The imagination of Edgar A. Poe, which painted a descent into the Maelstrom, had no hold on facts whereupon to delineate his marvelous picture. Stripped, however, of its fictitious dangers, the Maelstrom is still a gruesome fact, and the Norwegian fishing-boats are careful to give it a wide berth except in very smooth and pleasant weather, when the tide is just right. This is rather a disagreeable necessity, as it is said that the Maelstrom and its vicinity furnishes a favorite feeding-ground for the largest and finest specimens of the finny.

Mankind's Hygienic Mistakes. (Health Journal.) It is a mistake to labor when you are not in fit condition to do so. To conclude that the smallest room in the house is large enough to sleep in. To think that the more a person eats the healthier and stronger he will become.

To take off proper clothing out of season because you have become heated. To imagine that if a little work or exercise is good, violent and prolonged exercise is better.

To think that any nostrum or patent medicine is a specific for all diseases flesh is heir to. To go to bed at midnight and rise at day-break, and imagine that every hour taken from sleep is an hour gained.

To believe that children can do as much as grown people, and that the more hours they study the more they can learn. To eat as if you only had a minute to finish the meal in, or to eat without appetite, or continue after it has been satisfied, merely to satisfy the taste.

To imagine that whatever remedy causes one to feel immediately better—is alcoholic stimulents—is good for the system without regard to after effects.

Camphor-Making in Japan. (Druggist.) Camphor is made in Japan in this way: After a tree is felled the earth it is cut up into chips, which are laid in a tub or a large iron pot partially filled with water, and placed over a slow fire. Through holes in the bottom of the tub steam slowly rises, and, heating the chips generates oil and camphor. Of course, the tub with the chips has a closely fitting cover. From this cover a bamboo pipe leads to a succession of other tubs with bamboo connections, and the last of these tubs is divided into two compartments, one above the other, the dividing floor being perforated with small holes to allow the water and oil to pass to the lower compartment. The upper compartment is supplied with a straw layer, which catches and holds the camphor in crystal in deposit as it passes to the cooling process. The camphor is then separated from the steam, packed in wooden tubs and is ready for market. The oil is used by the natives for illuminating and other purposes.

Starved for Salt. (Chicago Journal.) So important have French academicians found salt to be that animals fed on flesh deprived of its saline qualities died of starvation. There was plenty of nutriment in the food, but there was no medium for its solution and absorption and hence it was useless.

CADET LIFE AT WEST POINT.

The Course of Study—Hard Work and Strict Discipline. (Poughkeepsie Press.)

The activities of West Point have no break throughout the entire year. Work beginning the 1st of September lasts to the end of the year. After a few days consumed in examination, another term begins, which lasts till the 31st of May. Then come examinations which last till about the middle of June, from whence till the 29th of August the cadets live in camp on the plain. During this period no regular studies are pursued, books being largely thrown aside for practical work, such as surveying, astronomical observations, etc. For these purposes the finest instruments are provided. Cadets are admitted to the academy as late in the year as September, when the year's studies are begun. The course lasts four years, dividing the cadets into as many classes. The fourth class, or first year's men, study mathematics, the English language, French, history, geography, and ethics and tactics of artillery and infantry, and receive instruction in fencing and bayonet exercise and military gymnastics.

In the second year, mathematics are a leading feature of the course of studies, which comprises, also, French, topography and plotting of surveys with lead pencils, pen and ink and colors, construction of the various problems in descriptive geometry, shades and shadows, and linear perspective and isometric projections. Practical surveying in the field during the seasons of camping out aptly supplements the studies in drawing. The study of military tactics comprises practical instruction in the schools of the soldier, company and battalion, and in artillery and cavalry. With the third year the successful cadet is advanced to the study of natural and experimental philosophy, chemistry, mineralogy and geology, free-hand drawing and landscape in black and white, constructive and architectural drawing in ink and colors, which tactics are continued, and practical military engineering added to the hard work of the period. In the last year the scope of studious pursuit is enlarged by the addition of civil and military engineering and the science of war, the Spanish language, international, constitutional, and military law, outlines of the history of the world, and technical instructions in ordnance and gunnery and signaling.

The reveille call at 6 o'clock in the morning rouses him from his bunk. He and his mate forthwith prepare the room they share in common, and in half an hour's time he is seated at his breakfast. Forty minutes are given him in which to make the first meal of the day. Guard-mounting is next in order, taken in turn. Each day's guard consists of thirty-five privates and four non-commissioned officers, and 8 o'clock one-half the students are seated in recitation classes, and the other engaged in preparation for them. At half-past 9 a. m., this half take their places, leaving those who have left their preparation for second recitation. This begins at 11 with half the cadets, as in the first recitation, and lasts an hour, when the remaining students take their turn for the remaining length of time. After dinner, at about 2, another period of recitation is begun, lasting an hour each for all the students, who are divided into two sections, as before. Classes are resumed at 10 minutes past 4 p. m., and last until half-past 5 p. m. Parade is the event of sunset, and in fine weather is attended by numerous admirers of the natty young fellows who take part in it. This includes the whole of the cadets in attendance at the academy. Supper succeeds the display, and at half-past 9 p. m. "taps" are heard on the drum—the signal of preparation for bed. Each student thereupon unfolds his couch and makes ready for the night's repose. By 10 o'clock every light is out and silence broods over the quarters.

Of the calls at West Point, the bugle summons for recitation; all calls for military formation are made by means of the drum and fife. One by drum and fife, heard every morning after reveille, is understood by all men to mean that they report at the hospital for examination, where they become subject to the rule of Esculapius.

Every Saturday the cadet is allowed to wander at his own will anywhere within the government lines. Two hops a week during the warm months of the year assist in forming the gentlemanly deportment for which the cadet is justly celebrated, and increase his esteem for the letter half of creation. Light reading amid pleasant surroundings is at his disposal in the library, or, at his pleasure, in his room. The advent of friends at the past gives him a "spell" of liberty, never indulged, however, at the expense of his progress. Interchanging calls with other cadets is a pleasure tempered with prohibitions which are wholesome, and suggestive. The cadet must not smoke, nor are alcoholic drinks allowed in the rooms. He must not play cards, but chess and checkers are not interdicted. Many cadets who are musical in their tastes, play on instruments and sing. Here, better than elsewhere, may be added that attendance on divine worship once a week is compulsory.

The superintendent of the academy is the judge over his delinquents. His decisions have military sanction, and are administered with unrelenting certainty. What in the civilian student would be regarded as unnoticeable might be an important offense in the military cadet. To omit one button of the multitudinous fastenings of his coat may give the cadet a term of detention in the barrack-yard, rifle in hand.

A Mistake We Make. (Boston Budget.) We bow down before men or women because they are reputed to be rich, when in reality they are no better if so well off as ourselves. We take the shadow for the substance so often that we are incapable of distinguishing the one from the other, and we make our madams or sirs, who may be but one day removed from the common jail.

Queen Victoria's Joke. (London Letter.) Queen Victoria rarely indulges in a joke, but she once gave a good hit at Sir Charles Dilke, who had little sympathy for the royal family. Some one spoke disparagingly of Sir Charles Dilke's criticism of the civil list, whereupon the queen remarked: "It is strange, for I remember having him as a boy on my knee and stroking his hair. I suppose," added her majesty, after a moment's pause, "I must have stroked it the wrong way."

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TO MORROW.

[All the Year Round.] "You'll come to-morrow then; light words Gayly she waved her little hand, gayly he bared his head."

"You'll come to-morrow then," and the man on his errand went. With a tender prayer on heart and lip, yet on his work intent.

The woman a moment lingered; "would he turn for a parting look?" Then with half a smile and half a sigh, her household burden took.

"You'll come to-morrow then," and when the morrow broke, Pale lips in the crowded city, of the "railway accident," spoke;

A strong man in a stranger's home, in death's dread quiet lay. And a woman sobbed a full heart out in a cottage a mile away.

So lightly our thoughts leap onward, so lightly we hope and plan, While Fate waits grimly by and smiles, to watch her plaything—man—

Discounting the dim strange future, while his blind eyes cannot see, What a single flying hour brings; where the next step may be.

And love floats laughing onward, and at his side glides a frow. While men and women between them walk, and say, "We'll meet to-morrow!"

PORTABLE STRAWBERRY BEDS. An Aged Negro's Invention, and the Success of His Plan. (Atlanta Constitution.) Portable strawberry beds are the latest in the long list of inventions of the nineteenth century, and in a few years every citizen who has a little patch of garden or a sunny spot on the roof of his house can raise strawberries all the year round. These beds have three or four advantages over the old-fashioned style, which cannot be overestimated. All the disadvantages of age of wind, rain, and drought are done away with. Between Branford and Guilford is a back road that is little traveled and on one of the loneliest, rockiest and most generally forlorn clearings lives the man who is destined to revolutionize the market gardening of the future. He is an aged negro, rejoicing in the appellation of Caesar Johnson. A reporter, with a taste for the wild and beautiful in nature, chanced to drive past the habitation of Caesar a day or two ago, and was surprised to see the old man sitting in front of his house, regarding with an air of pride three or four fine specimens of strawberries.

"Where in the world did you get those?" he asked, as he drew up his animated quadruped. "I grewed 'em," said Caesar, as he calmly devoured a berry that was bringing 25 cents in the New York market. "You grewed 'em? How?" "Yes, sar, I grewed them in buckets. You jess come and see."

The reporter followed, and sure enough, back of the hovel, on a bench, stood twenty or thirty pails, each with a flourishing strawberry plant. Some of the plants were covered with blossoms, and on others the deep red and delicately greenish white of the ripe and unripe fruit, peeped from under the luxuriant leaves.

"You see dem pails is mighty handy to take round," explained Caesar, as he held one in each hand for the news gatherer's inspection. "I done made a lot of them pails, and fill 'em up wid blackest kind of wood dirt. Den once a week I cuts a runner off an old plant, and puts in a fresh pail, and that way I keeps a fresh stock. These old plants can stand de cold, so I leave 'em out until late in the afternoon, but the young 'uns they looks kinder peaked if I lets dem be out except in de middle ob de day."

The roof of the house was mostly composed of old sashes neatly glazed, and in the center of the garret floor stood an old wood stove, which kept the temperature at summer heat. There were more pails, each containing plants of different ages, which Caesar explained would bear all winter if he did not forget and let the fire go out.

A Neapolitan Do. (Rom. Cor. London Times.) Imagine the doorway of a cave, where, on entering, you must descend. Not a ray of light penetrates into it except by the one aperture you have passed through; and there, between four black battered walls and upon a layer of filth mixed with putrid straw, two, three and four families vegetate together. The best side of the cave, namely: that through which humidity filtrates the least, is occupied by a rack and a manger to which animals of various kinds are tied; a horse it may be, or an ass, a calf or a pig. On the opposite, a heap of boards and rags represent the beds. In one corner is the fireplace and the household utensils lie about the floor. This atrocious scene is animated by a swarm of half-naked, disheveled women: of children entirely naked rolling about in the dirt, and of men stretched on the ground in the sleep of idocy.

Such is a Neapolitan fondache. Multiply it by thousands. Remember that 100,000 beings at least have no other shelter; that they only live on fruit and vegetables, on snails and onions, without even changing their rags once in a year; without water, except such as flows in a dense, impure rivulet winding through those lanes. Remember that over those fondache rise houses of four and five floors, where another population, scarcely less poor, less dirty or less crowded and ill-fol, lies huddled together. Houses where the sun's rays never penetrate, where the sea breeze never reaches, where all instinct of modesty is dead, and animal humanity alone predominates. This is the Naples which has need of being disemboved—the greengrass it is necessary to burn out.

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