

## Middle Age the Harvest Season of Life.

Written for the Western Home Monthly.

Captious people will ask at once the date, forty or sixty? and one had better admit at once that middle age is not a fixed frontier which divides every life into the same size of provinces, but varies with each person. Some children are old at 15, with precocious talk and weird solemn faces, and some men at 30 have the air of 50. They are stout in body, they amble in their walk, they drop oracular remarks, they endure with an effort the gayety of youth. There are others who defy time and put the record of the registrar general to confusion.

With most of us there is a turning point in life like the watershed on a railway journey. For so many years we are climbing up, for a little we run on a level, and now we are beginning to go down, only beginning, but going down. Say at 50 years if an exact and pedantic reader must have a date. Our body changes about that time; we give up every game except golf, we puff slightly when we hurry to catch a train; we do not care to stand for a long time if we can get a seat, our walk grows more impressive.

We are not old now, but we are not young, we are half and between, we are middle aged, and our mood corresponds. For one thing we have grown insensible, or largely so, to praise and blame.

The man has come to know himself, and that is the first great necessity of successful living. He knows what he can do and what he can't do, and therefore he is not intoxicated when he is praised, because this was his strong point, and every man surely has some strong point, and if he is not dashed when he is censured, when a neighbour blames him, the chances are that he was quite right, for that was his weak point, and every man is weak somewhere. If he were to praise him why that would be too friendly. The fact is the man has no illusions, they have been dispelled as morning dreams. He has weighed himself and understands how he stands and where he is, and so there comes over middle age a certain mood of calmness, which has not, of course, in it the force of youth, but has its own compensation in contentment. Instead of the flush of spring there is the mellowness of autumn.

Akin to this mood is a gracious magnanimity. When one is young one is of necessity fighting for his own hand to win a prize, to obtain his degree, to establish a business, to acquire a practice, to make himself secure. Every man is his rival, if not his enemy, and he is not inclined to rejoice in other people's success, for it may be at his expense, or at least it may be a reflection on his failure. Nor has he leisure to concern himself about other men's reverses or to give them pity. He was down himself yesterday, and if he does not take care he may be down again tomorrow in the dust of defeat. When his battle has been fought and the struggle is over, especially when he has won and reached the crest of the hill, then he has time to rest and observe and to take an unselfish interest in his comrades. When a man is running his race it is not possible for him to consider the other runners or to wish them well. He needs all his breath for his own race. When he has come in and put on his coat, having won or lost, but all the more if he has won his prize, he stands by to applaud the panting runners as they pass the goal, the goal he has already passed. Renan had all his life prided himself upon not pushing but preserving calmness amid life's fiercest fight. "If a man shoves me," he used to say, "I say pass, monsieur," and it is not wonderful that as he grew old he was entirely satisfied. "His unimpaired curiosity continued to interrogate the universe," but he was full of rest, he suffered terribly, but he had not abdicated. "I have done my work," he said to Mme. Renan, "I die happy." This mood of satisfaction with life begins at middle age and is connected with a delight in younger people.

When one has had his fill of work and has had some moderate reward he wishes the younger men coming up behind him to have their share of things, and earn their wages. This is not so much charity on his part, it is justice; it is not to be ascribed to religion, but to middle age.

And so comes another mood, which one may call altruism, or living for other

people. The middle aged man (or woman) lives not for himself but for his children. He does not care what men say about him, but he is desperately concerned about their judgment on his sons. If some one praises the boy the father is lifted for days, if they run the boy down, the father is cut to the heart. He boasts about his son's success, he tries to cover his son's defeat, he would willingly pass on his own gain to his boy and bear his boy's suffering. He has died to himself, and is alive again in his family, and if he is spared to be a grandfather he grows preposterous in his pride over that child, and his admiration of all its doings. No doubt there is such a thing as a disappointed and bitter middle age, when men profess to have seen the end of all perfection, and to believe neither in man nor woman. There was an old prayer, "Lord preserve me from a young judge," and one expects an old judge to be broad in charity and pitiful towards humanity, but there are old men who spend the last quarter of their lives in carping and complaining, in sneering and discouraging. This is the opprobrium of middle age, but one sees this ungracious spectacle let him be pitiful, for the man has most likely failed. He has been a victim of circumstances or perhaps his own enemy. He has never reached the crest of the hill; he has never passed the goal post; he has been thrown out by the wave, he has been trodden underfoot. And now he has a vendetta against the young who are full of hope, because they mock him; against those who have succeeded, because he thinks it has been at his expense, and against human life because it has been such a deceit and mockery. Pardon his sourness, he is one of the failures of humanity, fruit which has never ripened. Deal gently with him. And turn to that big hearted man who did great things in his day, and now is ready to lend a hand to every struggler, and to give a cheer to every winner. Who wishes well to all men in their place, and blesses God that life on the whole has been so kind to him, and that the best of it is yet to come when the sun, already beginning to sink, will set gloriously behind the western hills.

### A Problem to be Solved.

The greatest problems of Canadian agriculture are not the narrow, technical ones, but the relations of the industry to economic and social life in general. Agriculture has not as yet been able to call to its aid in any marked degree those forces and tendencies which have culminated and been of such economic value in the general business world, in the great productive and distributive aggregations. The complete solution of the economic ills of Canadian agriculture may not be in co-operation, and yet in both the productive and distributive phases this is, perhaps, the most apparent remedy. Co-operation in distribution has made a beginning, but co-operation in production is still almost unknown.

### His Chair.

President Eliot of Harvard on a visit to the Pacific coast met Prof. O. B. Johnson of the University of Washington. In course of the conversation Dr. Eliot asked the Westerner what chair he held.

"Well," said Professor Johnson, "I am professor of biology, but I also give instruction in meteorology, botany, physiology, chemistry, entomology, and a few others."  
"I should say that you occupied a whole settee, not a chair," replied Harvard's chief.

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