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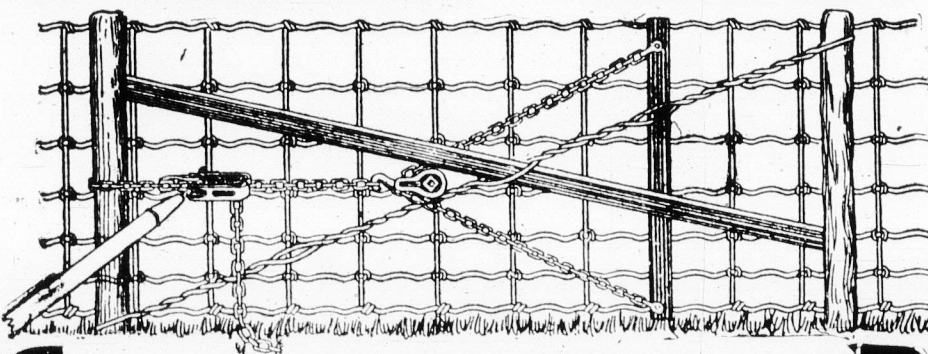
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The Man and the Woman of Fifty.

By ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

When we are children we regard fifty as the end of life.

A man or woman of fifty seems to us but little younger than one of seventy, but as we march along with the years we grow to change our point of view, and we set the old age stake farther and farther away the nearer we approach it.

In country places men and women of fifty are indeed regarded as old people, but in cities and among people of fashion or genius, fifty is considered the prime of life.

There is a certain element of the tragic often about this period of human existence for men and women of imagination and temperament.

The children are grown and married, and occupied with their own affairs. The paternal and maternal cares and pleasures no longer absorb the parent's time and thoughts, and if the wife of fifty has allowed herself to grow commonplace and uninteresting, while the husband of fifty has kept step with progress, he finds more and more leisure to feel lonely and misnamed, and to realize that the Vesuvius of his heart is not the extinct volcano he imagined, but is full of smoldering fires, and ready to burst forth in an eruption upon provocation.

Of course, the more he indulges in such thoughts the nearer he brings the provocation, and the daily paper tells the rest of the story, which is frequently the record of the divorce court.

The woman of fifty, as a rule, waits until death has made her free before she indulges in romantic analysis of her emotional nature. Then she is oftentimes astonished to find that she is as desirous of admiration, attention and devotion from the opposite sex as she was at twenty; and she does not seem to realize, despite her long acquaintance with the sex, that men are not always disinterested in their pursuit of womankind. She is indeed inclined to be more trusting and confiding than she was in her first youth.

The man and woman of fifty have been much in evidence the last year or two as leading characters in amorous adventures. It would be a simple matter to count half a dozen Lotharios of fifty who have occupied much space in newspaper sensations, and the mature Julietts are almost as numerous.

I call to mind the tragic death of a beautiful woman with grown grandchildren a few years ago; a woman who had been living a double life, unknown to her family and church; and whose death, under painful circumstances, first revealed the tragic facts.

In this particular case the Romeo was of her own age; but as a rule, when a woman or man has lived half a century and develops a sentimental or adventurous tendency, it is at the instigation of a young companion. A millionaire whose death brought to light many sentimental entanglements, had put aside at least two mature wives in his desire to enjoy the companionship of younger charmers, and a woman of fifty revealed to the world shortly afterward that she, too, had renewed the emotions of youth, in a romance with a man young enough to be her son.

Many instances have been recorded by the pen of the historian where a man of fifty won the admiration, and love, and loyalty, of a young woman. I have known a girl of twenty to fall deeply in love with a man who had crossed the half-century mark.

A girl of a hero worshipping tendency, would be easily led to place genuine affections upon a man who attained to honorable position and power, and who made her the object of chivalrous attentions.

Perhaps fifteen years later, when she was thirty-five and he sixty-six, or still later when the wife of forty possessed of all the ambition and

vitality of her prime, she found her husband an old man, weary of the vanities of life, perhaps then she might think her choice a mistaken one. That would all depend upon the nature of the woman and the type of man.

But the young husband and mature wife is more serious. Position, power and honors are elements which enter into the ideal of an attractive man, with almost any woman of any age; but no man of virile character pictures the lady of his dreams with these worldly gifts to bestow upon him. It is the nature of woman to receive, the nature of man to bestow the external things of life, and the moment a man begins to weigh the benefits he will derive from a marriage with an older woman, that moment he ceases to be manly in the true meaning of the word.

Once in a thousand times, perhaps, a woman of fifty retains the charms and fascinations which render her able to capture the heart of youth. Ninon de L'Enclos was as irresistible at sixty, and even at seventy, it is said, as at twenty-five. But she was wise enough (even if her wisdom did not lead to morality) to avoid marriage with any of her youthful admirers. She retained the privilege of being the one to tire, instead of placing herself in the position of a deserted and neglected old wife of a young husband.

It is rare, indeed, that a young man seeks an elderly woman for a wife unless he has some object to gain other than domestic felicity. But in spite of this fact, such women are to be found in every community who believe in the protestations of love made by designing youths, and resign to their keeping heart, hand and purse without demur or question.

There is a certain pathos in all this which should awaken our pity rather than call forth our ridicule.

It is the maternal and romantic impulse, both awakened after a lethargic slumber to a second Summer in the woman's heart, which leads her on to such follies.

The early romance of her life faded perhaps into a mere memory long before she donned widow's weeds. The husband became engrossed in business or public affairs, or indulged in infidelities which she concealed and condoned for pride's sake; her children grew out of her arms and became men and women, and no longer needed her; she settled into a rut of duty, a mere existence; her affectionate impulses in a sort of apathy, and imagined she had outlived all vivid emotions when suddenly she found herself a rich widow; men were seeking her society; they were paying her compliments, and up from the ashes rose a new emotional nature.

And when the young lover pleaded, she was both woman and mother in affections again, but mingled emotion and vanity made her forget that she was an elderly woman, and that the young man could not, in the nature of things, be sincere in his protestations of love.

Alas, poor woman! May wisdom and common sense guide her to shut the door gently but firmly on the young lover's retreating form, and save the miseries of a neglected old wife of a young man.

When the woman of fifty marries, let her choose a mate of her own age.

In Fields Fav. Off.—Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil is known in Australia, South and Central America, as well as in Canada and the United States, and its consumption increases each year. It has made its own way, and all that needs to be done is to keep its name before the public. Everyone knows that it is to be had at any store, for all merchants keep it.

"Better in every way!" I think if Amy Randolph perched these four words once, she had fifty times up and down her narrow trying to solve the hard life had offered her.

She was a slender, fast, teen, with large, dreamy, and nut-brown hair. One that would attract from a passerby; but when it well, when the large, active mouth had taken a phase of expression, as the girl's poetic mind heart, the pure loveliness tenance grew upon you most beautiful.

And to Guy Chester A become so. He knew mouth could smile or large eyes could soften winning and lovely even came.

And he loved her—no him, with every thrill every pulse of her being easy-going, vacillating, most perfect little gem hood he had ever met.

And he was Guy Chester Hill, if ah! that makes or mars so man if he pleased his mother was Amy Randolph, his and his mother's companion, or return grandparents who bare life upon a miserable Pennsylvania.

And Mrs. Chester, who tempered, exacting, thoroughly cowed and timid girl that she seemed pale, uninteresting, non-writing letters, reading sewing, but utterly unattractive never saw the exquisite young face, the delicate features, the dreamy poetry "What Guy could find that washed-out girl!" discover. She worshipped son, but she was too in to give him his way when with her own.

And her own way, at required Guy to marry a money would support her extravagances, and leave purse full for hers. For extravagant, living in winter in fashionable circles their country seat all summer.

And the very wife Guy his mother's opinion, wed him for his asking was loud-voiced and vulgar to be fast, with rather cast of beauty, a sunflower as Amy was a violet. But had left her a large fortune had fallen in love with making no secret of the keen-eyed mother.

That she had disgusted very outset of his acquaintance by her frankly avowed for his attention and society her but little. She had up in the belief that money attraction, no, man could she had money. If she wore earrings to breakfast, a riding-dress in the country her wealth so proven? complexion was often a roses in her hair, so delicate could bear a high color. Altogether she felt her in the matrimonial circle. Chester encouraged her.

And when she had accepted Chester's invitation to spend a winter in the s...