

STORIES  
POETRY

## The Inglenook

SKETCHES  
TRAVEL

## GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY.

By Isabel Stuart Robson.

One of the strongest proofs of the way in which women's interests have widened during the last half century lies in the fact that, while women recognise more than ever the importance of "keeping fit," the advance of the "forties," apart from its effect upon their position as wage-earners, does not trouble them so deeply as in former years.

Yet while a woman may feel that it rests largely with herself today whether she remains, until late in life, a popular and valued member of her little world, or sinks into an unconsidered unit, some regret there must always be for lost youth and the possibilities which only come in early womanhood. "We are growing old. We are near the end of our days," as Thackeray says in one of his books; "we shall never feel as we have felt." It is folly, however, to chafe at the inevitable: wisdom lies in making our progress through life a growth and development rather than a decline and a loss.

Madame de Staël once said that every woman should feel it a duty to grow old gracefully, and while it may seem a difficult problem, it is one well worth solving. The woman who succeeds is not only one of the happiest but one of the most beautiful sights in Nature. The first step is to accept the fact that youth has gone and that the process of growing old is progressive. One of the most pathetic sights, though too often, alas, it borders on the ridiculous, is the woman who makes desperate and futile efforts to clog the wheels of Time by choosing in dress what is plainly not in accordance with her years, and who, for the dignity and stateliness which belong to age, substitutes the manners and "ploys" of youth. The woman who keeps her daughters in the schoolroom too long lest they should become her rivals in the social circle, who denies to her sons the use of the sweet name "mother" that their manliness may not betray her years, is sowing for herself the seeds of a tedious and unlovely age.

Paradoxical as it may seem, it is in early maturity that we must begin "growing old." The habits of selfishness and of self-sufficiency, which are so essential to happiness in age, do not spring up in a night. They are the growth of years and constant effort. In a paper read by Mrs. Creighton at a recent Conference of Women Workers there are some philosophic counsels and sympathetic advice on this subject. Old age, she suggests, has so many lonely hours that the capacity for being alone, so difficult and unbearable to many, should be cultivated, and with it a habit of neither expecting nor demanding too much of the time and attention of others. After the first sense of "being old" comes with the consciousness that one is "being left out" in the plans and talk of the younger generation and of being "passed over" when younger people are present.

To those happy women who have kept a young heart and a keen interest and sympathy with the young this brings no wounded feeling. Like the little spinster in that beloved book of our youth, Leslie Goldthwaite's *Summer*, they "have no self to be hurt." The young are quick to discern those whose interest in their peculiar problems is not only sincere and loving, but intelligent; those who will understand their difficulties and not judge or condemn by the light of another generation, and whose outlook is asunder as the poles from that of "Aunt Tabitha" in Oliver Wendell Holmes' humorous poem:

"Whatever I do and whatever I say,  
Aunt Tabitha tells me that isn't the way:

When she was a girl (forty summers ago)  
Aunt Tabitha tells me they never did so."

Nothing helps one to grow old gracefully so much as a lively sense that the world is moving on and the ideas of today are not those of our youth.

We are too apt to look on old age as the final stage of a gradual descent. There is nothing left but to sit down, our work accomplished, and await the inevitable end. Yet the truth remains that while

"Old age is still old age,

The waning not the crescent moon," we may grow old as the oak-tree does, every year enlarging our circle of interests and influence. The woman who has cultivated a hobby is never dull, and to have acquired a habit of reading good books, which not only provide interest in the perusal but meditation for quiet hours, is to have done much to make age happy. One cannot but pity the woman who, as the mother of a large family, has allowed herself all her life to be so entirely absorbed in domestic affairs as to lose all interest or participation in anything outside her home, and who in age, when the nest is empty and the young birds have flown, finds herself with "no one to work for," no scope for the duties which have hitherto entirely occupied her, and too old for new interests or seek new work.

The great secret of growing old without ugliness and pain is to have many resources at command, some strong interest which will fill the gaps made by time and circumstance. These gaps unfortunately become many as years slip away. The young leave us, going to distant lands and making homes of their own; the world moves on, leaving us among the shadows; and there remains the saddening memory of loved ones outlived. It is for this trying time we must forge for ourselves a vital interest, which will keep us brave, cheerful, and young at heart, not a burden to ourselves and others, but happily aware that life still means as much for us and means well."

"We are not quite  
Cut off from labor by the falling light,  
Something remains for us to do and dare;  
Even the oldest trees some fruit may bear.  
For age is opportunity no less  
Than youth itself, though in another dress;  
And as the evening twilight fades away  
The sky is filled with stars invisible  
by day."

## THE IDEAL CITY.

What makes the city great and strong?  
Not architecture's graceful strength,  
Not factories' extended length,  
But men who see the civic wrong.  
And give their lives to make it right  
And turn its darkness into light.

What makes a city full of power?  
Not wealth's display or titled fame,  
Not fashion's loudly boasted claim,  
But women rich in virtue's dower,  
Whose homes though humble still are great

Because of service to the State.

What makes a city men can love?  
Not things that charm the outward sense,  
Nor gross display of opulence,  
But right, the wrong cannot remove,  
And truth that faces civic fraud  
And smites it in the name of God.

This is a city that shall stand,  
A light upon a nation's hill,  
A voice that evil cannot still,  
A source of blessing to the land;  
Its strength not brick, nor stone, nor wood,  
But Justice, Love and Brotherhood. —  
Selected.

## TWO APPLE TREES.

"I have been looking at these two trees, boys," said Mr. Moore one bright Saturday morning, "and as there seems to be about the same amount of apples on each one, I have decided that if you want to gather and market them for yourselves you may do so."

"And have the money for ourselves?" they asked eagerly and in unison.

"Yes, and you may also take old Billy and the light wagon to draw them to town this afternoon."

Before he had ceased speaking, John, the elder boy, had begun to climb one of the trees, and Mr. Moore, without further comment, walked away.

The other boy also walked away, but in a different direction.

John meanwhile having secured a good foothold in the centre of the tree, was giving it a vigorous shaking, which sent the apples to the ground in showers.

Presently the brother returned carrying a ladder and a basket.

"Oh, ho," cried John, "you don't mean to say that you intend to pick those apples off the tree? This is the way to do it," and he gave his tree another energetic shaking. "Why, don't you know?" he went on, "if you stop to pick those apples off it will take you all day long."

"Can't help it," was the answer; "that is the way they are coming off, and the only way."

"But, you'll not be ready to go with them to town this afternoon."

"Then I'll go some other afternoon."

"But you can't stay out of school." "I can be examined Monday at noon. Don't worry, I'll find some way to get my apples to market, and they'll bring me a good price when they do get there."

John continued his protestation, but his brother persisted in doing his work in his own way. Therefore, it was nearly sundown and John had been gone several hours when the brother took the last apple from the tree.

When John returned from town soon after he jingled his coins in his hands merrily, and asked with a laugh:

"Don't you wish you had some?" "How much did you get a bushel?" asked his brother.

"Thirty-five cents," said John.

A few moments later when they entered the barn together, where the brother's apples were carefully bestowed in baskets, John exclaimed:

"What in the world did you do to those apples? They look as if they had been polished."

"Oh, just a cloth and a little rubbing did the job," was the answer.

"Who would believe that the trees which bore those apples and John's were exactly alike?" said Mr. Moore, coming into the barn at this moment. John looked grave.

"But, what's the use of all that trouble? They'll not bring you any more," he said scornfully.

"Wait and see," said the brother. On Monday evening, when the younger brother returned from the village he counted out his money, and he had received just double the amount that John had been paid for his apples.

"I didn't know," said John, "that taking a little trouble would make so great a difference about the very same thing."—Clara J. Denton, in Michigan Christian Advocate.

One spirit with the Lord, we are privileged to share the very blessedness that fills his heart.