



Whether Common or Not

By Will M. Maupin.

August 31, 1863-1910

Drawing very close to fifty—how the years go rolling by—
And the sum of life is blazing at its zenith in the sky.
Almost fifty years of living, skies of blue and clouds of gray,
And my mem'ry loves to linger over every bygone day.
Days of boyhood games and laughter, days of rosy dawn of youth;
Days of early manhood bringing wealth of roses—and of ruth.
Ah, the long years that have faded in the dim and distant past
Till I'm owning forty-seven; nearing fifty pretty fast!

Forty-seven years of living—much of joy and some of care;
Little gold to line my pockets, lots of silver in my hair.
Years of wandering wherever vagrant fancies bade me roam,
But the sweetest years of living are the years of Home, Sweet Home.
And when evening shades are falling, as the sun sinks in the west,
I know well the home years give me all of life that is the best.
So I sit beneath the home-tree with the ones I love most dear,
Quite content at forty-seven—and with fifty drawing near.

Forty-seven years of living—and of loving on the way.
Looking through each cloud of sorrow on to where the sunbeams play.
Four score years and seven—count them—joys outnumber all the woes,
And I've quick forgot the thorn-pricks in the perfume of the rose.
Years of dreaming and of doing; years of failure and success,
But, thank God, each year made brighter by some true friend's kind caress.
Now with life's sun at the zenith and the shadows eastward flung,
I shall cease this growing older, and just keep on growing young.

"Looking Backwards"

Let's see, it was Edward Bellamy, was it not, who wrote that clever book, "Looking Backward?" Isn't it easy to look backward and see where we just missed doing something great? Twenty years ago I worked for a man who was born and raised in the east, and who was in the book publishing business before he left Massachusetts and came to Nebraska to publish a daily newspaper. One day he told me how a young man came into his Boston establishment and offered the manuscript of a book. My employer took the manuscript and read it, then returned it to the young author with an adverse verdict. "I didn't think the book would be profitable," said my employer. "I offered to publish it at the author's expense, but he had no money, so he took it elsewhere. Two years later he found a publisher. The young author was Edward Bellamy and the book was 'Looking Backward.' The publisher who took it made a fortune, and I'm out here in Nebraska wondering how I can let go of a daily newspaper that is losing money so fast it looks like a streak of disappearing greenbacks."

When a man has reached the age that the Architect has—and is willing to admit it—he has a little hesitancy in admitting some instances of his lack of foresight. I remember that some thirty years ago I bucked the

Chicago board of trade—in my mind. I took a thousand dollars of imaginary money and played the pork market for just one week. I kept accurate track of my purchases and sales, buying on a ten-point margin. At the end of the week I had cleared up something like \$60,000. A little later I played the same kind of a game on the wheat market, and won a bunch of money big enough to choke a cow. That encouraged me. I thought I knew more about the Chicago board of trade than the man who invented it. And it so happened that about that time an old Missouri doctor—our family doctor—intimated that quinine was going up to beat the band, and that if a man bought quinine on a margin he could make a barrel of money. He admitted to me that he was going to speculate a little. With a recollection of how I had beaten the Chicago sharks at their own game—in my imagination—I determined to do it in fact. So I exhumed the little money I had buried in a country bank and went at it. Just before I had a chance to sell out and a little more than double my money, a lot of fool congressmen took it into their heads to suddenly put quinine on the free list—and the price of that drug fell so fast and so hard that it made a dent in the ground. When I came to I found in my hand a curt letter from my broker telling me to come across with some more margins. I confess that I was so impolite that I neglected to even answer his letter.

Never again for me. In the course of events there will come a time when my friends will file slowly past and say, as they gaze upon my face, "Don't he look natural?" but they'll never have cause to say, "He was fool enough to buck the board of trade."

Thirty years ago today? Let's see: I was either perched upon a stool in the old Sentinel office in Oregon, Mo., or else bobbing for bullheads in the Big Tarkie with Grant Holtz or Charley Soper—with the chances in favor of the bullhead stunt. Thirty years ago the Big Tark was a sizeable stream, I want to tell you. At its normal stage it seemed to be about two hundred feet wide—but I've seen it when it was two hundred miles wide. In fact, I've seen it wider than it was long. I had occasion to cross the Big Tark a few weeks ago and I stopped to gaze about and try to locate some of the old fishing holes. And bless me if I could believe that any right-thinking bullhead big enough to nibble at a worm could have ever condescended to live in that puny and insignificant stream. Yet the man who was driving my buggy—not a gas wagon—told me that he had crossed it every day for thirty-five years, and that it was as big as it ever was at that time of year. But I knew better, or at least thought I did. Is it possible that my imagination had deceived me and that as the years slipped by my ideas of the Big Tark outgrew the stream?

All this reminds me that perhaps the same thing occurs when we think of the "good old days." Isn't it barely possible that if we were now called upon to endure some of the things of other days that we now think of as the best ever, we'd go out doors and mutter things to ourselves? Maybe the pies that mother used to make are not a bit better

than the pies that Kate or Mary or Dot make today, and that it is our tasters that are to blame. You shouldn't expect a palate all snarled up with tobacco and hot sauces and other hot things to be able to differentiate like it could before it was called upon to stand so much abuse. But, by grabs, I'm right here to state, and without fear of successful contradiction, that there is one old thing that can not be equalled by the new—and that's my pipe. Of course I'm speaking from my own point of view. The missus sitting by my elbow declares that my favorite pipe, now clenched firmly between a couple of teeth that still hit, was left on top of the piano the other day, and that it actually dragged the heavy instrument half-way across the room. Realizing the futility of contradicting her, I greatly fear that her rather unbelievable remark means that if I continue longer in the enjoyment of the odoriferous bowl I'll have to sneak out behind the house.

But gracious me! Here I started off this week's output of stuff with the idea that as it was an anniversary I'd get sentimental and pull out the sob stop and put on the tear pedal—and here I am meandering away about just nothing at all. But when a fellow is honest enough to admit that he is forty-seven, and has gray hairs galore in his head, and is minus a few teeth and plus a lot of wrinkles—when a fellow is honest enough to admit all those things hasn't he got a right to maunder a little bit?

Yes; just forty-seven years ago I appeared upon the scene of action and proceeded to make Calloway county, Missouri, howl. Anyhow there was considerable howling done. A couple of years later I took my parents by the hand and led them over into Illinois, and some fifteen years later led them back to Missouri. That's about all the leading I have ever done. For the past twenty-three or twenty-four years I have been led—when I wasn't being driven. Every one of these forty-seven years, or so many of them as I can remember, have been bully years, and I wouldn't wipe my mind free from the memory of any one of them if I could. So I'm just going to keep right on living just as long as I can, with the hope that the next forty-seven years will be at least no worse than the forty-seven past. So saying I will now cease and give my many thousand of admiring friends time and opportunity to congratulate me upon my brilliant career.

WORKING OVERTIME

"I see you claim one hour's overtime, Bill," said the master of the mill. "I thought no one worked overtime last week."

Bill passed a horny hand across his mouth.

"Quite right, gov'nor," he replied. "One hour's me due."

The master regarded him suspiciously.

"Come, when was it?" he inquired.

"Last Thursday," responded Bill. "I was sent up to your own 'ouse to 'elp shake the carpets."

"Yes; I remember that distinctly," cut in the "boss." "But you got off at 6 sharp."

"Ah, that's true, gov'nor, as far as it goes," assented the man. "But your missus give me 'alf a meat pie to take 'ome, an' that there hour is for bringin' the dish back!"—Answers.

A QUESTION OF GIFTS

"Why did you deliberately make an enemy of your old friend Jinks?" "Because he is to be married next month."—Lippincott's.

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