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How good were the good old days?, 1954.

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HOW GOOD WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

November 14, 1954

There is a very fine sentence in a book of the Bible ^{which is} replete with stimulating and thought-provoking sentences, the book of ~~Kohaleth~~, Ecclesiastes, which reads something like this, "Do not say 'Why were the former times better than these.' It is not from wisdom that you ask this." ~~I took this verse as a text for my sermon this morning on "How Good Were the Good Old Days?"~~ Evidently ~~that question was asked~~ even in the days of Ecclesiastes, ^{People} ~~in his day~~ were looking back longingly upon the good old days.

~~Do not say 'Why were the former times better than these?'~~ Actually, the former times were worse than these. We are prone to forget the past because the past is no longer with us and all of its thorns ^{are not presently experienced} ~~are not sticking into our eyes at the moment.~~ The present is a living reality, and we do experience sharply the unpleasantness of the ^{present} moment. When we say the "good old days," what good old days are we referring to? Ten years ago? The days of the second world war with its "blitzes" and its horrors and the ^{present} ~~thought~~ of doom that was in the air, with the Nazis goose-stepping over the face of the earth? Thirty years ago? The first world war? With millions being slain and the ^U ~~mock~~ and the mire of the western front? Three hundred years ago? ^{When} The wars of religion ^{was} decimating the western world? Plagues! Filth! Poverty! Just when were the good old days?

What age in the past was better than this age? If you read the literature of any period in the past, ~~regardless what period,~~ and you read the writings of the best ^{writers} ~~men~~ of those periods, you will come upon bitter complaints ^{most} ~~on their~~ ^{the} ~~part~~ about conditions of their day; and frequently they contrast ^{the} ~~conditions~~ in their day with ^{what they had} ~~the loveliness that was in the past.~~ The ancients were fond to represent ^{my} this idea of the good old days by ^{declaring that} ~~calling attention to the steady~~

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and certain decline ^{but} ~~degradation~~ of the race of mankind from the Golden Age ^{has already declared that successive} ~~of~~ ^{ages of} ~~the past through~~ the Silver Age, ^{to} the Bronze Age, ^{and finally} to the Iron Age. ~~And~~ ^{their} age, ~~was~~ of course, the age in which they wrote what they wrote, was the hard, cruel, Iron Age.

I was on the campus of one of the great universities ^{an camp not so long ago} of ~~America~~ just ~~two~~ days ~~age - three days ago~~ and I addressed a gathering of ~~the~~ students, and ~~Following~~ the address we met in informal discussion, and ~~One~~ of the students asked me if I didn't really think that this age in which we are living was worse than the age of the jungle. In those days one man killed another man. Today, ^{we have the} there ~~is~~ organized mass slaughter of millions of ^{men} people - ^{Didn't I really} whether I didn't think that ^{one day} this day was ~~for~~ worse than those days. ~~And~~ ^{here} we were meeting on the campus of one of the great universities of our ~~country~~ ^{land}, surrounded by ~~buildings~~ ^{numerous} dedicated to the latest discoveries in science, in medicine, physics, chemistry, biology, ~~building dedicated~~ to art, ~~to~~ literature, ^{and} to the humanities. He we were meeting in a magnificent student union where young men and women of ^{way} all faiths ^{and many nationalities} were meeting together, and from many nationalities, receiving fine education, as were hundreds of thousands of other young men and women on the campuses of our country, ^{receiving a good education,} where ~~relatively poor~~ ^{many, then from poor houses with no other opportunities} young men and women had the opportunities of education, opened to them. Here was great music and great art, ~~and~~ here was a young man, ^{and earnestly} really sincerely asking whether this age in which ^{he was} we were living was not ^{really} as bad if not worse than the ~~good old~~ days of the jungle. This young man was sincere, and I am quite sure that similar thoughts ^{are} ~~were~~ entertained by other young people. The same thoughts are frequently ~~entertained~~ ^{expressed} by intellectuals, ^{perhaps out} I am afraid as a matter of intellectual affectation - sort of a superior pose to ^{definitely the} run down this present ~~twentieth~~ century by contrasting it with the glories ^{may} of ~~some~~ thirteenth century, or the Age of Elizabeth, or the Age of Pericles or some other age when there was a marked flowering of the human spirit. ~~in one direction or another.~~ ^{all} And these ^{people} intellectuals are not aware - or perhaps they are aware but they choose to ignore the fact - that in so doing they ~~must~~

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that was far from pleasant - ~~appalling~~ the misery
overlook so much in that past ~~which they are extolling so greatly~~ - the poverty, ~~the misery~~
and the illiteracy of the masses, ~~and the unbridled tyranny, and the slavery,~~ the ~~slavery~~
~~and the diseases, and the pestilences of which the people who lived in those ages~~
complained so bitterly, ~~and from which they hoped and wished to free themselves~~

Very often I hear the people ~~of this country~~ speak about the good old days
in our own country, ~~and somehow~~ vaguely they refer to some period ~~without actually~~
~~pinning it down, a~~ ^{in the past} period in the past, of unlimited opportunity, of expanding frontiers,
of untrammelled freedom when every man seemingly had all that he wanted or could
easily get all that he wanted - ~~good old days!~~ And I wonder ~~sometimes~~ whether
these people who talk that way ~~forget~~ ^{have forgotten} what occurred in those good old days - the bitter
industrial strife of ~~those good old days~~, the periodic and disastrous economic
depressions of ~~the good old days~~, the bread lines and the soup kitchens, ~~and the~~
sweat shops ~~and the wide areas of human poverty, and the slums of the good old~~
days, and further back the bloody civil war fought over slavery, ~~in the good old~~
~~days.~~ Actually, these days in which we live are far superior in almost every
regard to the best of the good old days - a higher standard of living for more
people, high ^{er} wages, ^{+ better} more homes, more cars, more social security against unemploy-
ment, against sickness; security in old age, better health conditions, better
education, more education available to more people, rights of labor more firmly
established, men working less hours. In almost every regard life today for the
vast masses of the people is far better than at any time in the history of America.

I imagine that this sense of nostalgia for the good old days can be traced
to the insecurity of the age in which we live - the age of atomic weapons; the
probability or the possibility, the apprehension of an atomic war which will
destroy everything seems to have cast a pall over the minds of people and over
the minds of many of our young people. I find that among students as I go from
college to college. I try to tell them that they ought not to evaluate their
careers in relation to some ~~possible~~ possible, inevitable, they think, catastrophe

that is in the offing any more than a human being ought to evaluate his life against the inevitable fact of his death some day - death for the individual which is absolutely sure; the destruction of humanity which is far from being sure. I try to tell these young people that this is a great age in which they live and that we are moving into a greater age. And this is a great age not only because it is scientifically a great age in every regard - the new sources of power, the new insights into the nature of matter and energy, the new inventions and discoveries - but in terms of social progress, in terms of social advancement, in terms of civilization this is a great age because more is being done in our age for the raising of the standards of the masses of the people, for the eradication of poverty, the improvement of health than in any generations or in any five generations that have passed. More is done for the backward peoples of the world today who are pushing their way to freedom than at any time in the past. Colonialism and imperialism are in their death-throes. The world is moving today in the direction of the elimination of poverty, the elimination of the inequalities of the races, and also - and this might seem strange - in the direction of the abolition of war, in the direction of organizing the world for permanent peace in spite of the setbacks and the frustrations that take place. These are the three major trends of our century, all hopeful, all leading to a better society of tomorrow, all of which should be a challenge to young people, a thrilling challenge to be a part of this great revolutionary movement which is taking place all over the earth for a better world. What we are seeing before our eyes is not the disintegration of society but a new integration and a promising and hopeful and nobler re-integration of mankind. I try to tell young people that they are living in a country whose resources and potentialities haven't even been tapped. America is moving into a greater age. But there is room and there is need for all the talents that young people are possessed of.

We need a mood of optimism in our world, and I am afraid all about us the media of communication - the press, the radio, the schools - all these are not contributing to a mood of confidence and hopefulness among our people. So people have begun to talk "good old days."

When I find people talking of the good old days in terms of their own personal lives, I am inclined to believe that they are thinking of their childhood - childhood without cares, where they were utterly protected and dependent upon someone else, where they had no serious responsibilities of their own, no perplexing problems and no grave decisions to make on their own, and so they glamorize their youth and their childhood. Those were the "good old days."

Actually, youth, of course, is not as happy an age as we older people think, for as we grow older we seem to forget much of the unhappiness of childhood, the heartaches, the bitter disappointments in our childhood, and how much we resented and were rebellious about, and how difficult was our adjustment, especially in our stormy years of adolescence. We forget all that. We think back upon the sweetness and the innocence of our childhood and of our early youth.

It is true that adults do look back to their childhood to this world of security and love which was theirs when they would like to escape the demands and the burdens of their present lives, and in more aggravated forms this of course becomes a sort of a neurosis, a longing for the warmth and the security of mother's arms, and even as the psychoanalysts tell us of the earlier mother's womb in the prenatal experience of the yet unborn infant.

We do lose something, of course, when we move from one stage of life to another even as we gain something. We do lose something as we move from one level of experience to another. In that magnificent "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" the great poet William Wordsworth voices that sense of loss which man experiences in the move from childhood into the maturer years:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream
The earth and every common sight
To me did seem appareled in celestial light;
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore.
Turn wheresoever I may, by night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
The rainbow comes and goes, and lovely is the rose
The moon doth with delight look 'round her
When the heavens is bare;
Waters on a starry night are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where ere I go
That there hast passed a way of glory from the earth.

Well, it's all very beautiful. I am not at all sure that it's all very realistic - that with the passing away of youth there passeth away a glory from the earth, whether the so-called innocence of childhood enabled us to see the world always "apparelled in celestial light," or whether, as one poet put it, as we move away from childhood we get away farther from heaven. But this is sure - that great compensations come to us as we grow into maturity. Maturity brings with us knowledge and strength and the deepening of spiritual insights and the widening of the orbit of our fellowship and friendship, and keener appreciation, and adventure, and great opportunities to exercise our skills and our talents. With the new burdens which we assume as get older there come to us greater rewards, deeper satisfaction, the building of a home, love, children, companionship. We lose much, of course, according to the poet, of the innocence and sweetness of youth, but life compensates us with much else. We would not sacrifice really our present for the good old days. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in his old age, wrote a poem called "The Old Man Dreams." It is an old man reflecting on his present condition in life, thinking back longingly to when he was a young man of twenty. He would like to be a young man of twenty again:

Oh for one hour of youthful joy!
Give back my twentieth spring!
I'd rather laugh, a bright-haired boy,
than reign, a gray-beared king.

Off with the spoils of wrinkled age!

Away with Learning's crown!
Tear out life's Wisdom-written page,
And dash its trophies down!

One moment let my life-blood stream
From boyhood's fount of flame!
Give me one giddy, reeling dream
Of life all love and fame!

My listening angel heard the prayer,
And, calmly smiling, said,
"If I but touch thy silvered hair
Thy hasty wish hath sped.

"But is there nothing in thy track,
To bid thee fondly stay,
While the swift seasons hurry back
To find the wished-for day?"

(And so this old man begins to reflect a little.)

"Ah, truest soul of womankind!
Without thee what were life?
One bliss I cannot leave behind:
I'll take - my - precious - wife!"

(That he doesn't want to give up.)

Then the angel took a sapphire pen
And wrote in rainbow dew,
This man would be a boy again,
And be a husband too!

"And is there nothing yet unsaid,
Before this change appears?
(Is there something else you would like to hold back on before I put
you back to where you were when you were 20?)
Remember, all their gifts have fled
With those dissolving years."

"Why, yes;" for memory would recall
My fond paternal joys;
(He is beginning to recall his joys as a father now)
"I could not bear to leave them all -
I'll take - my - girl - and - boys."

(He'd like to have them. He would like to be 20, but he'd like his
children too.)

Then the smiling angel dropped his pen, -
"Why, this will never do;
The man would be a boy again,
And be a father too!"

Well, I think there is a good bit of sound philosophy, in this lovely poem. We all look back on our yesterdays and that which is past and gone, the days which are no more, and we see all their romance and their poetry and their beauty. We forget that in those days we were yearning for something more - we weren't satisfied with staying 20. We wanted our careers. We wanted the deeper satisfactions in life to come true. We had dreams, but we wanted those dreams realized. We were reaching out for the future.

My own feeling is, dear friends, that every day is a song in its beauty and its glory - every day. And that we can prepare every day that the next day will retain much of the beauty and the song and the glory, and perhaps add to it. Do not say "Why were the former times better than these?" It is not from wisdom that you ask this. Our people, our religion, taught men to look forward, not backward. The Golden Age was not way back there in the distant time - the Golden Age is yet to be. And there shall come to pass in the end of days - there will be peace, there will be justice in the world, there will be brotherhood in the world - in the future - it did not exist in the past. Mankind is rising from lower levels to higher levels - painfully rising. We have not reached a stage of perfection at any stage, but we are pushing upward to the light. And as far as our personal lives are concerned, Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made
Our times are in his hand
Who saith: "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid!"

For old age is not the end. Life goes on. Trust God, see all, be not afraid. And make every age which may be yours yield its utmost to you of meaning, of significance, of beauty, and of glory. For each age can do it, and each age can therefore be a deeply satisfying age. The good old days - they're here - they will be here, but you have to make them so.

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[illegible][illegible]

(a) To do that - the writer must overlook the poverty, a
illiteracy, or ignorance, or slavery, or disease & pestilence
[these eyes -] which those who lived in them complained
so bitterly.

it without much difficulty
Forget - better industrial Slaves - Shuns - Depressors -
 the wide area of harvest the bread - lines - the
rough shelter - the sweet spots - the bloody civil wars
the slavery in America - broken ways - org. & labor

Mr. Slaney in times a -

Actually - standard / living higher - higher ways - org. & labor
- were social security - more money - more cars
- better education - better health practices
- more available - higher education

57. I imagine that ^{Internet} ~~insecure~~, range - threat, abuse
weapon - cast a pall over lives, many of our people
- apprehensions -

(Students) - I try to tell them - not to evaluate them

career in relation to an inevitable catastrophe. (3)

(b) Great Age - (2) Moving into greater age - Unlearned
honzes - (3) Living in country - where resources and
potentials have not even been tapped. (4) Room & head
for their talents & contributions

6. I suffer when people talk of these hard old days - in fact
I have never known any other kind of life - Childhood - without care -
utterly dependent - no series responsibilities - desires
to make -

(a) Youth, too, is often planned - for as no one else
we forget the unhappinesses, the heart-aches, the disappointments
of childhood - rebellious movements - the difficulties
of adjustment - of constant adjustment

(b) It is true, however, that very often, adults do look
back with nostalgia to their childhood - to a world of
security and love and to which they would like to
escape from the demands, the burdens, the responsibilities of their
adult life

(c) We were oppressed from - it becomes a nerve -
a longing for the warmth and security, the mother's
smile and even lashes, the mother's word - in the
preludat sphere, the yet vulnerable infant -

7/ We do lose something, & cross a new mark from one stage, like to another - from one level, exp. to another - even as we give something -

① wordsworth - "Ode on Intimations, Insinuating from Recollections of Early Childhood"! Jette. (82)

8/ ~~Some~~ Don't know how true that all is - whether the so-called innocence / childhood enable us to see the world - "apparent in celestial light" -

Whether - as we grow older we move "farther off from heaven that when I was a boy" - Thomas Hardy.

But - there are compensations for our losses -

① Maturity brings with it - knowledge - strength - deepening insight - wisdom - ~~experience~~ - adventure - ~~affection~~ -

- whatever to women are skills, are talents - to build and with our burden come ~~our rewards~~ ^{our sacrifices} more fully "more fully"
 - the holding of home - family - love -
 and companionship = ~~for~~
 higher costs -

9/ We would not swap them for the ~~good~~ ^{good} old days, are we?
Yarrr!

10/ We look lazily back on our yesterdays - that which is best and gone - the days that are no more
Cum gratia! I feel it with very strongly -

11/ x b p - עין בן עין - The better does an fall of time

Grow old along with me!
 The best is yet to be,
 The best of life, for which the first was made.
 Our times are in his hand
 Who saith: "A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor
 be afraid!"



HOW GOOD WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

November 14, 1954

There is a very fine sentence in a book of the Bible replete with stimulating and thought-provoking sentences, the book of Koheleth, Ecclesiastes, which reads something like this, "Do not say 'Why were the former times better than these.' It is not from wisdom that you ask this." I took this verse as a text for my sermon this morning on "How Good Were the Good Old Days?" Evidently that question was asked even in the days of Ecclesiastes. People in his day were looking back longingly upon the good old days.

Do not say 'Why were the former times better than these?' Actually, the former times were worse than these. We are prone to forget the past because the past is no longer with us and all of its thorns are not sticking into our eyes at the moment. The present is a living reality, and we do experience sharply the unpleasantness of the moment. When we say the "good old days," what good old days are we referring to? Ten years ago? The days of the second world war with its blitzes and its horrors and the thought of doom that was in the air with the Nazis goose-stepping over the face of the earth? Thirty years ago? The first world war? With millions being slain and the mock and the mire of the western front? Three hundred years ago? The wars of religion decimating the western world? Plagues? Filth? Poverty? Just when were the good old days?

What age in the past was better than this age? If you read the literature of any period in the past regardless what period, and you read the writings of the best men of those periods, you will come upon bitter complaints on their part about conditions of their day, and frequently they contrast conditions in their day with all the loveliness that was in the past. The ancients were fond to represent this idea of the good old days by calling attention to the steady

and certain decline, degradation of the race of mankind from the Golden Age of the past through the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, to the Iron Age. And their age, of course, the age in which they wrote what they wrote, was the hard, cruel, Iron Age.

I was on the campus of one of the great universities of America just two days ago - three days ago - and I addressed a gathering of the students, and following the address we met in informal discussion, and one of the students asked me if I didn't really think that this age in which we are living was worse than the age of the jungle. In those days one man killed another man. Today, there is organized mass slaughter of millions of people - whether I didn't think that this day was worse than those days. And here we were meeting on the campus of one of the great universities of our country, surrounded by buildings dedicated to the latest discoveries in science, in medicine, physics, chemistry, biology, building dedicated to art, to literature, to the humanities. Here we were meeting in a magnificent student union where young men and women of all faiths were meeting together and from many nationalities, receiving fine education, as were hundreds of thousands of other young men and women on the campuses of our country, where relatively poor young men and women had the opportunities of education opened to them. Here was great music and great art, and here was a young man, really sincerely asking whether this age in which we were living was not as bad if not worse than the good old days of the jungle. This young man was sincere, and I am quite sure that similar thoughts were entertained by other young people. The same thoughts are frequently entertained by intellectuals, I am afraid as a matter of intellectual affectation - sort of a superior pose to run down this present twentieth century by contrasting it with the glories of some thirteenth century or the Age of Elizabeth, or the Age of Pericles or some other age when there was a marked flowering of the human spirit in one direction or another. And these intellectuals are not aware - or perhaps they are aware but they choose to ignore the fact - that in so doing they must

overlook so much in that past which they are extolling so greatly - the poverty and the illiteracy of the masses and the unbridled tyranny, and the slavery, and the diseases, and the pestilences of which the people who lived in those ages complained so bitterly.

Very often I hear the people of this country speak about the good old days in our own country, and somehow vaguely they refer to some period without actually pinning it down, a period in the past of unlimited opportunity, of expanding frontiers, of untrammelled freedom when every man seemingly had all that he wanted or could easily get all that he wanted - good old days! And I wonder sometimes whether these people who talk that way forget what occurred in those good old days - the bitter industrial strife of those good old days, the periodic and disastrous economic depressions of the good old days, the bread lines and the soup kitchens, and the sweat shops and the wide areas of human poverty, and the slums of the good old days, and further back the bloody civil war fought over slavery in the good old days. Actually, these days in which we live are far superior in almost every regard to the best of the good old days - a higher standard of living for more people, high wages, more homes, more cars, more social security against unemployment, against sickness; security in old age, better health conditions, better education, more education available to more people, rights of labor more firmly established, men working less hours. In almost every regard life today for the vast masses of the people is far better than at any time in the history of America.

I imagine that this sense of nostalgia for the good old days can be traced to the insecurity of the age in which we live - the age of atomic weapons; the probability or the possibility, the apprehension of an atomic war which will destroy everything seems to have cast a pall over the minds of people and over the minds of many of our young people. I find that among students as I go from college to college. I try to tell them that they ought not to evaluate their careers in relation to some possible possible, inevitable, they think, catastrophe

that is in the offing any more than a human being ought to evaluate his life against the inevitable fact of his death some day - death for the individual which is absolutely sure; the destruction of humanity which is far from being sure. I try to tell these young people that this is a great age in which they live and that we are moving into a greater age. And this is a great age not only because it is scientifically a great age in every regard - the new sources of power, the new insights into the nature of matter and energy, the new inventions and discoveries - but in terms of social progress, in terms of social advancement, in terms of civilization this is a great age because more is being done in our age for the raising of the standards of the masses of the people, for the eradication of poverty, the improvement of health than in any generation or in any five generations that have passed. More is done for the backward peoples of the world today who are pushing their way to freedom than at any time in the past. Colonialism and imperialism are in their death-throes. The world is moving today in the direction of the elimination of poverty, the elimination of the inequalities of the races, and also - and this might seem strange - in the direction of the abolition of war, in the direction of organizing the world for permanent peace in spite of the setbacks and the frustrations that take place. These are the three major trends of our century, all hopeful, all leading to a better society of tomorrow, all of which should be a challenge to young people, a thrilling challenge to be a part of this great revolutionary movement which is taking place all over the earth for a better world. What we are seeing before our eyes is not the disintegration of society but a new integration and a promising and hopeful and nobler re-integration of mankind. I try to tell young people that they are living in a country whose resources and potentialities haven't even been tapped. America is moving into a greater age. But there is room and there is need for all the talents that young people are possessed of.

We need a mood of optimism in our world, and I am afraid all about us the media of communication - the press, the radio, the schools - all these are not contributing to a mood of confidence and hopefulness among our people. So people have begun to talk "good old days."

When I find people talking of the good old days in terms of their own personal lives, I am inclined to believe that they are thinking of their childhood - childhood without cares, where they were utterly protected and dependent upon someone else, where they had no serious responsibilities of their own, no perplexing problems and no grave decisions to make on their own, and so they glamorize their youth and their childhood. Those were the "good old days."

Actually, youth, of course, is not as happy an age as we older people think, for as we grow older we seem to forget much of the unhappiness of childhood, the heartaches, the bitter disappointments in our childhood, and how much we resented and were rebellious about, and how difficult was our adjustment, especially in our stormy years of adolescence. We forget all that. We think back upon the sweetness and the innocence of our childhood and of our early youth.

It is true that adults do look back to their childhood to this world of security and love which was theirs when they would like to escape the demands and the burdens of their present lives, and in more aggravated forms this of course becomes a sort of a neurosis, a longing for the warmth and the security of mother's arms, and even as the psychoanalysts tell us of the earlier mother's womb in the prenatal experience of the yet unborn infant.

We do lose something, of course, when we move from one stage of life to another even as we gain something. We do lose something as we move from one level of experience to another. In that magnificent "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" the great poet William Wordsworth voices that sense of loss which man experiences in the move from childhood into the maturer years?

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream
The earth and every common sight
To me did seem appareled in celestial light;
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore.
Turn wheresoever I may, by night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
The rainbow comes and goes, and lovely is the rose
The moon doth with delight look 'round her
When the heavens is bare;
Waters on a starry night are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where ere I go
That there has passed a way of glory from the earth.

Well, it's all very beautiful. I am not at all sure that it's all very realistic - that with the passing away of youth there passeth away a glory from the earth, whether the so-called innocence of childhood enabled us to see the world always "appareled in celestial light," or whether, as one poet put it, as we move away from childhood we get away farther from heaven. But this is sure - that great compensations come to us as we grow into maturity. Maturity brings with us knowledge and strength and the deepening of spiritual insights and the widening of the orbit of our fellowship and friendship, and keener appreciation, and adventure, and great opportunities to exercise our skills and our talents. With the new burdens which we assume as we get older there come to us greater rewards, deeper satisfaction, the building of a home, love, children, companionship. We lose much, of course, according to the poet, of the innocence and sweetness of youth, but life compensates us with much else. We would not sacrifice really our present for the good old days. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in his old age, wrote a poem called "The Old Man Dreams." It is an old man reflecting on his present condition in life, thinking back longingly to when he was a young man of twenty. He would like to be a young man of twenty again:

Oh for one hour of youthful joy!
Give back my twentieth spring!
I'd rather laugh, a bright-haired boy,
than reign, a gray-beared king.

Off with the spoils of wrinkled age!

Away with Learning's crown!
Tear out life's Wisdom-written page,
And dash its trophies down!

One moment let my life-blood stream
From boyhood's fount of flame!
Give me one giddy, reeling dream
Of life all love and fame!

My listening angel heard the prayer,
And, calmly smiling, said,
"If I but touch thy silvered hair
Thy hasty wish hath sped.

"But is there nothing in thy track,
To bid thee fondly stay,
While the swift seasons hurry back
To find the wished-for day?"

(And so this old man begins to reflect a little.)

"Ah, truest soul of womankind!
Without thee what were life?
One bliss I cannot leave behind:
I'll take - my - precious - wife!"

(That he doesn't want to give up.)

Then the angel took a sapphire pen
And wrote in rainbow dew,
This man would be a boy again,
And be a husband too!

"And is there nothing yet unsaid,
Before this change appears?
(Is there something else you would like to hold back on before I put
you back to where you were when you were 20?)
Remember, all their gifts have fled
With those dissolving years."

"Why, yes;" for memory would recall
My fond paternal joys;
(He is beginning to recall his joys as a father now)
"I could not bear to leave them all -
I'll take - my - girl - and - boys."

(He'd like to have them. He would like to be 20, but he'd like his
children too.)

Then the smiling angel dropped his pen, -
"Why, this will never do;
The man would be a boy again,
And be a father too!"

Well, I think there is a good bit of sound philosophy, in this lovely poem. We all look back on our yesterdays and that which is past and gone, the days which are no more, and we see all their romance and their poetry and their beauty. We forget that in those days we were yearning for something more - we weren't satisfied with staying 20. We wanted our careers. We wanted the deeper satisfactions in life to come true. We had dreams, but we wanted those dreams realized. We were reaching out for the future.

My own feeling is, dear friends, that every day is a song in its beauty and its glory - every day. And that we can prepare every day that the next day will retain much of the beauty and the song and the glory, and perhaps add to it. Do not say "Why were the former times better than these?" It is not from wisdom that you ask this. Our people, our religion, taught men to look forward, not backward. The Golden Age was not way back there in the distant time - the Golden Age is yet to be. And there shall come to pass in the end of days - there will be peace, there will be justice in the world, there will be brotherhood in the world - in the future - it did not exist in the past. Mankind is rising from lower levels to higher levels - painfully rising. We have not reached a stage of perfection at any stage, but we are pushing upward to the light. And as far as our personal lives are concerned, Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made
Our times are in his hand
Who saith: "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid!"

For old age is not the end. Life goes on. Trust God, see all, be not afraid. And make every age which may be yours yield its utmost to you of meaning, of significance, of beauty, and of glory. For each age can do it, and each age can therefore be a deeply satisfying age. The good old days - they're here - they will be here, but you have to make them so.