

DAYS OF RETIREMENT

HERE comes a tide in the affairs of men when their little ships must prepare to beach, when the long journey is ending and the time of retirement is near. And problems of old age are ageless. Did not a Roman senator say that in his retirement he was going to plant cabbages? It is only in our more highly-organised era that the guillotine can descend at a certain hour, on a certain day, on a man's life and cut him off from 50% to 80% of his life. That all this must be replaced by only a man's innate worth, his own-unaided volition is often a serious problem.

In a series of five talks, called *Prepare to Beach*, five retired people have given their ideas on what they hope to get from their leisure, how they fill their days, and what is their philosophy. Edward Hitchcock quotes one of the most profound things ever said about retirement. It runs: "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, when the evil days come not nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, 'I have no pleasure in them.'" He concludes that you get out of retirement an awareness of basic things which you should have spent your earlier life developing.

Agnes Merton, late of Christchurch Girls' High School, has not yet found time to experience "retired leisure," which should, according to Milton, be one of the pleasures of an intellectual person. There are always committees to be sat on, a little coaching, relieving teaching, housework and gardening. The only thing she regrets is that she has lost her elasticity of mind which would

enable her to take up completely new things she has never had time for.

Other talks in the series are given by Major-General G. B. Parkinson, C.B.E., D.S.O. (Ret.), who talks about retirement as it affects the Army man; William Machin, who finds committee work agreeable and no time for gardening; and A. G. Gurnsey, who discusses, on the eve of retirement, what the ending of the "long littlenesses" of a school-master's career means to him.

Prepare to Beach is now being broadcast from 2YC. William Machin's talk will be heard at 10.0 p.m. on March 14 and the series will start this week from 1YC at 9.30 p.m. on March 16 and from 4YC at 8.3 p.m. on March 19.



WILLIAM MACHIN
No time for cabbages.

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shape you would expect Mother's daughter to be. Still, they mightn't get such a kick out of it if they went round the back as Marilyn did and saw things draped over the scrubbing bucket, things with quite a lot of wear in them, too.

Mrs. Williams said to thank Mother very much indeed—it would be most useful. Marilyn asked if Patricia could play. Mrs. Williams looked vague.

"I'm not quite sure where she is, dear."

Marilyn thought perhaps Mrs. Williams *did* know. She had once overheard Mrs. Williams telling someone that she thought Marilyn too old for Patricia. She more likely meant Too Big, because the only difference Marilyn could see was that she collected Film Stars and Patricia and her classmates were still on the Royal Family.

"I'll look for her," said Marilyn.

Patricia and her friend Dianne were coming out the back gate as Marilyn came back along the road.

"Hullo," said Marilyn.

They giggled.

Patricia, Marilyn noticed, was wearing her own best frock of two years back. It had been a nice frock.

"Coming for a swim?"

They shook their heads. "We're going up to Anne's."

"I'll come, too," said Marilyn, lonely.

"It's our gang," said Patricia. "Not just anybody."

They turned lightly on their heels.

Marilyn stayed where she was, defeated. What's wrong with me, she thought, feeling rage bursting in her like a fountain and dribbling uselessly away from her fingertips. Surely she could do something? In lots of books she had read a girl could reduce her enemy to pulp (dirtily, but effectively) by shouting something like "Yah! You're wearing my old frock!" But Patricia

wouldn't have cared—would have tossed her head and gone on giggling. Or, if she *had* cared, would have tripped inside and changed it for one a current favourite had given her. And perhaps degraded Marilyn's prematurely to the rank of floorcloth (I loved that frock, thought Marilyn), and it would drip on the line as reproachfully as a severed head on enemy battlements.

Marilyn turned and ran down to the beach, feeling her too-long frock hampering her knees, its scratchy newness pricking her underarms. "I hate them!" she breathed. "I hate everybody!" She flung herself face downward on to the sand with the abandonment of a sun-bather, and felt the hot tears drip on to her arm. Her new frock crackled protestingly as she burrowed deeper. "I hate it!" she breathed into the dark confession-box of her elbow's angle. "I swear to God I'll never wear it."

She sat up and savagely ripped it off (a stitch snapped). Just like Mother to make her put a frock on over her suit just because she had to call at the Williams! She spurned the crumpled mass into the sand with her heel and sat, a consciously bitter smile on her lips, listening to the nagging of the waves on the beach and the shrill voices of children quarrelling over a bucket.

"Scared to get your suit wet?" jeered a voice.

"Watch me!" yelled Marilyn.

She scrambled up the rock and bounded along the diving-board, looped once, then, shaped and shapely as a porpoise, cleanly pierced the water. And the sea received her uncaringly in a brisk embrace, and with maternal indulgence parted its waves before her swift and triumphant passage, perhaps welcoming in her one whose proportions were not so different from those of her own sea-born Aphrodite.

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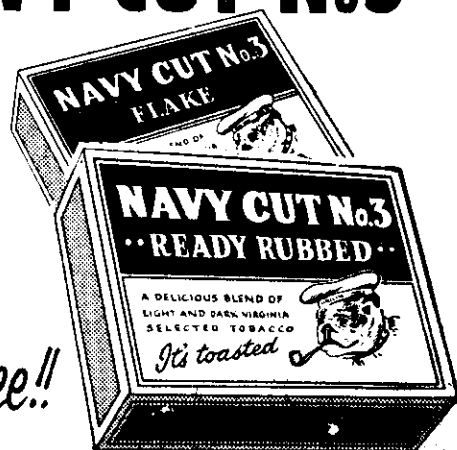
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