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**ON REACHING SEVENTY**  
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*... A letter from*

**FREDERICK T. GATES**

Trustee, The Rockefeller Foundation,  
1913-1923, and Chairman of the Board,  
The General Education Board, 1907-1917

*To*

**WALLACE BUTTRICK**

Trustee, The Rockefeller Foundation,  
1917-1926, and Chairman of the Board,  
The General Education Board, 1917-1926

*UPON THE OCCASION OF  
Dr. BUTTRICK'S SEVENTIETH  
BIRTHDAY*

Montclair, New Jersey  
October 23, 1923

Dear Old Friend:

Here's a hand of hearty welcome to the high and select Order of Septuagenarians into which I preceded you by nearly five months. I dreaded the day but I find it good to be here.

Really, when one comes to be here, it presents itself mainly as a distinction—a distinction which everybody, after all, desires though few attain, an honor which never goes by favor but always and infallibly by merit, a title of nobility that marks a man as belonging by birth to an hereditary aristocracy of at least four generations and probably many more, a true and not an artificial or conventional aristocracy, the only aristocracy which nature owns, an aristocracy of high moral and physical superiority. It means that and more. You have proved yourself a worthy heir of that best legacy which ancestral opulence can bestow, for have not you too attained the days of the years of your fathers? You have not wasted your substance in riotous living, or squandered your great patrimony in any prodigality.

Age has been honored since the dawn of history. Religion itself among all nations has its roots in the worship of ancestry. Hoary heads have ever been a crown of glory. Age, viewed close at hand, is to be welcomed, not dreaded. It brings privileges, immunities and emoluments all its own and not few—precedence everywhere, the gracious bow, the lifted hat, the proffered arm, the easy chair, the cozy corner, the dainty morsel, the weightiest influence in counsel, release from exacting duties, ripeness and tenderness of filial love, shelter from every ill wind that blows. Since my seventieth birthday women have risen from their seats in the crowded subway trains and offered them to me with exquisite grace of speech and manner. Think of that and what it means!

And then we don't have to work any more. From us the primeval curse of the fall of man has been lifted. No more do we eat our bread in the sweat of our brows. For us the flaming sword has been removed from the gate of Eden. We are permitted in the Divine Economy to re-enter. We may eat of all the fruits of the Garden. We may enjoy the immense advantages pleaded so successfully by Eve in tasting the apple without any of its terrible penalties. Ah, the apple of knowledge, and for the first time in life abundant leisure to eat our fill, to read the history and literature and science a too busy active life has denied us.

We need not deceive ourselves. Henceforth to the end we shall be walking through the valley of the great shadow. But it was for those aged travellers that the Twenty-third Psalm was written. It's in the valley that the Good Shepherd leads us into the green pastures and makes us to lie down beside the still waters. The rod and the staff alike are for our comfort.

For forty-five years you and I have been close friends—for over thirty years most intimate confidential friends—engaged together in exacting and stupendous enterprise pregnant with measureless destinies, and there has never been a break between us. I hardly know where to look for a duplicate of such a record. We were built to work together just as we have, and surely it was a divine Providence that placed us side by side. And now we seem destined to spend the twilight of the evening of life without being separated, and we can walk on hand in hand in the earned release of a joyful and carefree childhood.

Ever most truly,

(Signed) F. T. Gates

Dr. Wallace Buttrick  
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