

BIRTHDAY PARTIES FOR OLD PEOPLE

By Marian V. Dorsey



IF THE time ever comes when one would not be pleased to have a birthday cake—at least, one with candles on it—it is in that period between the early twenties and the late forties, always called the “uncertain age” when a woman is referred to. It is probably so called because it is uncertain as to what number of years a woman will acknowledge to having lived. But elderly men and women, as well as children and youthful maidens, take a pride in the increasing number of candles that designate the years, and it is always a beautiful and gratifying surprise, for an old man especially, to have his birthday remembered in this way by those who are near and dear to him.

In one family the candles from a grandfather's birthday cake have become cherished mementoes, that in turn add interest to new cakes of younger generations. His birthday came in September, a time of plenty, and as he did not care for parties made up of outsiders it was planned to give him a family supper, with a huge cake as the central ornament of the table, surrounded by eighty candles—the fourscore years he had lived his noble life that reflected many kindly beams. He knew nothing of the plan except that all his children and his three grandchildren would be there for the day. His daughters stretched the table to its limit, and down the centre they laid a mirror, twenty inches wide by thirty-four in length. The frame was tarnished, so it was entirely covered with green boxwood leaves, and just inside the frame the candles were stuck on the glass, about two inches apart, going all the way around it. The cake was placed in the centre of the mirror, and was decorated with pinks, the old gentleman's favorite flower.



A MINUTE before the honored octogenarian was ushered into the room, two daughters, one on each side of the table, quickly lighted the eighty candles, and a brilliant spectacle they made, all reflected in the mirror lake; and the grandfather stood for a moment spellbound by the fairy scene; then, true to the cautious instinct of old age, he exclaimed, “Blow them out!” and amid shrieks of laughter at the quietus put upon their illumination, the children and grandchildren blew the candles out, and sat down and made merry with the old gentleman, who was as pleased as a child at the beautiful surprise.

Two years later his wife was seventy, and seventy of his candles were put around her cake. Last year she had her seventy-fifth birthday cake, with roses—her flowers—decorating it, and a few weeks later a little grandson who was five years old had his cake at his grandmother's with five of the candles that had been on his grandfather's eightieth and his grandmother's seventy-fifth birthday cakes, with the flowers, pinks and roses, decorating it. Last summer another wee tot who reached his first anniversary had his one candle from the same historic cakes.