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THE PARTING GUEST...

What delightful hosts are they—
Life and Love!

Lingeringly I turn away
This late hour, yet glad enough
They have not withheld from me
Their high hospitality.

So, with face lit with delight
And all gratitude, I stay
Yet to press their hands and say

"Thanks—So fine a time! Good night."

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

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My message to my friends on my 96th birthday was intended to suggest that the long-continued practice had reached its end. And so I thought. But this pile of friendly greetings covering the Holiday Season and my birthday presents a challenge I can't resist. So here I am again. But wonderful as my general health is (for the "upset" of two years ago has been almost wholly righted) this must be the last.

The years will take their toll. In the words of The Preacher (Eccl. XII, 5) "the grasshopper" has become "a burden"—(and how I hate to confess it!)—which I must lay aside. So if I reach my 98th anniversary and my friends still remember it with their kindly letters and greeting cards they will understand, I trust, why they do not receive the acknowledgment I should love to send.

In my card for 1947 I included a little jingle:

Eighty-seven rhymes with heaven,
But my thoughts don't run that way
So much that's new, so much to do!
—I'd fain a little longer stay.

There's a different slant in a bit of anonymous doggerel I saw a few weeks ago in Cedric Adams' column

which with a few touches to adjust the meter runs as follows:

"How do I know that my youth is spent?
'Cause my get-up-and-go got up and went.
But in spite of all I still can grin
When I think what my get-up-and-go has been.
'Old age is golden' I've heard it said,
But doubt it at times when I go to bed,—
Put my ears in a drawer, my teeth in a cup,
My eyes on a table till time to get up.
Ere sleep fills my eyes I say to myself
'Is there anything else I should put on the shelf?'"

This is so good I want to pass it on especially to my fellow members of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Methuselah. Perhaps it will strike a responsive chord as it does with me ten years after I went so far to find a rhyme for "eighty-seven". So long as we can laugh at ourselves we're not completely fossilized.

Don't mistake me—this is not "Good-bye!" but just—"Thanks! see you soon."

God bless you all! I wish I could tell you what your friendship has meant to me.

