

"BEAUTIFUL FOR EVER."

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



THIS paper is chiefly addressed to the young of both sexes; and when I say young, I must not by any means be understood to refer to the number of years the reader may have lived. Youth is not always in the possession of

those still

under thirty. Byron, at the age of thirty, bade farewell to his youth in verse; in reality, he had bidden farewell to it years before then. Again, a man or woman may be really young at heart, and considerably so in appearance, at the age of fifty, or even far beyond it; and one may live many years, if I may so speak, in a few short months—ay, even in a few weeks. And there are instances of persons becoming aged in one night under the paralysing influence of extreme terror. There is a question we are constantly hearing asked in every-day life, and that is, "How old are you?"—generally with the emphasis on the *you*, as if the questioner had said, "I'm quite willing to tell you how old *I* am." "I am so-and-so," says the questioned, giving his age in years. "Are you indeed, now?" says the first speaker; "I really wouldn't have taken you for so much. What age should you say I am?" "Dunno indeed; five-and-twenty, perhaps." "Three-and-thirty last birthday." "Dear me! why, you don't look anything like that." Any one can see the praise-me-and-I'll-praise-you drift of such a conversation; but it pleases both, and often leads to cigars and pleasant talk in a railway carriage or elsewhere.

You see people always give their age in years. Now, in reality, nothing could be more erroneous than reckoning a man's age from the years he may have lived; nor more delusive either, for people expect to live as fast as they please, and console themselves with the idea that they are still young, and have all the world before them—because, forsooth, they are only so-and-so years old.

To understand, then, what age really means, we must know something of the characteristics of life itself.

Now I know the reader would never forgive me if, lured on by the title of this paper, I got him to listen to a dry physiological lecture, so I don't mean to do so; I mean always to be on the best of terms with my readers, and therefore my medicinal doses shall always be infinitesimal, and followed by the immediate exhibition of a sugared plum. Therefore, instead of describing the positive qualities, let us take a glance at its negative ones. "Ah," you will say, "this, then, is *death!*" Perhaps you are right, but chemists, you know, tell us there is no such thing as death.

Behold the burden on yonder bier. That once was a man; not two hours ago he talked, he smiled, moved, heard, saw, loved, and thought. Even now there is the semblance of man there. But how still it lies! it does not, cannot move. How cold it feels! neither heat nor motion there;—and soon we know there will be a change. That change, indeed, although we cannot perceive it, is even now begun, and presently, by chemical laws, that body will be re-dissolved into its original elements; for in life there are two forces constantly at work—a chemical or disintegrating force, and a vital or conservative force; and these two forces are in a manner constantly at war with one another; but so long as the vital force is in full activity, and equally balanced with the chemical, the very decomposition of the tissues, effected by the latter, develops a force which assists in the organising of nutrition and the carrying on of the functions of the body. But as we grow older the vital force gets weaker, and offers less and less resistance to the chemical, until at last we sink into the grave—and there, you know, the chemical forces have it all their own way. Now this is what I want you to understand: after many years, as I have said, the vital force gets weaker; that is one way of getting old. *But there is another*—for inattention to the laws of health, fast or injudicious living, and many other things have the same effect on vitality, and render us old before our time.

Why is it, think you, that under the most favourable circumstances man cannot live for ever? It is because the vital force is not a perpetual force, but the chemical is. Life is a machine which is easily worn out, and can never be renewed in the same individual, but chemical force goes on for ever.

It is self-evident then that a person's age does not depend upon the number of years he may have lived, but upon the way in which he has spent those years. For, granted that youth and manhood have each in their possession a certain recuperative power which enables the body to repel disease, or if attacked, to grow out of it as it were—you must, nevertheless, bear in mind that frames which active disease itself cannot overcome, will inevitably succumb to long-continued habits of life that tend to lower the vital force. And, too, the degeneration of the *vis natura* may be so very gradual as not to be felt or perceived by the victim

himself. It is the constant drop that wears away the stone. And now I have done with physiology.

In order that it may never be said of the reader that he or she is old in life though young in years, I will presently mention the things that are to be avoided, in order to be beautiful for ever without enamelling and quite independently of Madame Rachel; but first let us see what are the symptoms and visible signs of that sort of premature old-agedness which is not at all rarely to be met with in this too busy world of ours.

And first as to grey hair. This taken alone is by no means a sign of age either in the old or in the young. Many a fresh and youthful face I can call to mind, and so I have no doubt can you, which is topped by snowy hair. Some people get grey-haired when very young, and this peculiarity runs in families and even in clans. It is generally, although not always, associated with the rheumatic or gouty diathesis, and the nervous temperament. And, as a rule, people who get early grey do not become bald. And, talking of grey hairs, I know a young lady of five-and-twenty who has, as our novelists would say, a wealth of wavy hair, and it hangs in beautiful rich ringlets, not of golden, but of silvery sheen. And I know the clergyman of a parish church, now in his ninety-third year, whose hair—his own hair, mind you—is still as black as the raven's wing.

The strength of an individual who has been a free and a fast liver decays at a very early age. But you cannot get such a one to believe that it is anything else except just the result of being a little out of sorts, which a few weeks at the seaside will be sure to put all right. Decay of the teeth is another sign of advancing age.

Loss of flesh and shrivelling is a much more serious symptom, and along with this, or as separate symptoms, you have breathlessness and perspiration on slight exertion, a general feeling of tiredness and *ennui*, and languor of the circulation.

Memory fails in the prematurely aged to a greater or less extent, and conversational power, for the loss of which they endeavour to make up by telling anecdotes.

And now I've a word to say on wrinkles. Wrinkles look very nice in old people, but they do *not* become the young. The skin in age, whether young or old age, is not capable of fully performing its functions. It is not so pliant, it has become dry, and wrinkles easily.

Nothing, I think, shows age more surely than certain kinds of wrinkles. These generally are induced by fast living, which brings on dyspepsia and sluggish liver; these latter induce restless nights; the skin about the eyes of a morning is slightly swollen and cedematous, and if this be continued for any length of time, it is easy to see how crows'-feet are permanently established. About the only class of wrinkles I care to see in the face of youth are those around the eyes, caused by smiling, that are signs of a merry heart which will never get old. Very different are those deep wrinkles that extend from each *ala* of the nose,

and curve down the cheek towards the chin. These are most prominently seen in waiters, and in people engaged in business which necessitates their fawning on their customers. Such wrinkles are the result of smiles that are merely from the teeth forwards, and do not extend downwards to the heart or upwards to the eye. Avoid, therefore, smiling when you don't feel like it. *Esse quam videre* is a capital motto.

Avoid dyspepsia if you would live to a healthy old age. It causes sleeplessness, puffiness of the eyes, wrinkles, and grey hairs. Live plainly, and beware of highly spiced made dishes and condiments of all kinds, and seek for an appetite in the fresh air. You cannot have too much of that. If you are temperate in eating, temperance in drinking will come naturally. Go in for daily and perfect ablution. Make this a regular habit. Do not neglect exercise. Never use any cosmetic for the face except rain-water, for one and all of them sooner or later injure the skin irremediably.

Hard work, especially brain-work, must always be followed by a proportionate period of inactivity.

Avoid the use of stimulating oils for the hair. Occasional washing with the yolk of two or three eggs and rain-water, and the daily use of moderately hard brushes, are the great secrets of beautiful hair.

The use of a nicely fitting corset is beneficial rather than otherwise, and although very tight lacing is injurious, medical men have had over-much to say about the matter. A well-made boot, too, can never injure any one. Goodness forbid our English girls should ever be shaped like savages, either in feet or form! The customs of late hours and crowded rooms have a notoriously ageing influence on the youth of this country. They are the worms at the root of beauty's bloom. Now, young ladies, I do not for a moment meditate advising you to give up your balls and your parties. You *shall* dance and sing, and be generally jolly, for you are young, and if you didn't you would mope, and get ill and ugly; that would be worse, wouldn't it? Only take your pleasures moderately, and without too much excitement; and here is the best piece of advice I have given you yet: *spend as much of the day as you can in out-door exercise*, so shall you enjoy your evening dance, and still be beautiful for ever. Lastly, do not wear too much clothing in summer, nor too little in winter; and never, if possible, lose your temper.

Do not think that there is no beauty in genuine old age, for, ah! indeed, indeed there is, if life has been well spent, just as there is beauty in the sunset of a long summer's day. Horace, in an address to his wife, says, "To me thy wrinkles have more charm than fairer face."

There is really no reason why one should dread the approach of old age. There is nothing sudden, nothing painful or terrible in a healthy old man's last years. Only a gradual waning of life's powers, and a feeling of weariness which makes one long for the grave as a child for its cradle; and coupled with this, we trust, is the hope, equal to a certainty, of a happy hereafter.