

THE SCIENCE OR HYGIENE OF ADVANCED LIFE.

SPEAKING of the conservation of life in the aged, Dr. Horatio C. Wood, of Philadelphia, a scientific paper states, recently mentioned the case of a prominent citizen, who, having died at the age of 81, was quoted by his neighbors and associates as being gathered like a ripened sheaf. Dr. Wood objects to the simile as being inappropriate, for the gentleman in question was full of physical and mental vigor up to within a week of his death, and there was no more reason that his life should terminate so suddenly than if he had been but threescore.

This eminent physician believes that, aside from deaths from accidents and preventable causes, the duration of life is frequently influenced by success and failure. The man who has succeeded—and by this he means one who has so spent his years that they form a gratifying subject for self-review—can, by proper care, prolong his life much beyond the traditional threescore and ten. But a sense of failure in life is apt to become the indirect cause of premature death, for it exhausts the vitality and detracts from the recuperative power of the system.

To make old age possible, however, we are told, the several vital organs must be approximately equal in strength. The man of ordinary physique, who possesses this fortunate balance of power, will in all probability outlive an athlete whose development has been unequal. Excessive strength in one part is in fact a source of danger. An overdeveloped muscular system invites dissolution, because it is a constant strain upon the less powerful organs, and finally wears them out. Death in the majority of cases is the result of local weakness. It often hap-

pens that a vital organ has been endowed with an original longevity less than that of the rest of the organism, and its failure to act brings death to other portions of the system, which in themselves possessed the capabilities of long life.

As age creeps over a person, the conditions of the animal organism change, and they possess less elasticity to meet and overcome such strains as can be invited with impunity in youth. Exposure to inclement weather, the sudden shock of good or bad news, are frequently sufficient to terminate a life which with care would be able to endure many more years of active usefulness. It is therefore highly desirable that persons of advancing years should make their personal habits the subject of careful study, and with the help of some wise counselor regulate their daily living in accordance with the changed conditions of their animal economy.

Of all the questions which must be decided as thus indicated, few are more important than that of diet. The loss of the teeth as life advances should be replaced when possible by artificial substitutes. But even with the best product of the dentist's skill, mastication is apt to be imperfectly performed, and the food of elderly people therefore should be easily digestible, and at the same time comparatively soft and readily comminuted. In its nature, the food should not be too stimulating. Many are injured by an excess of nitrogenous food. The kidneys, being weakened by age, are unduly strained if meats and other rich foods are eaten in excess. Milk and its products or cereal preparations cooked with milk are among the most suitable and per-