

Hence arise many of the evils and troubles of old age, and notably indigestion and gouty symptoms in various forms, besides mental discomfort. No hard and fast rules can be laid down, but strict moderation should be the guiding maxim. The diet suitable for most aged persons is that which contains much nutritive material in a small bulk, and its quantity should be in proportion to the appetite and power of digestion. Animal food, well cooked, should be taken sparingly.

It is an easier task to lay down rules with regard to the use of alcoholic liquors by elderly people. To quote again from Ecclesiasticus, "Wine is as good as life to a man, if it be drunk moderately, for it was made to make men glad." Elderly persons, particularly at the close of the day, often find that their nervous energy is exhausted, and require a little stimulant to induce them to take a necessary supply of proper nourishment, and perhaps to aid the digestive power to convert their food to a useful purpose. In the debility of old age, and especially when sleeplessness is accompanied by slow and imperfect digestion, a small quantity of a generous and potent wine, containing much ether, often does good service. Even a little beer improves digestion in some old people; others find that spirits, largely diluted, fulfill the same purpose.

It is not to be inferred from the hints given in the preceding paragraphs that the preservation of health should be the predominant thought in the minds of elderly persons who desire that their lives should be prolonged. To be always guarding against disease, and to live in a state of constant fear and watchfulness, would make existence miserable and hasten the progress of decay. Selfish and undue solicitude with regard to health not only fails to attain its object, but is apt to induce that diseased condition of mind known as hypochondriasis, the victims of which are always a burden and a nuisance, if not to themselves, at least to all connected with them. Addison, in the "Spectator," after describing the valetudinarian who constantly weighed himself and his food, and yet became sick and languishing, aptly remarks, "A continual anxiety for life vitiates all the relishes of it, and casts a gloom over the whole face of nature, as it is impossible that we should take delight in anything that we are every moment afraid of losing."

Sleep is closely connected with the question of diet; "good sleeping" was a noticeable feature in the large majority of Humphry's cases. Sound, refreshing sleep

is of the utmost consequence to the health of the body, and no substitute can be found for it as a restorer of vital energy. Sleeplessness is, however, often a source of great trouble to elderly people, and one which is not easily relieved. Narcotic remedies are generally mischievous; their first effects may be pleasant, but the habit of depending upon them rapidly grows until they become indispensable. When this stage has been reached, the sufferer is in a far worse plight than before. In all cases the endeavor should be made to discover whether the sleeplessness be due to any removable cause—such as indigestion, cold, want of exercise, and the like, and to remove the cause.

Warmth is very important for the aged. Exposure to chills should be scrupulously avoided. Bronchitis is the malady most to be feared, and its attacks are very easily provoked. Many old people suffer from more or less cough during the winter months, and this symptom may recur year after year, and be almost unheeded. At last, perhaps a few minutes' exposure to a cold wind increases the irritation in the lungs, the cough becomes worse, and the difficulty of breathing increases until suffocation terminates in death. To obviate such risk the skin should be carefully protected by warm flannel clothes, the outdoor thermometer should be noticed, and winter garments should always be at hand. In cold weather the lungs should be protected by breathing through the nose.

Careful cleansing of the skin is the last point which needs to be mentioned in an article like the present. Attention to cleanliness is decidedly conducive to longevity, and we may congratulate ourselves on the general improvement in our habits in this respect. Frequent washing with warm water is very advantageous for old people, in whom the skin is only too apt to become hard and dry, and the benefit will be increased if the ablutions be succeeded by friction with coarse flannel or linen gloves, or with a flesh-brush.

Such, then, are the principal measures by which life may be prolonged and health maintained down to the closing scene. It remains to be seen whether, as a result of progress of knowledge and civilization, life will ever be protracted beyond the limit assigned to it in a preceding paragraph. There is no doubt that the *average duration* of human life is capable of very great extension, and that the same causes which serve to prolong life materially contribute toward the happiness of mankind.