

# THE SATURDAY READER.

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FIVE CENTS.

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## LONG LIFE.

"LONG life to your Honour!" "Oh, King, live for ever!" It is the same all the world over. The Irish beggar, or the Eastern courtier, each thinks this the best prayer he can offer up for the party addressed. Not so thought the old woman in New Hampshire, U. S., who, as Southey, with sententious meaning, says, had reached the "miserable age" of 102, and who, on hearing a bell toll for a funeral, burst into tears, and exclaimed, "Oh, when will it toll for me? I am afraid I shall never die, and that God has forgotten me."

Yet Cornaro and others wrote books to persuade men to try to be old; and when Rochefoucauld said, "few men know how to be old," perhaps we should not apply a moral meaning only to his words. It is demonstrable that men may live to be very old, and yet not be very miserable. We have many proofs of a green and agreeable old age, "frosty but kindly." Suicide and casualty are, according to not a few philosophers, the only preventive to man's allotted life being a century. "The man who does not die from accidental causes," says Buffon, "reaches everywhere the age of ninety or a hundred years."

According to the same authority, "the duration of life in every animal is in proportion to the time of its growth: thus, man being twenty years growing, lives five times twenty, that is to say, 100 years; the camel is eight years growing, and lives forty years; the horse is five years growing, and lives twenty-five years." The learned tell you the growth does not cease in reality, though it may apparently, until the union of the bones and epiphyses is effected. According to one French writer on the subject of longevity, the first old age in man does not begin until seventy, and continues to eighty-five, and at eighty-five begins the second and last old age—a classification which enables us to understand Sam Rogers' aspiration at ninety, "Oh, for sweet seventy!" Cornaro, though possessing a delicate constitution, contrived to live to a hundred; but then he was in circumstances which enabled him to take the utmost care of himself, and he took it. Nor was he like an old miser, unwilling to part with a valuable secret for nothing; he tells us how he lived to be old, and that was by moderation and taking care of himself. He apostrophises temperance in a manner to delight a teetotaler—temperance, however, not only in eating, but in drinking. "Divine sobriety, friend of nature, daughter of reason, sister of virtue!" he exclaims; "it is the root of life, of health, of joy, of skill, and of every action worthy of a noble mind."

Adam, in Shakspeare's "As you like it," who was fourscore, accounts for his old age to sobriety—

"Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty;  
For in my youth I never did apply  
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood:  
Nor did not, with unbashful forehead, woo  
The means of weakness and debility;  
Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,  
Frosty, but kindly."

Cornaro's diet:—Twelve ounces of solid food, and fourteen ounces of wine each day, were, for more than half a century, all his nourishment; and he took this quantity in two, three and four portions. This agreed with him so well that, during the whole of this half century, he was ill only once or twice, and then because he allowed himself to be persuaded into increasing his supply. "This is what I live upon," he says; "I eat bread, mutton, partridge, &c. All such articles of food are suited to old men, who, if they are wise, will be contented with them, and not seek for others." "Few would believe," said M. Reveillé-Parise, "how far a little health well managed may be made to go!"

But people might say that Cornaro was an Italian gentleman of fortune, who could afford a residence for summer and another for winter, and have what food he liked, and that agreed best with him, whatever it cost. We, however, have more instances of poor people living to a great age than rich people. Old Parr was a poor man, a husbandman by occupation, in Shropshire, and he lived to be one hundred and fifty-two, and then only died from accident. Become famous for his extreme old age, King Charles I. desired to see him. He went to Court, where they feasted him, and eating too much, he took a fit of indigestion and died. When Harvey dissected him, all the viscera were found to be perfectly healthy, and the cartilages in no way ossified. He was twice married, taking his first wife at eighty, and his second at a hundred and twenty-two. By the first he had two, and by the latter one child. Nor was this all his offspring, for at a hundred and five, Parr had an illegitimate child by one Catherine Milton, for which he did penance in Alderbury Church. We learn that his diet, up to the last year of his existence, was principally skimmed milk cheese, coarse bread, small beer, and milk and whey, which he had often, and used to rise and eat by night as well as by day; and yet upon this food, and up to a hundred and thirty years of age, he performed various kinds of agricultural labour, even to the thrashing of corn. By the way, the Parrs were a long-lived family, for there was a Robert Parr who died in the middle of the last century, aged 124, and his father 109, and his grandfather 113. Henry Jenkins, who died in 1670, aged 169, was, during the last century of his life a fisherman, and often swam in the river after he was a hundred years old.

Indeed, so far from poor circumstances being supposed to shorten life, the oldest man of modern days was a Hungarian peasant, named Petratsch Zartan, who died in 1724, aged 185 years. In a brief memoir of him, we read:

"Petratsch Zartan, died 1724, aged 185 years. He was born in 1537, at Kofroeck, a village four miles from Temeswaer, in Hungary, where he lived 180 years. A few days before he died he walked, with the assistance of a stick, to the port house of Kofroeck, to solicit the charity of travellers. His sight was much impaired, but in other respects his faculties were tolerably good. A son, at the time of the old man's decease, aged 97, was born of his third wife. Being a member of the Greek Church, the old man was a strict observer of the numerous fasts established by its ritual, and was at all times very abstemious in his diet, save that once every day, with the milk and the leaven cakes, which constituted his sole food, he took a good-sized glass of brandy. He had descendants to the fifth generation, with whom, after he had passed the age of old Parr, he frequently sported, carrying them on his back or in his arms. Count Wallis had a portrait taken of the old man, a short time previous to his death, as seated in

his cottage. The following inscription is placed under the picture:—"Petratsch Zartan, a peasant in the village Keveretch in the Banat of Temeswaer, in the 185th year of his age. He died the 6th day of January, 1724. His youngest son is still alive, in the 97th year of his age." The age of this poor peasant exceeds that of the patriarch Abraham ten years; of Isaac five years; that of Nahor, Abraham's grandfather, thirty-seven; of Henry Jenkins, sixteen; and of old Parr thirty-three.

I suppose I have quoted quite enough to confirm most people's desire for old age, especially in a country where there is no danger of a man's relatives doing as the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands (according to Sydney Smith) used to do, namely, knock the old folks on the head, and eat them when they grew tiresome, and told the same story over and over again.

Haller, the physiologist, says a man might live not less than two hundred years. Complacency and quiet, according to Buffon, are great aids to longevity; "if we observe men," he adds, "we shall see that almost all men lead a nervous and contented life, and that most of them die of disappointment." In these days of collapsing credit-companies and breaking banks, we may expect only too many illustrations of the great naturalist's theory.

The old-fashioned notion used to be that elderly people should eat a great deal of honey as an article of diet. Sir John Pringle called it "the juice of life." Pythagoras, who enjoyed with a great age good health, also lived much upon it. Let no one use it upon these vague recommendations, for it is known that to people of delicate stomachs it is often injurious. Two persons, named by the author of "Records of Longevity," always sweetened their food with it, viz: J. Hussey, aged 116, and Prince Fluellyn, of Glamorgan, 108. It would be safe to go by Dr. Abernethy's rule of living, and he says: "Never overload the stomach, and eat slowly." Here is Abernethy's diet for those who have not the digestion of an ostrich:—"Breakfast: bread and butter, four ounces; tea or coffee, eight ounces. Dinner: bread and vegetables, two ounces; animal food, seven ounces; light wine or malt liquor, six ounces; water, two ounces. Tea: bread and butter, three ounces; liquids, eight ounces. No STRENGTH. Total, during the day, sixteen ounces of solid food, and twenty-four ounces of liquids." The reader will remember that Cornaro's diet was twelve ounces of solid food, and fourteen ounces of wine.

Possibly after all, however, there are not many who think extreme old age worth striving for—worth taking a deal of trouble to obtain—who are of the same opinion as Northcote, the painter, that life, after the power of labouring with zest has gone, is like keeping the candles lighted in a church after the congregation have left—waste of time, waste of existence. It is not every one that can take the same pleasure in fourscore and ten that Cornaro and Fontenelle did. The latter, who lived to be ninety-five, said the age at which he had been most happy was from forty-five to seventy-five, because at forty-five the condition of life was established, and dreams vanished or fulfilled, so that then really began the season of quiet enjoyment. Southey said: "Live as long as you may, the first twenty years is the longest half of your life." Dr. Cadogan held that the life of man was properly ninety years, instead of three score and ten—"thirty to go up, thirty to stand still, and thirty to go down." "Fortunately there is a tranquillity," to quote Southey once more, "which nature brings with it as duty towards the close of life as induces sleep at the close of day." Be life short or long, remember,