

business; but the errors of aged men amount but to this,—that more might have been done, or sooner. . . . Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home to the full period; but content themselves with a mediocrity of success." Whereas, "Young men, in the conduct and manage of actions, embrace more than they can hold; stir more than they can quiet; fly to the end, without consideration of the means and degrees; pursue some few principles which they have chanced upon absurdly; care not to innovate, which draws unknown inconveniences; use extreme remedies at first, and, that which doubles all errors, will not acknowledge or retract them;—like an unready horse, that will neither stop or turn." I think that it will be granted generally that this description of the virtues and failings of youth and old age are those of human nature. They apply equally to all periods and all countries; and the faults commented upon by Bacon are precisely those against which the young and old should endeavor, so far as possible, to guard themselves.

Yet there is another period of life, which one regrets that Lord Bacon did not see fit to discuss and illuminate with some of his pregnant criticisms—Maturity. Or perhaps this period is itself capable of being subdivided into early and late maturity. The first embraces the third and half of the fourth decades; and is, or should be, comparatively free from the shoals and quicksands of extreme youth and extreme age; especially should we have learnt by experience to discard the rashness and conceit of youth. By the time we have reached the

third decade we shall probably have made so many mistakes that our self-esteem will be distinctly less. "We are none of us infallible," remarked Professor Jowett one day to his class; "not even the youngest among us!" Yet while we are shaking off from us by degrees the fetters of that youthful conceit, which is largely the result of inevitable ignorance,—since we have lived so short a time in the world as to make it impossible to compare ourselves with those better and wiser than ourselves,—yet vigorous life remains in us still. We ought to be growing free from the temptations and perils assailing the young, while those affecting old age are still too far from us to be any source of danger. But Maturity has its late period. It includes the fifth decade and the latter half of the fourth:* a period in which, though we are not exactly old, we are conscious that we are growing old. Even if we are still mentally in our prime, we are not so physically. The joyous blood of vigorous youth no longer courses through our veins. We are past the meridian of life, and I suppose that it is but natural that we should regret it. Now and then, perhaps, at increasingly long intervals, when we are in bracing air on breezy moors or surrounded by frolicsome young folk, when we are away for the Easter holiday—for I think all life seems younger in the spring,—fresh young spirits seem to arise in us, and for the time we forget our years. But the exuberance is but transitory. We return to our normal duties. With the cessation of the holiday has ceased also the revival of the feeling of youth. We are growing old, and we cannot disguise from ourselves the fact.