

reformers, there is some sense in this idea. In itself old age is not a desirable thing. There are accessory circumstances which may render it enviable; but these do not always exist. The tendency is to esteem and honour those over whose heads many years have passed, because we suppose that with the passing of years wisdom has come. "Intellect is the essence of age," says Emerson. The superficial observer sees the snowy locks and wrinkled brow, and takes these as the evidences of that ripened intellect which he is prepared to venerate. But the age of the wise man is to be computed from his studies, not from his wrinkles. The intensity of a life of two-score years may have had richer results than the even tenor of four-score. This is the idea of the old Veda: "He that can discriminate is the father of his father." And is not the man who has worked with every nerve and muscle till fifty, of as much value to society as he who has dawdled out a century? Has he not done more? Does he not know more? And can he not then step aside from a busy life to a deserved rest, leaving his memory enshrined in the affection and esteem of the circle where he moved—leaving a name more honourable far than he whose chief notoriety is from his many years—years which we begin to count, as some one has said, when there is nothing else to count?

The legend of Tithonus does not exaggerate the evils of a physical immortality; and when statisticians assure us positively that more than half the people over eighty years are totally infirm in mind and body, we scarcely feel tempted to desire a longevity that shall take us into the regions of disability. When the prophets of hygiene point us to our blunders, and lay down rules for our guidance like those of Cornaro, or per-

haps more cast-iron still, we are apt to say with the old satirist, "*Longa dies igitur quid contulit?*" What pleasure even in anticipating a comparatively vigorous senility, if we outlive our generation and outlive our usefulness? The grand-children become the men and women who govern the world; and they seldom work harmoniously with the grand-fathers. "Old age for counsel!" But the busy workers have little time to consult old age, and little inclination to follow its advice when adverse. Will the mere fact of having lived many years console Old Age for his physical inconveniences, for his failing powers, for the neglect of his juniors, for the loss of all his friends and companions? Where will the happiness be for the lonely centenarian—

"When the mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has pressed,
In their bloom;
And the names he loved to hear,
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb?"

As he looks on life's busy whirl, so changeless in its activity, its energy, and its vigour, yet ever changing in its forms and modes, so different from what it was when he was young, will he not cry with him of old:

"Yet hold me not forever in thine East;
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground."

Better far to work while there is strength to work and when strength fails to cease from labour, and enter into rest there,

"Where beyond these voices there is peace."