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THE VALUE AND DURATION OF LIFE AND THE ART OF PROLONGING IT.

IN a recent number of the Fortnightly Review, Dr. Robson-Roose gave a very lengthy and practical paper on this subject, from which we take the following copious extracts :

VALUE OF LIFE.

The doctrine that a short life is a sign of divine favor has never been accepted by the majority of mankind. Philosophers have vied with each other in depicting the evils and miseries incidental to existence, and the truth of their descriptions has often been sorrowfully admitted, but they have failed to dislodge, or even seriously diminish, that desire for long life which had been deeply implanted within the hearts of men. The question whether life be worth living has been decided by a majority far too great to admit of any doubt upon the subject, and the voices of those who would fain reply in the negative are drowned amid the chorus of assent. Longevity, indeed, has come to be regarded as one of the grand prizes of human existence, and reason has again and again suggested the inquiry whether care or skill can increase the chances of acquiring it, and can make old age, when granted, as comfortable and happy as any other stage of our existence.

The question whether long life is desirable depends much upon the previous history of the individual, and his bodily and mental condition. The last stages of a well-spent life may be the happiest, and while sources of enjoyment exist, and pain is absent, the shuffling-off of the mortal coil, though calmly expected, need not be wished for. The picture afforded by cheerful and mellow old age is a lesson to younger generations. Elderly people may, if they choose, become centers of

improving and refining influence. On the other hand, old age can not be regarded as a blessing when it is accompanied by profound decrepitude and disorder of mind and body. Senile dementia, or second childishness, is, of all conditions, perhaps the most miserable, though not so painful to the sufferer as to those who surround him. Its advent may be accelerated by ignorance and neglect, and almost assuredly retarded or prevented. No one who has had opportunities of studying old people can shut their eyes to the fact that many of the incapacities of age may be prevented by attention to a few simple rules, the observance of which will not only prolong life and make it happier and more comfortable, but will reduce to a minimum the period of decrepitude. Old age may be an incurable disease, admitting of but one termination, but the manner of that end, and the condition which precedes it, are, though not altogether, certainly to a very great extent, within our own power.

From very early times the art of prolonging life, and the subject of longevity, have engaged the attention of thinkers and essayists; and some may perhaps contend that these topics, admittedly full of interest, have been thoroughly exhausted. It is true that the art in question has long been recognized and practiced, but the science upon which it really depends is of quite modern origin. Many new facts connected with longevity have been collected within the last few years.

DURATION OF HUMAN LIFE.

What is the natural duration of human life? This oft-repeated question has received many different answers; and inquiry has been stimulated by skepticism