

not be appreciated, especially as you can hardly repeat it with the same vim. All this is very aggravating, and the only good purpose that young ladies of the Lillian type seem to be able to affect is to crush some inveterate punster.

Having escaped from Scylla you fall into the dangers of Charybdis in the form of the young lady Miss Marianne. Miss Marianne is one who prides herself upon her self-assertion and her mental powers—she talks didactically upon every subject and tells you that she reads Carlyle and Schopenhauer and Swedenborg; perhaps she is metaphysically or philosophically inclined and will ask your opinion of theories which you never can and never will fathom; and will mention the names of works of which you have never heard, and of the existence of which you would have remained in everlasting ignorance. Oftentimes you will look very wise and express an opinion at haphazard in complimentary blindness only to see her eyebrows arched in pitying disdain. Should you venture to pay her a few compliments you will be stopped with a frown, and when you ask her if she is fond of dancing, she will smile deliciously as she tells you she likes rational amusements, such as reading Smith's Wealth of Nations or skimming the theory of evolution mystified à la Herbert Spencer. She will take very great pains to inform you that she is not as other young ladies are, and is deeply ashamed of their "frivolous twaddle" and lackadaisical sentimentality—she will also tell you that she feels deeply the reproach which is thus undeservedly cast upon her in consequence of their empty-headedness. So that after all your efforts to amuse Miss Marianne you are made to feel exceedingly small.

However, neither of the above are as great trials as Miss Arabella—she is very romantic and sentimental; thinking of nothing but admirers. She will dance through an entire evening utterly regardless of the propriety or of the tired feet of her partners. One good point is that she certainly does her utmost to be agreeable—and loving. She will agree with you in everything you say, even should you contradict yourself half-a-dozen times—but sad to say, she makes very few original remarks herself. She will make a frantic attempt on the first opportunity to talk about flirtations, love and engagements. She is seldom witty, and her "chaff" falls flat, giving you an impression that she is desirous of your making love to her. No matter how much you feel in good spirits and anxious to be conversational, by the time you have made your sapient remarks on the weather and similarly interesting topics, somehow or other silence ensues, and you puzzle your brains as to what you are to say next; you may, if you are very modest, immediately jump to the conclusion that you are a simpleton, and that Miss Arabella knows it. But she is so sentimental that she thinks your feelings are too deep for expression and not a thought enters her mind as to whether she is stupid or not, for failing to supply you from time to time with matter for conversation. She will stand with her arm in yours as complacently as if no such thing as conversation existed, while you in your misery wish you were at home or at the bottom of the river.

Young ladies will say that parties are stupid because young men don't dance or talk, and perhaps it is true.

Geo. Rothwell.

THE SUNSET YEARS.

The story that the world about us and in us has to tell, is one of rise and progress and decay. And the history of the inanimate world (if indeed there be such), together with the history of nations and the history of men,—all speak in the same strain, flinging over the brightest glory of the earth a strange, sad grace and melancholy. Everywhere in life we behold with Hamlet "the pity on't." Why all should fail and fade that once is born, we none of us can say; we can but accept the inevitable. Our heritage is the dust, and our duty, so to live that nobler dust may throng the coming years.

In viewing the individual life (as we may here) descending the other side of the hill, we cannot but be particularly impressed with that strange, sad feeling—that feeling for which we have no name; for over this portion of life the sadness is flung in darker hue. Then it is that the days of the keepers of the house are drawing to a close, the strong men bow themselves, the grinders cease, and those who look out of the windows are darkened. But notwithstanding this, most of us have painted for ourselves ideals of a tranquil and beneficent old age, which we greatly desire to enjoy, and do really hope to attain; that is to say, an old age of serenity and calm joyousness, whose sky is free from the clouds of care,—an old age rich with the experience of years, kind in its sentiments to all, helping and cheering all with timely word and advice, and unmarred by aught of selfishness or prejudice or wilfulness;—an old age wedded in fancy to spending its days under bright skies and 'mid waving wood, 'mid green meadows and by laughing streamlets, 'mid cooling winds and bounteous harvests;—an old age such as the poet saw when he said:

"Though old, he still retained
His manly sense, and energy of mind.
Virtuous and wise he was, but not severe;
He still remembered that he once was young,
His easy presence checked no decent joy;
Him even the dissolute admired, for he
A graceful looseness when he pleased put on,
And laughing could instruct."

And, truly, when at length one is fully reconciled to growing old, nothing can be more enchanting than the anticipation of such a hearty, generous old age. Even to the mind of active, joyous youth, there are few pictures more pleasing to the fancy than that of the ancient man—the snows upon whose head have neither numbed his brain nor chilled his heart—retired from the bustle of life, and sheltered from its dust and heat, and spending the sunset years in watching the sports of youth, and lending the light of a cheering smile to all. So pleasing to the fancy is such a picture, that one would suppose many would attempt to realize it, and that not a few would actually succeed. At first sight, few things would appear less difficult of attainment; but, alas! here again we behold the "pity on't." It is not easy—it is difficult, as Madame de Stael has said, to grow old gracefully.

"Years steal

Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb;
And life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim."

There is too much strife—too much struggle in life to permit many to grow old gracefully. Like he who when a youth carried heavy burdens upon his shoulders, we find ourselves *crooked*, far from graceful when years have passed. A graceful old age! How can we whose minds have been held at tight tension all through the years of life, by the many cords of the world, attain the graceful uprightness which a tantalising fancy depicts? How can the twig, bent by the rude blasts of harsh circumstances, incline as it otherwise would? Ah! here again we have the "pity on't" that the hard struggle of life should so often bend and twist the poor struggler who, under a happier star or a less tyrannous one, might have attained to the serene heights where peace and happiness dwell.

Viewing as we do how in so many instances our early-formed habits and opinions are but confirmed, we are led to ask how we should regard the counsel and injunctions of the aged. In general the advice of old age sincerely given, the young cannot do wrong in following; but there are many exceptional instances. "Great men," says some one in the Book of Job, "are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment. Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." But how often is it so? Not very. How often, rather, does the clear mirror of youth become so cracked and marred as the years pass that naught can be viewed therein aright. How often those who having seen in youth with clear and searching vision evil and abuse and hypocrisy in the world, and having endeavoured with energy and enthusiasm to reform or abolish that evil, that abuse, that hollow pretence,—how often, I say, have they had their arms checked, their aspirations clogged by the bogs and morasses into which they were dragged. And even of those who struggled on in noble endeavour, with high and true intent, how many have faltered and trembled in much fear lest they should have journeyed too far and have reached forbidden ground, and have then painfully and slowly retraced their steps to where the common herd browsed, instead of manfully struggling through the short remaining distance that led to green pastures and softly flowing waters. The Radical of twenty-five becomes at fifty the bigoted champion of Use and Wont, the fierce opponent of urgent Reform; the chivalric and gentle prince becomes the tyrannous and selfish king; the sweet, confiding maiden grows into the haughty, suspecting dame. Various sad reasons explain all this. The strong inducements of selfish interest gradually bring about the change in some; the cares of the world, the pinches of poverty are very heavy and very sore, and he must be very strong who can bear them unmoved. Then, again, the years bring terrors to the old, as night doth fears to a child, and there are few who have been blessed by nature with that elasticity of mind and of body which can prevent the clear thought of youth from becoming beclouded by the trials that surround the lives of men, whether those trials be of prosperity or adversity. The physical infirmity and lessened vigour that, alas! follow in the wake of the years, so powerfully influence the opinions and action of mankind—so modify the outlook into the world, that the bright sun of early days seems ensnathed in cloud; the world looks not so bright; fears are in the way; and the spirit, no longer so buoyant, eager, hopeful—no longer "leaping before"—longs for calm shelter, for quiet, rest, slumber.

That man, I think, is to be counted happy who has so lived in youth that he now lives in age unbound by any shackles; and just as I have seen a river working its way at the beginning of its flow through rocky defiles and tortuous windings, but at length journeying onward, unimpeded in its broad majestic course, to the parent sea, so have I seen the youth manfully buffet the narrowing deflecting tendencies of life and find his reward in a rich, ripe and generous old age.

I think that among the saddest of all sad words which poets have wedded to the theme old age, are those which Macbeth speaks when he says:

"I have liv'd long enough: my way of life
Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf
And that which should accompany old age—
As honour, love, and obedience, troops of friends—
I must not look to have; but in their stead
Curses, not low, but deep, mouth-honour
Which the poor heart would fain deny
But dare not."