

tinguish the language. He began with some shrill tones, and ended with a series of grunts. I looked with profound reverence and pity at the figure before me, "Is this," I said, "what long life means? for which we too often, and mistakenly pray! Is it to linger on, vacant and useless, as in a miserable and endless dream?" My sight grew dim and shadowy; I was looking through the watery lens of a tear. His white beard was still whiter and longer; his nose and chin were yet more pointed, and his mouth and eyes still more sunken. His ears stood out yet farther, and his few white hairs yet thinner and longer. He had now got me in the focus of his vision, and before that glance I felt like one who had violated the secrets of the dead. I bowed low to the *Atomy*, as I passed out of the room, and sought my own chamber at once.

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## CHAPTER II.

The Doctor's mother was a fine bustling old body of sixty,—very charming manners, and full of anecdote and repartee. *Her* mother was ninety—a paralytic old lady, who needed a good deal of attention, and got it. *Her* mother again, had been perhaps something of an old maid before entering matrimony, and was one hundred and thirty. Two generations even beyond this were represented in the Doctor's household. No wonder he said "his family was large." I found among these venerable matrons—not only in this household, but also in others—that up to about the age of eighty, there was little decay of the faculties. From eighty to one hundred, they were more or less infirm. At one hundred and twenty, they were helpless, physically, but often with mental faculties very lit-

tle impaired. From that onward, the process was so slow that it was difficult to assign dates. Just as it has been seen that a piece that once was a cultivated garden, will retain its fertility indefinitely, in the midst of surrounding barrenness and desolation, so I found that those who had cultivated their minds in youth, not only had a happier and more attractive old age, but retained their faculties far longest. A woman of fashion was imbecile at ninety, while a cultivated mind kept its possessor in a green old age to one hundred and twenty.

The old people, on the whole, were very kindly used. If a man ill-treated his father, he knew what was coming. He would be treated just so by his own son. One would think the Highland story was invented here—where a son cut a blanket in two, put half of it round his father's shoulders, and turned him from his door. Turning from watching the old man tottering down the glen, he found his own little son had folded up the other half-blanket, and was hiding it away. "What are you doing with that blanket?" "I am laying it away; and when *you* get to be an old man, I'm going to put it round *your* shoulders, and put *you* away, just as you did grandfather!" And the man ran after his father and brought him back. The "moral" of the story, at least, was certainly indigenous here.

I had been accustomed to think that one of the greatest trials of this life was the death of children: these little human blossoms, too early kissed by frost—but remembered evermore, with tenderest regrets. And I used to wonder how a mother, so tender in her feelings, so loving and so gentle, could bear such sorrows at all—did not fly away at once, and seek the skies! I did not know it was the sorrow itself that *made* her so gentle