

GROWING OLD.

"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon: and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation/ Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served

God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem; " Luke 2: 25-38.

These two persons were advanced in years, one of them eighty-four, the other perhaps only a little younger, yet time had failed to leave any of those marks on their character which so often blemishes the lives of the old. Possibly their eye-sight had grown dim, for even a prophet is not free from the infirmities of age; But the vision of their soul was undimmed/ Their interest in the human race was as fresh and green as in the days of their youth.

"Oft am I by women told,
Poor Anacreon! thou grow'st old;
See, thine hairs are falling all,
Poor Anacreon! how they fall!
Whether I grow old or no,
By these signs I do not know;
But this I need not to be told,
'Tis time TO LIVE, if I grow old."

It takes an unselfish spirit to follow the human race with keen interest when we know our own sun is fast sinking. An old person who stops at the end of life's journey to build a bridge, or to plant a tree, or to pray for a blessing on the head of a little child surely loves others besides himself. How happy the lives of these two saints. The gay prattle of a little child, the care-free laughter of youth brought no stinging regrets that theirs was passed, for they were still young. Their youth was as eternal as the tree of life itself, for it had been renewed day by day at the fountain of everlasting life. Let those who think

to perpetuate their youth by any other means BEWARE, for without this anointing old age will surely claim its own!

Another beauty in the lives of these saints is that the disappointments of life had not marred their faith. We cannot conceive of a life as long as theirs without its disappointments. Perhaps from their youth, if not from early childhood, they had waited anxiously for the coming of the Messiah. Who can say how many times bright hopes were shattered, perhaps at times with bitter disappointment. Like the youth in Hawthorne's story of the "Great Stone Face, perhaps they looked for the Christ in every noble face that passed their way. Every beautiful child, every venerable countenance, whether of gray haired priest or shepherd, stirred in their hearts a hope that at last the King had come. They were too wise to refuse Him even if He had appeared in the guise of deepest poverty. So, no doubt the faces of the wayfaring men were scanned with the deepest interest and with an ever living hope. But no disappointment could crush a faith resting on such a promise as theirs. As each face showed some imperfection, some lack of divine beauty or wisdom promised by the prophets in the Messiah, hope whispered, "This is not He, but He will surely come."

The very blemishes that marked the lives of those who excited their hopes only served to increase the desire to see Him Who was to be the perfect image of the Father Himself. So, at the time of His coming, their hope was as fresh and green and their faith as strong as the day God gave the promise that they should see the Messiah before death.

How can we come to a happy old age? The happiest old age is one that closes like Elijah's in a whirl-wind of glory. Happy indeed is the man who comes to the last days of a good old age like Moses, with his eyes undimmed and his physical strength not abated. It is a blessed old age that keeps even the faculties of the mind untarnished, though the eyes grow dim and the natural strength fail. A man who can close his life's work like Wesley and Fletcher, in the full employment of the task which God gave him, even when weak in body, can truly say, "The Lord has been good to me." I have no doubt that many would prefer to end it as Paul and Stephen ended theirs than in the enforced idleness of an infirm old age.

But we cannot choose for ourselves. Whatever men may, we are not master of our fate, so far as the infirmities of this life are concerned. Our lives are disposed of by a power greater than ours. Some of us may have to sit in old age as helpless as Lazarus, and like him, eat the crumbs that fall from other men's tables. The temple often fails when the eye of the soul is undimmed. In the case of the two old persons before us it seems that their active life had ceased.

However, there is much that we can do in youth that will sweeten the closing hours of our life. No doubt many of those whose minds fail them in old age do so because the higher faculties of the brain were dulled and blunted by non-use. Like a limb that is never used it perishes away. It is appalling how so many young men and women let their

God-given faculties rust out. Like the slothful servant who hid his talent away in a napkin, they come to the close of life in a hurry to return the precious gift to God. Many a brilliant cultivated mind has come to a babbling old age because of an intemperate youth. Some of the most acute sufferings of old age are also known to be the result of intemperance. The homely old adage, "If you dance, you must pay the fiddler," has been verified a thousand times in a suffering old age.

But whether your life closes like that of Moses and Elijah, or like the two servants of God here before us, or in the helplessness of Lazarus's affliction, don't let it rob you of that broad sympathy for the human race that is the heritage of youth. Whatever may be the strength of your body or mind, you can still take the little ones in your arms and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God in their lives. If you have this when your sun is setting you can see the dawn in the Eastern sky that marks the coming day of their lives. Don't let old age steal away from you your faith in the human race. And above all, don't let it dim the eye of faith in a life beyond the grave.

It is doubtful if there is a more acute problem facing society today, unless it is the ever present problem of youth, than the problem of old age. Every day, and on every hand, we hear the charge of the middle-aged that society has denied them, not only a fair share of the blessings of life, but in some instances has almost de-

neid them a right to live.

In some respects the problem is the same it has always been. Men are, and have always been, much like trees. When a tree is young you can transplant it to a new soil. You can even carry it far away to a climate that is different to the one that brought it to life. After it is transplanted you can uproot it and plant it again in a new place. But there comes a time when the tree must send its roots deep into deep into the soil. It must anchor itself firmly to the ground the gives it life. After this it is death to uproot it.

In some respects it is so with men. In youth we find it easy to change our environment. New languages, new customs and new trades are easily learned. If we lose our hold on one profession we can soon adopt another, and, in time, become as proficient in this as the old one. But there comes a time in the life of a man when he, too, must send his roots deep into the soil that gives him life. There comes a time when he must grasp with a firm hold the livelihood that supplies his daily bread. We generally find at this age the facility with which we once learned a new trade gone. To uproot a man after this is death or a withered and decaying old age. In this respect the problem is the same it has always been.

But there are some problems of old age today of which history holds no parallel. Changes occur so fast today they sweep us off our feet. Many a man, who ten years ago held a good position because of some trade or profession he had learned- and learned it well- today finds himself

without a livelihood and too old to grasp another. If there is anyone more deserving of sympathy than an orphan child, it is an industrious man who has spent half a lifetime learning to make a certain commodity, and then learns that the world no longer needs it. Surely it takes more than human courage to face life's problems again with a cheerful spirit after such a bitter disappointment. Yet, there are literally millions of men facing life today with this serious handicap. Some of these are barely past middle life and have several small children depending on them for support. Like "Frecles", the one armed boy, they are crying, "Give us a chance, and we will work as hard with one hand as other men do with two."

In other ages of the world the idle and helpless old consisted mostly of those who had, by their thrift and industry, earned a competency in their early life, and stopped at the close of life to enjoy it in peace and quiet, or those who had flitted away their summer like the grasshopper, and in old age were thrown as a charge upon society. But today we face the appalling problem of an army of men idle before they reach old age. They have nothing laid by, for most of a man's earnings in the early years are given to the livelihood or profession that gives him support. It is hard for us who have not experienced it to realize the bitterness of a man's disappointment, after he has spent twenty years learning to make one article, to find a ten thousand-dollar machine that can do the work of a hundred like him, or to find the society has out grown the need of the article he had learned to make.

There is perhaps no greater danger threatening civilization today than the restless daring spirit of those who forced into idleness against their will. It is society's problem and cannot be ignored. Old age pensions will not solve the problem. What these men want is a chance to work and live as other men do.

It may be too early yet for the greatest thinkers to offer a particular solution for this problem. Like most of the difficult problems of human society it may be solved in some unexpected way. It may be we will have to build schools for these men and women, just as we have built schools for the youth, where they can learn another profession or trade. But it is not too early to offer a general solution for the problem. We know that, whatever the solution, it will call for a broad sympathy and sacrifice on the part of capital as well as those gainfully employed. We cannot drive these men from the gates of our cities, as the soldiers of Louis did the French peasants, and tell them to go home and starve peaceably. If we go on ignoring their complaint we may have as bitter a day to repent of our cruelty as that monarch did.