

"THE BEST is yet to be"

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Ingredients for a happy
and useful old age

by G. Kennedy Tucker
Superior, Brotherhood of St. Laurence

We hear and read a great deal today about the tragic lot of elderly people. That we are faced with a major problem cannot be denied and many methods have been advocated as solutions.

However, little has been said about the question of elderly folk developing themselves.

This book shows in a variety of ways how such a development is possible. Father Tucker writes of the difficulties and obstacles to be met, some of which are peculiar to the aged. But he also suggests ways of overcoming these difficulties. The booklet describes a new approach to life for those men and women who are often thought to be "too old." It is not intended as a complete answer to the problem, the many diversities of which we are not yet fully aware. The booklet does show that being elderly in years does not necessarily mean that one cannot look forward to a happy and useful future.

My thanks go to my friend and colleague, Barry King, for editing this publication and for saving me the tedious task of proof-reading. I thank too my friend Ernest Henthorn for his work on the cover.

-G.K.T.

THE BEST IS YET TO BE

By

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Preface

"THE BEST IS YET TO BE"-For me these words of Robert Browning epitomise the hopes and expectations of all, as they journey through life. The higher one climbs the more extensive the view. The longer the road the greater is the experience for the miles that lie ahead.

For too long, old age has been regarded as a downhill process. Such is true no doubt in regard to the physical part of man, but it should be far from true in regard to man as a whole personality destined in some way to play his part in the affairs of the world so long as life lasts.

Because of the ever increasing number of years added to man's tenure here on earth, and, because of other major factors, the question of old age has become one of the great problems with which mankind is faced. If the problem is to be solved there must be radical changes in our thoughts on the subject. This is specially the case with those who are growing old and those, who, although old, have sufficient mental capacity to follow new trends of thought. It is perhaps more specifically the case with those whose responsibility it is to assist the aged to make full use of their physical, mental and spiritual powers and so enable them to be useful and happy to the end. Dr. Trevor Howell in his "Our Advancing Years" says *"Old age is a challenge to our time. Upon our success or failure in meeting this challenge will depend the future of the history of mankind on this planet."*

I write with the hope that I can possibly make some contribution toward bringing about the radical changes in thought that I believe to be so necessary. I hope, too, that I can enable more people than is the case at present to realise the need of a definite policy on the subject about which I write. The Australian Government is prepared to give substantial financial aid to organisations caring for the aged.

It is only by careful study and much thought on the part of all concerned, that the best use can be made of this aid. In writing, my main object has been to make myself understood rather than to seek literary perfection. I feel sure that with advancing years, I must have acquired some of those faults which I advise should be avoided. Perhaps, if I saw myself as others do I would not have written this book at all! I remember, however, that it is only of quite recent years that any attempt has been made to prepare for old age before it becomes a reality. Perhaps if I had been born ten years later, there would be less danger than there is of those who know me quoting those words of nearly 2,000 years ago - "Physician, heal thyself."

In spite of what I say about myself I may be in a position to give some advice on how to live to a happy and useful old age. I have reached that stage myself. Because of this, I should be able to give advice in regard to the avoiding of some of the mistakes made, due to the lack of guidance in the past on the question of how to prepare for old age. I like to think that I am still of some use. I most certainly am happy and no part of my life has been more satisfying than the present. Because I find life so interesting, I want to live as long as possible.

I write chiefly from the experience gained during the last ten years, while living and working amongst those no longer young. The lessons I have learnt during this period have been most valuable and I am more thankful than I can say to those who have taught

me. Bearing in mind the vital part, whether it be for good or for evil, that aged people can play in this particular period of the world's history, I believe that the group amongst which I work and live and of which I am part, is the most important of all groups. We constitute the link between the period when people were allowed to drift into old age without any real attempt being made to prevent them from becoming burdens to themselves and others, and the

present period, when medical and mental science is doing much to save the elderly from becoming liabilities to the community. Much depends on our reaction to the present trend of thought. We can be compared to guinea-pigs in the scientists' laboratory. Doubtless the guinea-pig in itself is of little value, but from the point of view of the scientist, it can be of immense value. The same applies to the "70 thereabouts" age group: By making the best use of experience gained, by co-operating with those who would guide them in matters physical, mental and spiritual, they will not only enrich their own lives, but they will play an important part in solving a very pressing problem.

When I first began the work which now absorbs so much of my time and interest I fondly imagined that old people only needed a home of their own. How crass was my ignorance! The building of homes was just the beginning. I now try to show how much more is required, if old age is to be the happy and useful experience it should be.

I have made no attempt to deal with those whose minds have become sluggish and have reached what has been called "the carpet slipper stage", those who seem well content to potter along the way that leads to the cemetery. These good people may be content, but they not only fail to participate in the special form of happiness that old age should bring, they also exaggerate the country's social and economic problems. Valuable efforts are being made to help this particular group of people by those specially trained for the purpose. This work should continue, but I believe that for most of us the emphasis should be on keeping people from becoming mentally sluggish, rather than trying to do the work that can only be done by experts.

I believe that old people should be allowed to continue, irrespective of age, in their particular calling as long as they can be of service there. This may mean an adjustment of working hours for the aged and it may be contrary to some trade union principles. The wage earner, however, must learn to realise that it is he who has to carry the burden which useless old

age constitutes. The longer old people can be of use to the community the lighter will be that burden on the community.

I should advise those (and this should be everyone, because it is everyone's concern) who are interested in the subject about which I attempt to write to read the book already mentioned-"Our Advancing Years" by Dr. Trevor Howell. I deliberately refrained from reading this before attempting my own work lest I should be tempted to discuss matters which can only be the province of those with the knowledge and experience of Dr. Howell. My book is written from the point of view of an ordinary man with some experience of his subject. But I feel I must strongly emphasize the importance of that subject. It is the concern, not only of those who are elderly, but also those who have to carry the present burden, and those who will have to do so in the future. The aim is to educate everyone. The burden must continue to increase until all are alert to the vital necessity of doing something about it.

The aged of the present time are under a great debt of gratitude to those who, by study and research, have done much to promote physical well-being and add years to life's expected span. Unless, however, similar advance is made in the mental and spiritual spheres, the work of the research worker will only add to the difficulties of mankind in the years to come. It is estimated that some 70,000 people in Australia reach the age of 65 each year. Such is a frightening thought unless all available resources are brought to cope with the situation. There are many world problems about which the ordinary person seems able to do little. To my mind the problem of the aged does not come under this category. Hence this publication.

-G.K.T.

Carrum Downs,
Victoria.
July, 1956.

The Body

ALL MEMBERS' of a team in a tug of war need not necessarily be of the same weight. They are chosen for the particular contribution each can make to the welfare of the team as a whole. The man of eleven stone can be of greater value, than his fellow of thirteen stone, for the former may have the greater staying power. Each is chosen by the Team Master for his individual worth.

As long as we live, we should regard ourselves as members of a team. When we are no longer of use to the team here on earth we will be transferred elsewhere. As long as we continue to pull our weight, we can know that we are of equal value irrespective of age or physical capacity to any other member of the team. In the past people have been inclined to regard the aged as mere "has-beens" no longer able to pull their weight. There must be a radical change in this method of thinking. In a properly ordered Society a person on retirement should be free from financial anxiety, but on the other hand he should know that material wealth in itself cannot ensure lasting happiness and satisfaction. This book can only be of value to those who have grasped this fact, or are trying to grasp it.

A man should so think and live that he may know, that on retirement from the occupation in which he has been absorbed over the years, he will be able to live in reasonable comfort for the rest of his life. Luxury can have a deadly effect on those who indulge in it, and the longer it is indulged the greater is the effect. In society as now constituted the old age pension is necessary and in some cases it should be very much higher than it is, but with a more sane and more enlightened outlook on old age than that

which prevails at the present time, the pension should become increasingly less necessary.

Because people are living for ten to fifteen years longer than they did in the past, and, because there are indications that life's span will be still further extended, it is of vital importance that everything possible should be done to enable all to be of use as long as life lasts. This fact should be fully realised by the young and the middle-aged, for, unless radical and immediate changes are brought about in regard to the method which now prevails in the treatment of the aged, they will constitute a burden greater than any community can carry in a few years' time.

That we can expect to live longer than did our fathers is due, to a large extent, to the advent of new drugs and other scientific discoveries. Scientists enable us to live longer, but, unless we are ready to learn how to make the best use of their research, it would have been better for all concerned had the drugs, which now add to life's span, never been discovered. We must, of course, make every use of the help given us by doctors, but we must do something more than merely take their drugs and follow their directions in regard to our physical well-being. Merely to do this would mean that, to an ever increasing extent, the old would become burdens on the young. We say we do not want to *be* burdens on others. We must do all in our power to see that we are not. It is for us to remember that until we change our thinking in regard to old age the young of today will have to carry the old for ten or fifteen years longer than was the case a few years ago.

It is not a pleasing thought, but there is something the mentally alert aged can do. It is not often that old people are given a pioneer task to do, but in this time there is such a task for them. The thought that we can not only avoid becoming burdens to others but that we can at the same time demonstrate that the old can play their part to the end should add a new zest to life. *The mentally alert aged of the present time can be of tremendous importance not*

only to their own generation. but to those who come after.

Preparation must be made for all pioneering undertakings and the final objective must always be borne in mind. The pioneer task before the aged involves not only the education of themselves for the task, but also their readiness to help those whose responsibility it is to provide for their welfare.

All who would take part in this thrilling task that lies ahead must fully comprehend that man is of a threefold nature. Looking at this matter merely from the human point of view: if one part can be regarded as being of less importance than either of the others, it is the physical; although all are part of the whole, each should be examined separately.

Doctors tell us that old people are no more prone to disease than young people. They are in fact immune to many complaints to which the young fall victim. It is true that, if an elderly person contracts a disease he has less resistance than has a younger person. On the other hand, drugs at the present time enable the elderly to recover rapidly from ailments that a few years ago would have caused death. Pneumonia, for instance, has lost most of its terrors. The same applies to heart complaints and other such ailments. Surgeons can now perform what, in times gone by, would have been called miracles. The operating table, even for the aged, need not be feared as in the past. These facts should inspire all to co-operate to the full with those who are doing so much to add to the comfort and well-being of the people whom they serve.

To co-operate to the full the aged must face certain facts, and they must follow those facts to their logical conclusion. The aged cannot expect to live at the same high pressure as they did, nor work for as many hours. Some have to wear spectacles, other hearing aids, some again can only walk with the aid of sticks. With the further advance of science which we can expect and when all become conscious of the importance of right preparation for old age, these

aids will become less necessary, and perhaps in time there will be no need for them. Scientists each in their own field are working with this objective. In the meantime it is for those who have to avail themselves of these valuable aids to do so without any feeling of self-pity.

Without fussing, about self, reasonable precautions must be taken to maintain the vigour of life. Only the foolish would fail to follow the instructions of a doctor in matters of diet and the like. Without becoming self-indulgent a reasonable amount of rest must be taken during the day.

A nap in the afternoon is good for some, although it should not become a habit unless necessary. Matters which may appear to be of little importance can often be of great importance. With advancing years joints are apt to become stiff. It is not as easy to get out of a chair as it used to be. But it is better not to use the arms as a leverage until necessary. A sort of sagging process seems to develop. To counteract this as far as possible, the shoulders should be kept erect and the head high. Very old people are inclined to shuffle as they walk. This should be avoided as far as possible while still mentally alert. The self-discipline in deliberately trying to overcome the manifestations of declining power is good in itself. To retain as far as possible the outward signs of youth with a feeling of self-confidence helps to avoid that "getting old" feeling.

We should remember, too, that if physical defects can be accepted without complaint other faculties become of greater value. This is the law of nature. We must, however, work in with nature and abide by her rules. Old age most certainly brings its disabilities but against these it brings that very valuable thing we call experience of life. This is something the aged have over the young, providing, of course, that they use it in the right way.

It is to be hoped that the time will come when specially trained people are set aside to give instruction to the aged as to how best they can happily pull

their weight as long as they are allowed to remain in the team. In the meantime, it is for us to do the best possible and we can do this by keeping guard on ourselves and avoiding those peculiarities, which we ourselves used to criticise when young. We must try to see ourselves and hear ourselves as youth sees and hears us. Of course, youth is often over-critical and we have to face the fact that we are no longer young, but this does not mean that we should allow ourselves to drift into those habits which tend to make us old before our time. At the same time we do not want to be people who have to be "put up with" by those younger than ourselves. Old people are by no means the only ones who can be boring to others, but the tendency to be so is more pronounced in the old than in the young.

It is well for us to remember this, when 'we feel inclined to complain of the disabilities that come with advancing years. We should thank God that the trials of youth are no longer ours; and our thanksgivings should give us courage to endure without complaint any of the many forms of pain that are common from the cradle to the grave. Dwelling on and bemoaning personal sufferings not only multiply the trouble but distresses those who have to listen to our tales of woe.

Talking about our ailments, or the giving of an "organ recital" is not only very boring to those who have to hear it; it also tends to exaggerate the suffering. The same applies to the "giving in" to the temptation of allowing people to fuss about us and pamper us. I remember a dear old friend whom I attempted to assist up some steps. "Thank you," she said, in very firm tones, "I can manage by myself." That attitude enabled her to live to a ripe old age, independent, happy and with a young outlook on life to the end.

At the age of eighty she was very scornful of those who thought her too old to make long interstate journeys by herself. We may not all be able to retain the vitality of this somewhat remarkable person but the more we try in a sensible way to do so the richer, healthier and more worthwhile life will be.



The Mind

EACH PART of man's threefold make-up is so closely related to the others, that in dealing with the matter a certain amount of overlapping is inevitable. This will be realised, as the subject is discussed under its various headings.

Some of us are of the worrying kind but there is, often something we can do about it. It is even beneficial sometimes to recall the worries we had in the past. We shall find that many of the fearful things we thought would happen did not happen at all, and, if some actually occurred, we were given power to overcome them. God does not give power in advance. It is only in accordance with present needs. It is good for us in times of worry to tell ourselves that, as we got through "bad spots" in the past, so we can hope to do in the present.

If there is something we can do about a problem that is causing mental distress, let us do it; in trying to relieve the situation the tension is lessened. If, however, there is nothing we can do about the matter, we should try to put it out of our minds. This we can only do by putting something in its place. We should switch to something different. Get hold of a nurseryman's catalogue and pick out plants we would buy if we had plenty of money; re-plan in our minds the garden, or think about what we could do to help relieve the worries of others. Get on to those unanswered letters, but don't refer to the worries in mind.

In periods of worry prayer is of great value. Our prayers, however, must not merely be that the thing feared may not materialise, but that we may have power to face up to and cope with it if it should become a fact.

In spite of any attempt to forget by doing something constructive, the worry may come back, but it should be remembered that the longer we can refrain from thinking about it the less it will worry us. Worry, of course, is lack of faith in the Power, which controls the destiny of all. The faith of some is such that it can overcome all worries. The rest of us can only do our best, but the more we try with the means in our powers the greater will be the peace of mind.

To have peace of mind we must have security. Living as we are in an insecure world, we shall never have this in its entirety, but those who have the welfare of the aged at heart should do all that is possible to give this sense of security. It is right for the aged to have a comfortable little home of their own, but this will not be of value unless the resident can feel that there is some place to which he can go should he be unable to care for himself and his home. And that place must not be an institution, but in some way must compare with the home vacated. The fear of the old-time Benevolent Homes helps to fill such institutions. When old people are given a sense of security a big step has been taken towards solving the problem. Youth, with its sense of adventure, likes movement and to a large extent youth allows the future to look after itself. This is not the case with the aged who like to have a sense of permanence, like to put down roots which will last as long as life lasts.

Elderly people attempting to maintain houses beyond their capacity must realise a dreadful fear. With these people there is always insecurity. What is to become of them when they are no longer able to care for themselves? The same applies to those living in rooms from which they may be evicted at any time. There is also the fear of those who foresee the reality of becoming burdens to relatives and friends. If it were only from the economic point of view, everything possible should be done to free people from this, perhaps the greatest of all fears, which many elderly people are now compelled to endure. For the attain-

ment of a sense of security which is of such vital importance, the cutting of roots is often necessary. This may be an painful process but like any other necessary operation it may well mean a new lease of life. There must, however, be no fear of continual movement from place to place.

Experience has proved that when elderly people have a feeling of security they can in very many cases care for themselves until the final call comes. We cannot think that the acute suffering which is the lot of many old people is the Will of Almighty God. In many cases the lack of a feeling of security in the early stages of old age is the cause of much misery later. All must live and work for the time when the unnecessary suffering now so often associated with the last days of life has ended. The fact that there is such a thing in the world is something that has to be faced and overcome. It may be that in dealing with it and striving to banish it we work out our own salvation. Pain most certainly can be turned to good use but that does not mean it is good in itself. There was pain for the mother who bore us but her pain was forgotten "for the joy that a man was born into the world." As we see it at present there will continue to be pain from the cradle to the grave. Interest in life and the endeavour to meet and overcome pain as far as is possible should, however, enable us to subliminate it.

As we advance in years we are affected by physical defects in our age group, but every period of life brings its compensations for difficulties that have to be faced, and, as far as possible, overcome. Many suffered agonies from toothache in their childhood but long before passing the seventieth milestone had no further distress of this nature. We are all too prone to regard the past as "the good old days", but we know perfectly well that in some respects they were not good.

In past years there was little thought of the close connection that exists between body and mind. The realisation of this fact today helps us to live longer. So that we can make the best use of this knowledge

certain truths must be known to us. It is now acknowledged that an active mind does much to maintain an active body. If the mind becomes sluggish it is unable to cope with defects in the body which in some form are common to all stages of life. A sluggish mind is unable to co-operate with those who care for the body. A doctor is hampered in his work, when the mind of the patient is unable to comprehend instructions given. This is specially the case with mental patients, but it is true to a degree in all whose minds are not mentally alert.

That the close connection between body and mind is not always fully understood is one reason why business and professional men on retirement seem to go downhill so rapidly. The very fact that their minds have been active for a long time constitutes a particular reason why they should not be allowed to become inactive. To avoid this rapid "downhill" process the mind must be kept alert. Something more is needed than such activities as pottering round the garden, doing the wife's shopping or chatting with friends at the club. These methods of spending the latter years of life may appear to satisfy, but in the subconscious mind (which has a far greater effect on us than we often realise) there is no real satisfaction, and no hope of being able to face the future with the knowledge that "the best is yet to be". If a man really can do no more than "potter", let him not worry about it. There are, however, countless numbers of men and women who could do more. It is these we have in mind. Of course, pottering in the garden and the like can be very valuable forms of recreation; but to retain the mental alertness that promotes physical fitness and helps to check infirmities which come with advancing years, one must undertake really worthwhile activities. The conscious or unconscious feeling that one is not really worthwhile hastens us toward the time when we become burdens to ourselves and to others.

A man may say on retirement and after many years of strenuous activity that he is entitled to spend

the rest of his life as he pleases, with no thought of others. It is true he is so entitled, but the adoption of such an attitude is a very bad form of insurance for the years to come. A man who retires at the present time at the age of sixty-five can have expectation of living for another twenty years. An eminent scientist recently stated that in a few years time apart from accidents, man's expectation of life may well be a hundred years. This may be a cheering thought or on the other hand, a very fearful one. Unless we are to avail ourselves of scientific and other discoveries, the lot of those who will have to carry countless thousands of mere "potterers" will be grim indeed. This need not be the case, however, in a community where people are prepared for old age. Both the aged themselves and those whose task it is to care for them must share in this very necessary preparation. The time has come when only those adequately trained should be entrusted with the important duty of enabling the elderly to make the very best of their latter years.

As I write these lines an old man, who for some years past, as a labour of love, kept my garden in order, lies a-dying. The lawn is covered with leaves. Someone else now will have to sweep them away. His job may not have been very important; it was only "pottering about", but it was pottering for someone else rather than merely for himself, and that is the point to be emphasised. So that they can be really satisfying and worthwhile, activities must be wider than the individual. The old fellow, to whom I refer, would have been dead long since but for his selfless activities, or worse, he may have become burdensome to himself and others. He was at his job only a few days ago, and his end is now near at hand. He knew he was needed, not only by myself, but by all in the little community of which he is part. He knew he was "pulling his weight". It was this knowledge that enabled him to keep going, and keep going happily in an inspiring way to all with whom he came in contact. This in itself made his latter years worth-

while. I shall miss him; we all shall. I shall miss him, not only because my garden will remain untidy until I have time to do something about it, but also, I shall miss that radiant countenance, that happy little chuckle of his, those words of appreciation for any little thing I could do for him in return for the very big things he did for me.

There have been others in this happy little community who have gone on their way happy and useful to the end. There have been nurses, more gardeners, helpers in various spheres, and those who have been of tremendous value just because of their cheerful dispositions and their continued desire to be helpful to others. They were happy, because they brought happiness to others.

There are some in this community who cannot be useful, and in consequence they are not very happy. They cannot be useful, because they were not encouraged when they were still mentally alert. They were allowed to live just for themselves and this brought on the feeling that they were no longer of use-just among the has-beens. In some cases the effect may be a miserable old age.

It would seem that settlements or villages for the aged constitute one of the answers in providing for the needs of elderly people. To make the best use of this method only those mentally alert should be admitted. In other words, the people who realise the good they themselves may derive from living in a community where all happily and readily work for the good of the community as a whole. They learn to know that their work, however humble it may appear, is constructive and worthwhile. It is this realisation that gives life real meaning and enables it to be a happy and satisfying experience.

With the financial aid now available from the Federal Government, village and settlement projects could do much to prevent many from drifting into an unhappy and useless old age. This scheme, however, is not for all. The majority of retired people could and should live in their own homes, but, where-

ever they live, they must find worthwhile occupations. The Church, for instance, is in great need of the service of men and women who could render valuable and worthwhile work; a service which would enable folk to know that they are of value and in that sense indispensable. There are innumerable tasks for workers in the social service sphere.

The doing of such tasks not only gives a zest to life, but helps to keep alive that creative urge, which is part of man's make-up and must be allowed to develop, unless he is to fail and die before his time. For many men and women the most fruitful period of their lives has been since retirement. They have gone on their way with "the best is yet to be" as their slogan.

It is sad to think of the many latent powers going to waste. There are so many worthwhile tasks waiting and so many people missing the happiness that old age could bring. For the sake of the aged themselves and for the sake of those coming after, all that is possible must be done in order that the valuable contribution the elderly can make to the welfare of the community is not lost.

Old age brings with it the tendency to live in the past. It is good to be able to chat with contemporaries of friends and happenings of the years gone by, but old people must be alert, lest they become tiresome to those who are still young and who have little or no interest in matters which are so very interesting to their elders. To dwell too much in the past causes the mind to become sluggish. It is the present and the days to come that really matter. Unless this is remembered our days of usefulness are numbered.

To keep the mind alert we must keep abreast of the times. Here something more than the reading of sporting or social columns is needed. The right kind of literature is of great importance and especially that which inspires the reader to link the knowledge gained with the needs of the times. To remain mentally active is so important and demands that we live and think in the present. Those who have "the pen

of a ready writer" might well employ their talents in furthering worthwhile causes and after due study express their opinions on one of the many problems which await solution. The experience which age alone can bring has a great value in this direction.

Those who are now aged, should ever remember that in their time and generation the world has drifted into a very sorry state. The outlook for those who come after is far from bright. To do something to make the lot of the coming generation a little easier could be a work for all, irrespective of age, who are alert to the needs of the times and are doing their utmost to supply those needs. This thought should be of special appeal to those who have children and grandchildren and others specially dear to them.

As often as possible I visit a friend of 95 years of age. He is almost blind and he sits in a chair all day. In appearance he is an old, old man. His speech is such that at times it is difficult to follow. Often my visits are after a long and somewhat tiring day and I am weary. I go feeling somewhat sorry for myself, but I come away refreshed and inspired. Such is the experience of all who have the privilege of visiting this grand old man. It would appear that he spends much of his time, neither in dwelling on the past, nor in thinking of his great disabilities, but in thinking of the problems of those who visit him. I hasten to add that he never gives any indication of the identity of the visitor to whom he refers when he speaks of these problems. His mind is too alert for that. I have known this friend for fifty years and he has taught me much, but never such valuable lessons as in this "his finest hour". Very few of us can hope to emulate this inspiring veteran but to bear such examples in mind should help us to reach the kind of old age which should be our objective.

In the same way that apparently unimportant things concerning our physical well-being are of great importance, so the same applies to our mental well-being. Clothes and personal appearance can be of great consequence. It has been said-"A sure sign

that you are slipping is gravy on the waistcoat!" As far as is possible and within reason, it is good to follow the fashions of the times. Wearing a hat or collar which was "the thing" fifty years ago does not help one to live with the times. The bright, cheerful frocks of elderly 'Women of today not only add colour to the scene but add colour to life for those who wear them. Care in regard to dress and personal appearance is good, but to ape youth when no longer young is as foolish as it is undignified.

Fortunate are those who are surrounded by the beauties of nature, for the song of the bird and the 'glory of flowers and trees should bring cheer to the hearts of those who would learn the lessons nature can teach. The ear must be attuned to appreciate the value of the laughter of children. Children can be somewhat trying at times, but, should they come to be regarded merely as noisy little brats, they in their turn will regard the aged as nothing more than grumpy old fogies, instead of people to whom they can look for wisdom and tolerance. Old people can be very trying, especially to the young.

It is important to retain, not merely tolerance, but the respect and understanding of young folk, for they can be of such help. Contact with youth can give something of that vitality to those whose youthful days are long past. Care, however, must be taken not to make undue demands on the attention and time of the young. For, in so doing, that 'Which is given loses its value. Complaints of neglect and the pouring out of woes by aged relations or friends repel rather than inspire those who visit with kindly interest. Demands for more visits can only cause them to become mere duty visits with the loss of their true value. The attitude of the aged should be such that visitors come, not because they have to come, but because they enjoy coming.

People in all stages of life can be boring to others. With advancing years the tendency is increased. All should not only try to see themselves as others see them, but also to hear themselves as others hear them.

In telling of an event the aged often begin with a long preamble which can be boring in the extreme. This is especially trying to those who have not acquired that leisurely attitude towards life which comes with advancing years. The oft-told and long-winded story can be very trying. To guard against these natural tendencies enables one to be a welcome companion rather than an old person, who has to be borne with patience.

The elderly should be glad of any kindly note of warning that may be given by those who help them to retain as far as possible the attributes which are so essential for a happy and useful living.

Our thinking is of tremendous importance and the younger we are when we realise this fact, the greater will be our opportunity of thinking aright when old age catches up with us. If we continually think that the infirmities common to old age are becoming more pronounced, this will hasten the time of their coming. We must learn to accept any waning of physical power. Our attitude of mind in this respect enables us to rise above those defects, if we remember that in many cases the really worthwhile things of life have been done by people with severe physical handicaps. They have learnt to turn their weakness into strength. What they have done, all can do to some extent.

Instead of bemoaning the fact that we are getting old it would be well for us to think of those, older than ourselves, who are still pulling their weight. Sir Winston Churchill, when well advanced in his seventies, did more than any one individual to save the civilised world from destruction. Now at the age of 82, he is still virile and active. One cannot think of him slipping into "pottering old age".

When more psychologists are available we will have more assistance in the matter of right thinking. Many, valuable books, however, such as H. A. Overstreet's 'The Mature Mind', are obtainable and should be read by those who would use their minds to keep them young, although they are physically old. St. Paul, a psychologist nearly 2,000 years in advance

of his time, stressed the value of right thinking. By following his teaching and the teaching of those who proclaim the same principle, although adopting a different technique, we can go on our way with hopeful expectation of enjoying life to the full, until the final call comes. As I look through my window, I can see the English trees in my garden in their autumn glory. The leaves will soon fall to the ground, but even then they will be beautiful. To me they are a demonstration of the Will of God for us all. For us, who are in the autumn of our days, they should be an inspiration to enable us to go on our way rejoicing.



The Soul

THERE WAS a time, not so very long ago, when only a few realised the vitally important link there is between the soul, the body and the mind" and, that if one part is in need, then all parts are in need. Before this fact was realised, the visit of the parson to the sick room or hospital was at times unwelcomed by doctors and nurses. It was feared that the priest might be regarded by the patient as a forerunner of the undertaker. The priest or minister, alert to the importance of his task approaches the sick as a humble representative of the Healing Christ-mindful of the promise of Him whom he would serve when He said "I am come, that ye might have life and have it more abundantly."

That the attitude of the medical profession in regard to the vital part religion can play in the healing of the sick has changed, has been demonstrated in recent years. The authorities are desirous of having specially chosen chaplains working in close co-operation with physicians, surgeons and all who minister to the sick. But it is not only in the case of sickness, whether it be physical or mental, that the important part the soul can play in man's well-being must be realised. It most certainly must be realised by all, who would with confidence look forward to that special happiness and peace of mind which old age should bring.

For various reasons many elderly people find themselves in their latter years out of touch with the Church and for them religion means little or nothing. Some are inclined to adopt the attitude that, because they have got along so far without religion, they can do so to the end; but the last days of life can be very painful and wearisome, and it has been proved beyond all doubt that religion can do much to ease the trials

old age can bring. There are some fortunate people who can say at the age of seventy that they have never had to consult a doctor. How foolish of them, when the infirmities of old age begin to manifest themselves, to refuse the aid of medical science that does so much to banish pain and make life worthwhile. It would be no less foolish to adopt the same attitude in regard to matters spiritual. In the latter years when life should be more tranquil than in the days of youth, there is an opportunity for the individual to examine for himself the question of religion, because religion can make all the difference between a really happy old age, a reasonably happy old age and a miserable old age:

There are countless books to be read on the subject. It is one of the duties of ministers' of religion to impart knowledge on that subject in which they have been specially trained and in which they should be experts. They should be consulted in the manner in which doctors are consulted. Religion is not the only door that opens the way to a rich and happy old age, but it is a door that must be opened, and entered, if one is to realise the truth of those words "the best is yet to be". Browning may have been an idealist, but without an ideal man does not get very far on any road worth following.

The higher the ideals, the higher will be the summit. With advancing years life has to be taken more easily than was the case in the past. This is inevitable and we can do nothing about it. It is, however, only true in so far as the body is concerned. With the mind and soul it is quite different. We have found that with advancing years the mind could become lazy and new ideas are less easy to assimilate than when young, but in the last chapter we saw how this could be overcome. As mental exercises are needed, so are spiritual exercises.

It should be remembered that religion is a thing that simply cannot be ignored. It is part of the "make-up" of man. Some try to ignore it by adopting the agnostic (don't know) attitude. That, of course, does nothing to stifle the religious instinct which is

in us all. The same argument applies to the rationalist, for no reasoning can stifle natural instincts. Some drift on through life without thinking of the spiritual part of their make-up, but whatever method is adopted in trying to ignore the matter, that natural craving, conscious or unconscious, is still present. There can be no real peace of mind so long as no effort is made to supply that for which the soul longs.

All periods of life bring their special temptations. The very fact, however, that old age has more freedom from the temptations common to youth, in many cases so devastating, gives an opportunity to develop these spiritual powers latent even in the most unspiritual of us. As soon as a tree stops growing, it begins to deteriorate and will ultimately die. The same applies to the spiritual part of man. Because the body has begun to deteriorate and will ultimately die, does not mean that the soul will do the same. In fact, it is intended to do just the opposite.

There are few more deadly states than smug self-satisfaction. This is especially dangerous in regard to spiritual matters, and is the particular temptation of old age. Old people no longer do some of the wrong things they did in the past (forgetting that in many cases they no longer do them, because they no longer want to do them). There is no cause for self-satisfaction here. They go to Church and say some kind of private prayers. These duties may be performed just as a matter of habit; again no cause for self-satisfaction. The feeling that one is as good as one should be, that there is no further call for effort is a sure indication that spiritual decay has set in.

Those who have been Church members all their lives often are inclined to think they have all the knowledge the Church has to teach. To adopt this attitude is to display ignorance of the Church's function, which is to impart knowledge applicable to every stage of life's journey. The period here on earth should be regarded as a lifelong school in which training is given for the fuller and richer life in the here-

after. The latter stages of life bring with them special opportunity to re-learn old lessons and to learn those lessons which can only be known when the trials and stresses of youth and middle-age are over.

Books on religion should not be dull. The best are intensely interesting, and are by no means only for the learned. The Bible, of course, is the best book of all, and is the one book which must not be neglected. Reading, as has been pointed out, does much to keep the mind alert. This is specially the case when reading about the most important of all subjects. Some people may not fully understand the teaching of the Church to which they belong. An easily understood book on the matter might well reveal truths of which one had hitherto been ignorant. Such truths might give a new and happier outlook on life, and make the burdens more easy to bear than they otherwise would have been.

There is another matter with which we should never be satisfied-our prayers. The more tranquil period of life brings with it an opportunity to pay more attention to prayer than perhaps has been possible in the past. To ask for things for ourselves is the least important part of prayer, although it has, of course, its importance. The more we pray for others, the greater and more full life becomes for ourselves. In praying for others we forget ourselves and that is so important, for we are all inclined to think too much about ourselves and our needs. To do so is another of the special temptations of advancing years. Unless this is avoided, we tend to become sorry for ourselves and so we lose much, if not all of the joy of living. Should we fall into the temptation of feeling sorry for ourselves, it would be well for us to think of all those who are in worse difficulties. Thoughts of them will lead to prayer for them. Efforts are being made to provide for the needs of those many old folk, who for too long have been neglected. These efforts should be supported by all who believe in the power of prayer. Then there are starv-

ing millions in various parts of the 'World. That cause, too, should be supported in this, the best way of all, for those who cannot help in material ways. And there are the unfortunate people of the slums and the sick ones. The causes for which we should plead are limitless. You cannot pray for all, you can pray though for those whose cause appeals to you most.

We must not, of course, neglect our friends and dear ones. The children, the grandchildren, the nephews and nieces, and their children. As far as possible these folk should be prayed for by name. Many find it useful to keep a little book with a page for each day of the week in which is written the names and causes for which they desire to pray. By this method none are forgotten and each day becomes one of special importance. By our prayers we can help individuals play their part in advancing good causes and can do something to rouse the conscience of those who seem to be indifferent to the sufferings of others. In doing these things we bring great blessings to ourselves.

All branches of the Christian Church have their sacramental systems. Some lay greater stress on the sacraments than others. All should be faithful to the teachings of their particular Church in this respect, because the Church has so much to give. It is for us to accept what is offered. In the Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper, as it is called by some, many find their greatest comfort and inspiration. If this means of grace has been neglected in the past, the present is the time to avail ourselves of it. Old age often brings with it a sense of loneliness. This is sometimes caused by the fact that, one by one, dear ones and special friends have slipped away. This loneliness can to a large extent be overcome. By our thoughts and our prayers we can in a very real sense keep in touch with those who have gone before. In the natural desire to have some form of concourse with dear ones no longer here in the flesh, there is danger of our becoming morbid and perhaps accept-

ing -some form of what is called spiritualism and from which no lasting comfort can be derived.

There is no danger, however, if our thoughts and our prayers are in accordance with the teaching of the Church since its foundation. In a sense our thoughts are our prayers. In this way we can remember those whom we have "loved long since and lost awhile". By remembering their virtues, their love for us and our love for them, we learn to realise that they are not so very far away after all. We think of those who have gone before as being in the nearer presence of God. By our prayers we, too, so far as is possible in this life, come into the presence of God and, in remembering dear ones in our prayers, something of that connection for which we long is realised. Many have found that they have derived more help from those on the other side since their passing than they did when they were present in the flesh. This has only been possible by prayer for and thought of on the "other side". The names of special ones recorded and reminded in the little book and referred to on the anniversary of their death makes that day, not one of sorrow, but a day of joy. But, of course, it is tinged with sorrow, for we miss them and shall miss them until reunited in the sphere to which we all hope to attain.

As long as life lasts there will be periods of sadness, there will be anxieties and fears and there will be loneliness and loss, but all these can be used for good. We must, however, care for the body God gave us for our period here on earth and we must keep that wonderful thing called the mind alert and active. Above all, we must care for the part of us which we call the soul, the real "I", that which is destined by the Creator of all for the place where all sorrows shall be turned into joy. With this thought in mind we can go on our way helpful and being helped, enjoying to the full that special peace and happiness that old age can bring, and realising to an ever increasing extent that "the best is yet to be".

An Experiment in the Working

THE IDEA was conceived some twenty years ago. It was during the dark days of the depression... It was considered that unemployed men, with families, old aged pensioners and others who did not find it necessary to live in the City would be better off in the country where land was cheap and inexpensive cottages could be built. Under such conditions adults could engage in gardening, poultry raising and other such pursuits which would give them an interest and at the same time augment the unemployment "dole" or meagre pension. The conditions prevailing in the country would be of great advantage to the children who, because of the poverty of their parents, were compelled to live in undesirable surroundings.

During the years prior to World War II many scores of families were cared for on the 45 acres of land at Carrum Downs some four miles from Frankston and hundreds of children were given opportunities which would not have been theirs had they stayed in the City. All who lived on the Settlement did not make the best of the opportunity offered, but it was an experiment well worthwhile and one which paid big dividends in human lives.

It was only towards the end of the war that it came at all possible to provide for the needs of the aged. Although much knowledge has been gained since those early days, certain principles have been maintained from the outset, and these have been based on the natural desires and needs of the average old person. The majority desire a place they can call their own. This is specially the case with women who, during most of their lives, have managed their own homes, doing their own cooking and shopping. They have taken a natural pride and interest in this work. Something is lacking in a home unless it has a garden, so in the planning there has always been room for

individual plots, so that trees, shrubs, and flowers could be grown. There are, however, no fences.

Companionship is essential for happy living, and companionship in one's age group is desirable. Without being in too close proximity one to another our homes are not isolated. It is good to know that a neighbour is near at hand in the case of illness and other emergency. All have whistles which can be used to attract the attention of those living nearby. These are of great psychological value. In the early days our cottages cost no more than £250. These consisted of bed-sitting room, kitchenette and bathroom with verandah. The majority of these have now been improved and of recent years the cost of a cottage for one person has risen to approximately £1,000. The first cottages were somewhat primitive and, because there were so few residents, a certain amount of loneliness was experienced. Even at that time, however, far more people were desirous of joining the community than we could accept.

As desirable as is the home of one's own and as great as is the satisfaction of caring for it, there is always a fear at the back of the mind of the aged person regarding his fate when no longer able to care for himself.

In order to give the sense of security which is essential to happy and useful living, and in order to provide for those who might need some assistance with their domestic duties, two blocks of flatettes, each containing six units, were built. Provision has since been made for a further sixteen such units. These consist of bed-sitting room, kitchenette and other conveniences. Residents go to a common dining-room for the mid-day and evening meals. The services of a nursing sister are always available.

As the numbers increased the need of something in the nature of a hospital became apparent. This was provided for by members of the Melbourne Junior Chamber of Commerce, who themselves built and furnished it in every detail. Although having accommodation for only four patients, it served its purpose

for three years. Then a building accommodating eight patients was erected. The original building is now used as nurses' quarters.

The requirements for useful old age include, not only independence, security and companionship, but also activity. Activities must be in addition to those necessary for one's own well-being. The feeling that one is of importance to the community of which one



is a part is of immense value. A great amount of the work of the community is carried out by the residents themselves. In some cases a small remuneration is given, but satisfaction comes not so much from money received, as from the knowledge that one is still of value, an important co-worker in a worthwhile enterprise. Many hundreds of pounds worth of plants have been propagated and planted out in the gardens common to all. Large numbers are sold to visitors. Valuable assistance is given in the hospital by elderly nurses and others with necessary experience. The catering staff is largely composed of those who devote a few hours a days for this essential service.

All the furniture in the large and well-equipped community centre was manufactured in the joinery shop staffed by men of the "seventy and over" mark. An up-to-date and well-equipped store has been built up from a tiny beginning by another "seventy and over". She is assisted by a staff of those approaching her own mile-stone. The planning and preparing of jumble sales, the sorting of waste products, the entertaining of visitors, dances and other entertainments are all part of those activities which do so much to promote physical, mental and spiritual well-being. The big event of the year is the "Village Fair". The proceeds go, not to the community of which the workers are part, but to another branch of the work conducted by the Brotherhood which is responsible for the whole. Herein lies the "Fair's" great value.

The experiment as a whole has proved successful and the time and energy expended well worthwhile. Perhaps the most important part of the venture has been the valuable experience gained on the question of how best to use the last years of life. All who would join an enterprise such as is here outlined, should do so while still mentally alert and should be ready to join in community living by goodwill rather than by rule. There has been and there still is a tragic touch associated with the experiment.

We are unable to accept those many hundreds from all parts of the Commonwealth who would become members of the community. Many of these have financial assets and could make valuable contributions in service and experience, but they cannot be accepted lest the personal touch should be lost. Experience has shown that the number of residents should not exceed 150. It is hoped that similar communities of happy and useful old people will be established in all parts of the Commonwealth, thereby a very valuable contribution could be made towards hastening the time when old age is no longer the tragedy it so often is at present, but is as it should be, a happy and exhilarating experience.

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