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# Cicero's Cato the Elder: Or, a Treatise on Old Age

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## CICERO'S CATO THE ELDER:

OR,

### A TREATISE ON OLD AGE.

*Translated by L. M. for his Father, aged 77.*

Father TIME is not always a hard parent; and, though he carries for none of his children, often lays his hand lightly upon those who have used him well: making them old men and women inexorably enough, but leaving their hearts and spirits young, and in full vigor. With such people, the gray head is but the impression of the old fellow's hand, in giving them his blessing; and every wrinkle, but a notch in the quiet calendar of a well-spent life.

[*Barnaby Rudge.*

Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty:  
For in my youth I never did apply  
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood;  
Nor did not, with unbashful forehead, woo  
The means of weakness and debility.  
Therefore my age is as a lusty winter—  
Frosty, but kindly.

[*As You Like It. II. 3.*

### CICERO ON OLD AGE.

#### I.

[In a brief Preface, addressed to his friend T. Pomponius Atticus, Cicero says that he feigns the following discourse '*de senectute*,' to have been uttered by the elder Cato, (Cato the Censor,) in a conversation with two young men of great promise—Lælius and Scipio: the same Lælius, whose 'mild wisdom' is mentioned by Horace;\* the same Scipio, who afterwards overthrew Carthage, and acquired the surname of Africanus the Younger. He was also called Æmilianus, after his grandfather, Paulus Æmilii, who fell in the disastrous rout at Cannæ.†

\* '*Mitis sapientia Læli.*' Lat. 1., Lib. 2., v. 72.

† History scarcely presents a nobler character, or a more touching fate, than those of Paulus Æmilii the Elder. Forced into battle against his better judgment, by his rash and arrogant colleague, he did all that a leader or a soldier could, to avert defeat, and roll back the carnage. When Hannibal's might could no longer be resisted, and the shattered remains of the Legions, with Varro at their head, were flying in dismay towards Rome, Æmilii, covered with wounds, was seen, sitting upon a stone, in the very track of the pursuing enemy. Friends and servants passed without knowing him; disfigured and blood-stained as he was, and bowed down with anguish and despair. At length a young Patrician recognized him, alighted from his horse and entreated him to mount and save himself for the sake of Rome. But Æmilii steadfastly refused; and, notwithstanding the young man's

Cato is represented by Cicero as refuting the various imputations commonly thrown upon Old Age: *first*, that it withdraws us from the pursuits of active life; *secondly*, that it enfeebles the body; *thirdly*, that it robs us of the pleasures of youth; and *fourthly*, that it is rendered melancholy by the near approach of Death. Cato's answer consists partly in denying that the alleged evils are peculiar to Old Age; and partly in proving, that even if peculiar to it, they do not necessarily make it unhappy.

Should Cato be thought to speak too learnedly or elegantly for his homespun character—Cicero suggests—it may be ascribed to his tincture of Grecian literature; to which, late in life, he devoted himself.

The supposed time of the conversation is about 148 or 149 years before Christ.]

#### PERSONS IN THE DIALOGUE.

MARCUS PORTIUS CATO, the Censor, (aged nearly 84.)	
CAIUS LÆLIUS,	} Young men.
PUBLIUS SCIPIO AFRICANUS, the Younger,	

#### II.

*Scipio.*—Cato, Lælius and I habitually admire your consummate wisdom in all respects, but especially, your never seeming to be oppressed by Old Age: a burthen so unwelcome to most of the aged, that they declare it heavier than Mount Etna.

*Cato.*—My young friends, what you marvel at is very simple. Every age is burthensome to those who have no resources within for a good and happy life; but he, whose enjoyments are all of the soul, regards nothing as an evil, which Nature makes unavoidable. Foremost in this class, is Old Age. All wish to attain it; yet all, having

tears, obliged him to mount his horse again. Then rising up, he said—"Go, Lentulus, and tell Fabius Maximus, that Paulus Æmilii followed his injunctions to the last: but was overcome, first by Varro, and afterwards by Hannibal." Lentulus had not gone far, before he saw the aged consul surrounded and cut down by the Carthaginian cavalry—striking at them till he died. Well did he earn the tribute paid him in the undying strain of classic minstrelsy—

Regulum, et Scauros, *animæ que magnæ*  
*Prodigum Paullum, superante Pæno,*  
Gratus insigni referam Camæna.

[*Hor. Od. 12, Lib. I.*

The grateful muse with louder tone shall sing  
The fate of Regulus—the Scaurian race—  
And Paulus, 'midst the waste of Cannæ's field  
How greatly prodigal of life!

[*Francis.*

attained, disparage it: so fickle and perverse is folly. "It has stolen upon them," they say, "faster than they expected!" Who made them expect falsely? Does age creep faster upon youth than youth upon childhood?\* Besides, how would their load of years be less, at eight hundred, than at fourscore? A spent life, however long, can minister no soothing, no solace to dotage. If you admire my wisdom, then—and would that it were worthy of your esteem, or of my own surname!†—it consists merely in following and obeying as a deity, that best guide, NATURE. She would hardly have mismanaged the last act of Life's drama, like an awkward poet; after having disposed the other parts skillfully. But a closing scene there must be: a time to wither and fall like wild berries and the earth's fruits, in their ripening season. And this a wise man will bear meekly: for, to act otherwise—to struggle against Nature—what were it, but to war with Heaven, as the Giants did?

*Lælius.*—Well, Cato,—as Scipio and I hope, or at least wish to become old, you will do us a great favor by teaching us now, beforehand, how we may best bear the increasing weight of years?

*Cato.*—Willingly, Lælius: and particularly if, as you say, it will be agreeable to both of you.

*Scipio.*—Yes, if it will not incommode you,—since you have accomplished a long journey, which we too, are commencing, we desire a view of the region you have reached.

### III.

*Cato.*—I will do my best. I have been present, when contemporaries of mine—for "birds of a feather flock together"—nay, when persons of consular dignity, C. Salinator and Spurius Albinus, complained of lost pleasures, without which, they deemed life a mere void; and of con-

\* Cicero here may have had in his mind's eye the words of Plato, [*in Axiocho*—*λαθον ὑπεισηλθε το γηρας*—"Old age, unseen, has stolen upon us." And Juvenal, [Sat. 9.] still more probably had this passage of Cicero in view, when he wrote those exquisite lines—

"Festinat enim decurrere velox.  
Flosculus angustæ micræque brevissima vitæ  
Portio: dum bibimus, dum sarta, unguenta, puellas  
Poscimus, obrepit non intellecta senectus."

But is not Cicero wrong in saying (or making Cato say,) that old age creeps no faster upon youth than youth upon childhood? Certainly, to all human experience, it seems otherwise. Each successive year of life appears briefer than the preceding one. The flight of Time, like the movement of a body falling freely, gathers new velocity with every additional space it traverses.

† Cato, from *catus*, *prudent*.

temptuous treatment from those who had once used to court them: I thought they misplaced the blame. For, had it been chargeable to Old Age, the same ills would beset me, and other old people,—many of whom I have known wax old without a murmur—who were not sorry to be freed from the chains of appetite, and experienced no slights from their acquaintance. In truth, all such complainers should blame their own characters and not their years. Men of moderation, not peevish or ill-natured, find old age easy and peaceful: but a fretful, or a savage temper, makes every time of life unhappy.

*Lælius.*—This is all very true. Yet an objector may remark that, upon you age sits lightly, because of your wealth, dignity and varied resources—a lot which few can enjoy.

*Cato.*—That undoubtedly is something, but by no means all: for, to Old Age is applicable what Themistocles answered, in some dispute with an inhabitant of Seriphos—who alleged that Themistocles had acquired glory by his country's greatness, not by his own: "Most true! I should never have been great had I been a Seriphian; nor would you, if you had been an Athenian." So, in extreme want, age is no trifle, even to the wise; and even amidst abundance, it is burthensome to the unwise. The old men's best panoply consists in virtuous qualities and virtuous habits. These, cherished through a long life, yield wondrous fruits; not only because they never fail us, even at the grave's brink—though that is no trivial recommendation—but because the consciousness of a well spent life, and of many good actions, is preëminently delightful.

### IV.

In my youth, Qu. Fabius Maximus, who recaptured Tarentum, though quite aged, was no less dear to me than if he had been young as I: for he had a gravity softened by courtesy, and age had not changed his manners. Indeed, my devotion to him commenced when he was not very old, though advanced in life. At a great age, he waged war as actively as in youth; and his patience tamed the young exultation of Hannibal—as our friend Ennius finely sings:

"Sole chief, whose wise delays won victory back  
Brooking a coward's name, that Rome might stand!  
For this, shall higher glories grace thy fame."

By what masterly vigilance and address did he retake Tarentum? Salinator, who had lost the town and fled to the citadel, boastfully said to him in my hearing, "Fabius, I was the means of your recovering Tarentum." "Certainly," retorted Fabius, smiling, "for if you had not lost the place, I never should have recovered it."

Nor was he less great in civil affairs, than as a warrior. In his second consulship—Spurius Carvilius his colleague being a tame nonentity—he withstood, as long as possible, all the efforts of the demagogue tribune, C. Flaminius, to parcel out the Picenian and Gallic lands, against the Senate's will. And when augur, Fabius had the boldness to declare, that good auspices attended every enterprise which was undertaken for the public safety; and that the omens were always adverse to bad movements. In that great man I knew many illustrious traits; but none more admirable than his demeanor at the death of his son Marcus, who had been a consul of no small renown. His eulogy on that son is in all hands; and when we read it, how despicable seems every philosopher in the comparison! Nor was Fabius great only when abroad, and exposed to the public gaze. Within himself, and in domestic privacy, he was greater still. What diction! What sentiments! What knowledge of Antiquity! What skill in the laws of Augury! And, for a Roman, what literary attainments! His memory treasured up every thing: not our own history only, but wars between foreign nations. Greedily did I feast on his conversation; as if haunted by a presentiment, that on his death I should find no other teacher.

## V.

And why do I say thus much of Fabius Maximus? Why, to shew you how absurd it is to call an Old Age like his, unhappy. All men, however, cannot be Scipios, or Maximuses, to recall their stormings of cities, their land and sea-battles, their campaigns and their triumphs. Yet, there is a mild and placid close, to a life that has been pure, tranquil and refined: a close, like Plato's—who died writing, in his 81st year: an old age like that of Isocrates, who tells us that he wrote his book entitled *Panathenaicus*, in his 94th year: and he lived five years afterwards. His master, Gorgias of Leontium, completed 107 years, never flagging in his studies or toils: and when asked how he could bear to live so long? he replied, 'I have no fault to find with Old Age.' A noble answer—and worthy of so wise a man! For silly people charge their vices and defects upon Old Age. But not so did Ennius, whom I spoke of just now, and who compares his own advanced life to that of a generous and successful race horse:

"The gallant courser then, victorious oft  
In proud Olympic fields, worn down with years  
Now covets calm repose."

The last years of Ennius, you may well remem-

ber. For the present consuls, Titus Flamininus and Marcus Acilius, were chosen in the 19th year after his death; which occurred in the consulship of Cæpio and Philip. I, that year, aged 65, advocated the Voconian Law\* with sound lungs and a loud voice. Ennius, at three-score and twelve—for he attained that age—bore those two burthens, poverty and old age,—as if they were pleasures.

Attentive consideration discovers to me four pretexts, for supposing age to be unhappy:—1. That it withdraws us from the business of life. 2. That it enfeebles the body. 3. That it takes away nearly all our pleasures. 4. That it verges upon Death. Now let us see what justice there is in each of these allegations.

## VI.

"Age draws us away from the business of life!" From what business?—from such as requires youth and strength? Are there, then, no employments for the old, which call only for MIND, regardless of corporeal infirmity? Was Fabius Maximus an idler, then? Or was Lucius Paulus;† your father, Scipio, and my noble son's father-in-law? Were those other veterans, Fabricius, Curius, and Coruncanus,‡ idlers and drones, when they were saving the Commonwealth by their wisdom and their influence? Appius Claudius was old and blind also: yet he, when the Senate seemed inclined to peace and a league with the victorious Pyrrhus, boldly uttered, among other stern sentiments, that which Ennius repeats in the well known verse—

"What fatal error warps your staggering minds,  
All nerv'd before with fortitude and wisdom?"

That speech of Appius is yet extant.¶ He delivered it 17 years after his second consulship,

\* Voconian Law, [*Lex. Voconia*,] enacted that no one should take, by the will of a deceased man, more of the estate than went to his natural heirs. It was passed A. U. C., 584. Cooper's note to Justinian's Institutes, 515.

† Paulus Æmilius, who vanquished Persius, king of Macedon. He was the son of Æmilius mentioned in the note to Section I, who died at Cannæ.

‡ Coruncanus was (A. U. C. 474) consul along with Lavinus, who was defeated by Pyrrhus. Curius, surnamed Dentatus, was thrice consul. He finally defeated Pyrrhus, and drove him out of Italy. See more of him, Section XVI. It is of him Horace speaks—"incomptis Curium capillis Utilem bello."

¶ A commentator quotes the commencement of this celebrated speech, from Plutarch's life of Pyrrhus: "Hitherto I have regarded my blindness as a misfortune; but now Romans, would to Heaven that I were deaf as well as blind; for then I should not have heard your shameful counsels and resolves, so ruinous to the glory of Rome!"

which was ten years after his first; and before this, he had been Censor. He must have been very old, therefore, in the war of Pyrrhus; as indeed, tradition represents him. Those, then, who say that old age has no share in the business of life, talk nonsense; like him who should affirm that a pilot has no hand in guiding a ship, because others climb the masts, run about the decks and bail the hold, while he sits calmly astern, holding the helm. True, he does not perform the offices of younger men; but he does what is far more important. Great affairs are managed not by corporeal strength or activity; but by prudence, weight of character and wisdom—which age, far from taking away, even increases. I have been soldier, military tribune, lieutenant-general and consul, in a variety of wars: do I seem to you idle and useless now, because I no longer command armies? I counsel the Senate what wars to wage, and how to wage them: I denounce hostilities in advance against Carthage, our inveterate foe, whom I shall ever dread until she be utterly destroyed.\* May the God's reserve that glory for you, Scipio!—the glory of completing the unfinished exploit of your grandfather! This is the thirty-third year since his death: but all ages to come will cherish his memory. He died just before I became Censor, and nine years after my consulship, during which he was chosen consul the second time. Had he lived a century, would he have repined at being so old? He then practised no longer the bold sally, or the active leap, nor used the sword or javelin. His weapons were reason, wisdom and judgment; the possession of which by old men, (*Senes*), caused our ancestors to term their chief council, the SENATE. The Lacedæmonians, like us, call their principal magistrates *SENES*, or old men. Look widely abroad—you will find the greatest states to have been overthrown by the young, and upheld or restored by the old: as in the play of Nævius the poet, it is asked and answered—

“Say how your mighty state so quickly fell?”

—“A swarm of upstart blockheads,—stripling babblers—Wrought the ruin.”

Rashness is ever a trait of youth; and prudence, of age.

## VII.

But “the memory is impaired.” I believe so,

\* It is well known, that long before the third and last Punic war, Cato harped incessantly upon the indispensable necessity to Rome, of destroying Carthage. He used to close every speech, no matter upon what subject, with an exclamation which has become proverbial—“*Delenda est Carthago!*”

if it be not exercised, or if the possessor is naturally dull. Themistocles at one time knew the name of every Athenian citizen. Think you, that when he grew old, he commonly greeted Aristides as “Lysinachus?” I not only know the present generation, but I knew their fathers and their grandfathers: nor do I fear any loss of memory by reading epitaphs;\* for, in doing so, I regain my recollection of the dead. I never heard of an old man's forgetting where he had buried his treasure. He remembers everything that really interests him; who are his sureties—who his creditors, and who his debtors. Lawyers; Pontiffs; Augurs; Philosophers: what numberless details do they remember!

Old people retain their minds, if they only retain their industry and studious habits: and this truth holds good, not with the renowned and exalted alone, but in the calm of private life. Sophocles composed tragedies until extreme old age; and as he seemed in that pursuit to neglect his domestic affairs, his sons commenced a lawsuit, to have the control of his estate taken from him, as a dotard. At the trial, the old man read to the judges his latest tragedy, *Œdipus Coloneus*, and asked them if that seemed the work of a dotard? The judges at once discharged him. Did age silence Homer, or Hesiod, or Simonides, or Stesichorus?†—or Isocrates, or Gorgias, whom I mentioned, just now; or those princes of Philosophy, Pythagoras, Democritus, Plato, or Xenocrates, or Zeno, or Cleanthes, or the stoic Diogenes, whom you have seen at Rome? On the contrary, did not the devotion of each to his favorite pursuit, end only with life? Nay, leaving such divine themes of thought, I can mention rustic Romans of the Sabine region, (neighbors and friends of mine,) who personally superintend every important work on their farms—the sowing, the gathering, the housing. Indeed, this, in them, is no wonder: for not one of them is so old as not to reckon upon living a year, at least. Yet, some of their toils they know can never profit them.

“Trees they plant to shade and feed posterity,”

as one Statius says, in his “Young Comrades.” The farmer, however old when asked—“Whom he plants for?” answers unhesitatingly—“For the immortal gods, whose will it is, that what I received from my ancestors, I shall deliver to my successors.”

\* It was a superstition among the Romans, that to read inscriptions upon tombs, weakened the memory. It prevailed also among the Jews, as appears by Buxtorf's “Religious Customs, &c., of the Jews.”—Barker.

† A vigorous and spirited poet of Himera, Sicily, 600 years B. C. He is commemorated by Horace, in *Od.* iv. 9. “Stesichorique graves Camænæ.”

### VIII.

Cæcilius right truly says, of an old man looking forward to another life—"Age! if you have no other fault, you bring with you this very sufficient evil,—that he, who lives long, sees much that he would rather not see."

But he sees much also, that he likes: and youth, too, encounters many unwelcome things. Cæcilius has another more censurable remark—"I deem the greatest unhappiness of age to be, that it feels itself odious to the young." *Odious!* Agreeable, rather. For as old persons of good sense are charmed, and feel their burthen of age lightened by the respect and kindness of well disposed young people,—so youth delights in the precepts of Age, guiding to habits of virtue. Metbinks, for example, I am as agreeable to you, as you are to me. Besides, you perceive that old age is not only exempt from sloth and languor, but is even busy and energetic: always doing or planning some work, suitable to the tenor of its past life. Need I tell you, that the aged still learn? Thus, we see Solon glorying in his verses, and declaring that he grew old amid daily accessions of knowledge! Thus I, too, near my life's close, have studied Greek; drinking it in, with all the eagerness of my long-felt thirst, to become familiar with the models you now hear me citing. And when I heard that Socrates played on the lute, I wished to do so too; for the ancients learned instrumental music. Certainly, in the language I have labored with success.

### IX.

Nor do I now covet the strength of a young man—for *weakness* was another imputation upon old age—any more than in youth I craved the power of a bull or an elephant. What powers we have we should use, and do our best in every undertaking.

What can be more contemptible than the words of Milo, the Crotonian, who, in his latter years, looking at some champions engaged in the race, is said to have gazed at his own limbs and exclaimed with tears—"These are lifeless now!" It was you, driveller, and not your limbs, that were worthless. They, and your huge frame, not your real worth, made you famous. No such whining ever fell from Spurius Ælius, nor from Titus Coruncanius, of old; nor from Publius Crassus, in our day: men whose words were laws to their countrymen, and whose intellects remained clear till their latest breath. A mere orator, I am afraid, may wane

with age, since his talent is not one of pure mind, but of lungs and bodily strength. Yet, I know not how, the thrilling voice electrifies still, in advanced years. I have not lost it; and you see how aged I am. The old man's discourse is easy, quiet and graceful; often winning him an audience by its mild and polished eloquence. And if he cannot himself exemplify that charm, he can teach it to a Scipio and a Lælius.

And what is more delightful than age surrounded by studious and affectionate youth? We cannot deny that the old are vigorous enough to inform and guide the young—to train them in every branch of duty: and is there a nobler task? To me, Cneius and Publius Scipio, and your grandsires, Lucius Æmilius and P. Africanus, ever seemed blest in having a throng of noble youths around them: nor can any real master of usefulness and excellence be deemed unblest, however much his sinews may have withered. Indeed, decay proceeds far oftener from the vices of youth, than from mere old Age; for early lewdness and intemperance, hand over to age a broken down frame. In the discourse which, according to Xenophon, the great Cyrus uttered when extremely old and about to die, he declares that his last years were no more feeble than his youth had been. I remember that in my boyhood, Lucius Metellus (first a Consul, and then for 22 years High Priest,) enjoyed such vigor in the close of life, as left him no need or wish for youth. I need not speak of myself, though it would be like an old man, and quite allowable to do so.

### X.

Do you not see in Homer, how frequently Nestor tells of his own exploits? He was then at thrice the usual length of human life; and, in thus telling the truth of himself, he incurred no charge of boastfulness, or of garrulity,—since, as the Poet observes, "words sweeter than honey flowed from his tongue." This captivating strain of eloquence called not for bodily strength: yet, the Grecian General-in-chief, wishes often for ten such as Nestor; never, for ten like Ajax. He doubted not, that if he had ten Nestors, Troy would quickly fall.

But to myself again: I am now in my eighty-fourth year. Would that I could make the boast of Cyrus! This, however, I can say, that although less vigorous now than when I was a soldier or a quæstor in the Punic war, or consul in Spain, or Military Tribune four years afterwards at Thermopylæ, under Acilius Glabrio,—still, as you perceive, Time has not entirely crushed or unnerved me. The Senate, the Forum,

my friends, clients and guests, call not in vain for my exertions. I never believed in that ancient and much lauded saying: "Be old soon, if you would be old long." On the contrary: I would rather be old for a shorter time, than be old prematurely. Accordingly, no person ever yet desired an interview with me, which I did not grant him. True, I am not so strong as either of you; but neither have you the powers of T. Pontius, the Centurion; yet, is he your superior? Whoever has a reasonable portion of strength, and exerts it to the best advantage, will feel no great need of more. Milo is said to have walked the race course at Olympia, carrying a live bull on his shoulders. Which would you rather have, strength like his, or a genius like that of Pythagoras? Employ the boon of bodily vigor well while it remains; when it is gone, do not bewail it, unless, indeed, young men should crave boyhood, and the middle-aged should covet youth. Life has a fixed course—Nature, a single and a plain path, to each period its own seasonable character is allotted; so that weakness in childhood, impetuosity in youth, a grave demeanor in settled manhood, and a mellow ripeness in old age, are perfectly natural, and ought to be regularly seen in their due succession. No doubt, Scipio, you know the habits of your grandfather's friend, Massinissa, who is now ninety years old. When he sets out to journey on foot, he never will mount a horse; nor when on horseback, will he dismount. No rain, no degree of cold, can make him cover his head: his body is of the most perfect firmness;\* so that he still discharges in person, all his kingly duties. Exercise and temperance, therefore, can preserve some of one's original vigor, even in old age.

## XI.

And have the aged no strength? It is not required of them. By law and usage, they are exempt from all duties that cannot be performed without it; and so far from being called on to do more than we can, we are not obliged to do even so much. It seems, however, that many old people are so infirm, as to be entirely incapable of discharging any duty whatsoever! But this is a defect of ill health, generally—not of age alone. How feeble was that son of P. Africanus, who adopted you! How puny, or rather how totally wanting, was his health! He would otherwise have been a second luminary in the Roman sky; for, to his father's greatness of mind, he joined

\* *Siccitatem* is the word here translated *firmness*. For Gesner [*Lat. Thesaurus*] says, that "*dryness*" [*siccitus*] "in man's body, is an attribute of strength and vigor."

far greater learning. What wonder, then, if the aged are sometimes weak, when even the young cannot help being so? Old age, my young friends, must be resisted, and its failings remedied by constant exertion. Yes, we must struggle against it, as against a disease. We must pay strict attention to health—take moderate, but sufficient exercise—and use just so much food and drink as to recruit, and not overpower or impair our energies. Nor is the body alone to be relieved, but the mind and spirits much more. For age suffocates these, as the want of oil extinguishes a lamp. And while the body sinks under its lengthened toils, the mental faculties are refreshed by exercise. Cæcilius, when he mentions the 'dotards of comedy,' means the credulous, besotted and depraved, who have the vices not of mere old age, but of a slothful, spiritless, drowsy old age. As wantonness and lechery belong more to young men than to old, yet not to all the young, but only to the profligate,—so, that species of senile imbecility termed dotage, marks the silly, but not all the old. Appius Claudius, when aged and blind, ruled four sturdy sons and five daughters, with his immense household and numerous dependents: keeping his mind on the stretch, like a bent bow, and never languidly sinking beneath the burthen of time. He maintained not merely influence, but absolute sovereignty, over his family. His servants regarded him with awe, his children with reverence, and all with affection. The good usage and discipline of the olden time prevailed in his house. So dignified and respectable is age, when properly on its guard—when it becomingly maintains its own rights, and yields to no undue influence—when, to the last breath, it preserves its due authority. I like a young man who has some traits of age, and an old man with some characteristics of youth. Such a one may be corporeally aged—but mentally, never.

As to my own pursuits, my seventh book of *Origins*\* is now on hand; I collect memorials and remains of antiquity; I write out and retouch my speeches in the great causes wherein I have been an advocate;† compose tracts on the civil,

\* Cato wrote seven books of *Antiquities*, or, as he entitled them, "*De Originibus*." Two of them related to the foundation of the cities of Italy; the other five to the history of Rome—particularly of the first and second Punic wars. He wrote, also, a treatise on military discipline, [*De Re Militari*], and one upon country affairs, or Agriculture, [*De Re Rustica*], besides more than 150 orations. His treatise, *De Re Rustica*, is the only one of his works that remains entire: of the rest, we have only fragments.—*Note to Laughton's Plutarch: Life of Cato, vol. II., p. 333.*

† He was very eminent as an orator and advocate. His eloquence gained him so much influence and authority, that he was commonly called the Roman Demosthenes.—*Plut. Life of Cato, vol. II., p. 309.*

pontifical and augurial laws; I dabble a good deal in Grecian literature;\* and, like the Pythagoreans, to improve my memory, I revolve in mind every evening, what I have said, heard and done, that day. These are my intellectual exercises,—the gymnasia of my mind. Toiling in these pursuits, I have little need of bodily strength; I enjoy and serve my friends; I repair frequently to the Senate, and there offer thoughts long and deeply pondered,—sustaining them with mental, not corporeal power. Even if I could not do all these things, I could amuse myself on my couch, meditating them: but the hardy, temperate course of my life, enables me to do them. One who lives continually amid such studies and employments, does not perceive when old age creeps upon him; so gradually and insensibly does he wax old. He does not perish at once; but calmly dies away, through mere length of time.

## XII.

Next comes the third imputation upon age; that it is devoid of pleasures. Glorious boon of years—if they do, indeed, free us from youth's besetting snare? My young friends, let me tell you a frequent saying of the renowned Archytas of Tarentum: which was repeated to me there when I was young, attending upon Fabius Maximus. Archytas used to say, that of all Nature's gifts to men, Pleasure was the most baneful; since, for its enjoyment, craving appetites were recklessly and unrestrainedly aroused; and thence came treasours, foreign conspiracies, and the overthrow of nations. In short, he held that the lust of pleasure incited to every crime, and impelled men to all profligacy: that to INTELLECT, Heaven's noblest boon to man, nothing is so fatal as pleasure, and that under the sway of Lust, or in the realm of Voluptuousness, Temperance can have no place—Virtue no home. To render this more clear, he used to say: "Imagine a man to be enjoying the most exquisite and exciting corporeal pleasure of which human faculties are capable. None can doubt that while this enjoyment continued, he could attend to nothing intellectual—could follow out no train of reasoning, or of thought." Hence Archytas concluded, that Pleasure is the most baleful of mischiefs; since if it were but sufficiently great and sufficiently prolonged, it would extinguish the light of Mind.

Nearchus, our Tarentine host, a steady friend of Rome, said he had heard from his forefathers,

\*Cato learned Greek very late; yet he improved his eloquence somewhat by the study of Thucydides, but by Demosthenes very greatly.—II. *Plutarch*, p. 307.

that Archytas expressed these sentiments to C. Pontius, the Samnite—father to that Pontius, who vanquished our Consuls, Spurius Posthumus and Titus Veturius, at the Caudine Forks; and that Plato, the Athenian, was present at the conversation. In fact, Plato did visit Tarentum in the consulship of L. Camillus and Appius Claudius.

What think you, is my aim in quoting this language of Archytas? It is to show you, that if reason and wisdom cannot make us despise pleasure, we owe much gratitude to age for disinclining us to that which we ought to shun. Sensuality, the foe of Reason, clogs thought, dims the mental sight, and is utterly alien to Virtue. I reluctantly expelled the valiant Titus Flaminius' brother Lucius, from the Senate,\* seven years after his consulship; but I deemed it necessary to set a mark upon licentiousness: for Lucius, when Consul in Gaul, had been persuaded by a mistress during a debauch, to behead† a prisoner, who stood convicted of some great crime. Under the consulship of his brother Titus, (my predecessor,) Lucius escaped justice; but I, and Flaccus, my colleague, could not overlook a profligacy so atrocious and abandoned—uniting disgrace to the state, with personal infamy.

## XIII.

From old men, who declared that they, when boys, had so heard from the aged, I have learned that Caius Fabricius, was accustomed to marvel greatly at a saying quoted in his presence, during his embassy to king Pyrrhus, by Cineas the Thessalian, from a professor of wisdom, at Athens, to the effect that—"Whatever we do, should have a view to pleasure." Manius Curius and Titus Coruncanius, on hearing this, wished that Pyrrhus and the Samnites might imbibe the doctrine, since it would be easy to subdue them, if they would abandon themselves to sensuality.‡ Curius was contemporary with Publius Decius, who, in his fourth consulate, had devoted himself for the republic five years before Curius was consul. Fabricius and Coruncanius too, had known Decius; and, as well from that heroic deed of his, as from the tenor of their own lives, must have seen and felt that there is a something

\*The Censor had power to degrade and expel Senators or Knights, for vice or crime.

†By the laws of Rome at that time, capital punishment of a citizen was not permitted.

‡When some person once praised sensuality in the hearing of Antiochenes, the first Cynic philosopher, he replied, "I pray God that the children of my enemies may have enough of it!"—*Ding. Laert. in Vita Antisth.*—*Fenelon, Abrégé de la vie des Philosophes*. 130.

intrinsically noble and glorious, to be coveted for its own sake; a something which the truly exalted mind, contemning sensual pleasure, ever loves and pursues.

But why do I say thus much of sensuality? Because, so far from its being a reproach to Age, that it has no hankering for pleasures,—'tis its very greatest and crowning praise. Is it destitute of banquets, loaded tables and oft filled cups? Neither, then, is it troubled with drunkenness, indigestion and broken slumbers. But if some concession to Pleasure is indispensable—indeed, we cannot well resist her blandishments, she being, as Plato divinely remarks, the *bait of Vice*, that takes men as on a hook—Old Age may highly enjoy temperate repasts, though not excessive feastings. In my boyhood, I frequently saw, returning from evening entertainments the aged Caius Duilius, the son of that Marcus Duilius, who first vanquished the Carthaginians at sea. Caius used often to amuse himself with torches and music, in which no private man had before indulged: such latitude did his great name accord to him.

But why speak of others? I return to myself: In the first place, I have always had club-companions. Clubs were founded in my quæstorship, when the Mysteries of Cybele had been received from Crete.\* With those friends, it was my custom to banquet moderately: yet still, there was a glow suited to that brisker period of my life. As time glided on, my whole character grew more gentle and sober. I measured the delight of our entertainments less by the sensual joys, than by the kindly intercourse they occasioned. Justly did our ancestors call the festive assemblage of friends, *convivium*; since it involved a *communion of life*, or *living together*: a better name than that given by the Greeks, who call it a *compotation*, and sometimes a *supping* together; as if they valued most, the grossest and least worthy part of such meetings.

#### XIV.

The charms of conversation make me delight in well-timed feasting parties, not only with my contemporaries—of whom few remain—but with persons of your age,—and especially with you. Thanks to Old Age! for having heightened my love of such intercourse, and taken away my appetite for meat and drink! If any one likes those grosser joys, however—for I mean not to declare uncompromising war upon Pleasure, of which perhaps a certain degree is natural and proper—even for those joys, methinks Age is not

without a zest. I delight, also, in those organized banquets, with masters presiding—as practised by our ancestors, in the pleasant discourse that prevails after the ancient fashion, while we drink; and in the cups themselves (as in Xenophon's *Symposium*) so nice, and all covered with dew—cooled in summer and warmed in winter. These pleasures I court among the Sabines, and I daily make one at some party of my neighbors, which we prolong, in various talk, till the latest possible hour of night.

"But," says a caviller, "pleasures have not that delicious, tickling joy, to the aged." Very true; but neither do the aged long for them; and the want of a thing is never painful, if you indulge no craving for it. When Sophocles, late in life, was asked if he gave the reins to love? he wisely replied, "The gods have ordered it better for me: I have made a glad escape from that passion, as from a harsh and furious master." To those who nurse a fondness for such joys, the want of them is irksome and torturing; but, to the satisfied and contented, the want is pleasanter than the fruition—if, indeed, any one can be said to *want* what he does not desire. I maintain that, not to desire is more agreeable than to enjoy.\* But grant that the spring-time of life relishes those pleasures more exquisitely. It first enjoys trifles, and then things which Old Age never craves, if it has them not. As, at the Theatre, the spectators in front are most entertained by Turpio Ambivius,† yet, the hindmost, also, are much amused, so Youth, eyeing Pleasure more closely, perhaps enjoys her more; but Age, too, finds enjoyment in a distant and rational contemplation of her charms. And how precious the satisfaction of living one's own master; no longer bound to the service of ambition, strife or hatred, or lust, or appetite of any kind! Surely, a tranquil old age, cheered and supported by a well-stored and an active mind, is among the happiest of conditions! We used to see Caius Gallus (your father's friend, Scipio,) well nigh perish in his eagerness to measure the earth and sky. How often did day overtake him in a task begun at night-fall! How often did night, when he had commenced at the dawn! How he delighted to warn us long before hand, of the sun's and moon's eclipses! Need I mention those who excelled in lighter, yet still refined and subtle pursuits? How Nævius rejoiced in his

\* Goldsmith differs—

"If few their wants, their pleasures are but few;  
For every want that stimulates the breast  
Becomes a source of pleasure when redress'd."

*Traveller.*

\* From Ida, in Crete.

† A famous comedian.—*Tac. Orat.*

*Punic War!*\* Plautus in his *Clown*† and his *Cheat*!‡ And I have seen old Livius,§ who wrote a play and had it acted in the consulate of Cento and Tuditanus, six years before I was born, and he then lived till I was grown up. I need not mention the priesthood of P. Licinius Crassus and his devotion to the Civil Law; nor P. Scipio, who was made chief Pontiff within these few days. All these men we have seen, old as they are, eagerly thirsting for knowledge. Marcus Cethegus, called by Ennius the *marrow of Persuasion*—with what earnest zeal did we behold him train himself in speaking! Now what are the delights of banqueting, or of light amusements, or of loose women, compared with those noble pleasures?

Such are the pursuits of Literature. They wax useful and pleasant with the growing genius of their well-trained and wise votaries, agreeably to that just saying of Solon quoted before: ‘Old age comes on with daily accessions of knowledge.’ Of all pleasures, none can surpass those of the intellect.

#### XV.

I come now to the enjoyments of agriculture, to me, unspeakably charming. Never dulled or clogged by Age, these joys appear to me almost identified with a life of wisdom. For they rest upon and grow out of the EARTH; who never rebels against man, nor fails to return him, with usury, whatever she has received at his hands. Yet, it is not so much her fruitfulness that pleases me, as her power and wonderful nature. Taking the scattered seed into her soft and submissive bosom, she there confines it when harrowed in. Then, the moisture and her embrace having made it warm, she expands it, and draws forth its unfolding verdure. The green shoot, braced and upheld by fibrous roots, gradually increases, springs up into a pointed stalk, and, attaining its full size, is cased in sheaths; whence presently emerging, it shows the ear, regularly formed, and defended by a palisade of spikes against the beaks of little birds.

I will not dwell upon the setting, the growth, and the shooting of vines. My enjoyment of such things is absolutely boundless: you may judge, then, of the soothing pleasure they afford to my declining years. To pass over the won-

drous vital energy of whatever springs from the ground—producing mighty trunks and branches from a tiny fig-seed, grape-stone, or the minutest germs of other fruits and trees—are not the results of *slips, plantings, twigs, live-roots* and *layers* enough to fill every contemplative mind with admiration? The vine, naturally so frail, and requiring support to keep it from the ground, embraces with its fingerlike tendrils, whatever prop it finds; and gliding in many a fitful vagary, is only restrained by the pruner's knife, from branching forth too luxuriantly in every direction. Early in Spring, the spared stocks have a *bud*, at each joint whence the twig proceeds. From this bud comes the grape, slowly appearing. Enlarged by the sun's heat, and by sap from the earth, it is at first very bitter to the taste; but ripening, it becomes sweet; and, in its vesture of leaves, enjoys a tempered warmth, while it is shielded from the burning rays. Can fruit be more luscious or more beautiful? Not its uses alone, but (as I said before) its cultivation and the study of its nature are pleasures to me; the props in orderly rows—the top-fastenings—the tying and training of the vines—the making *layers* of twigs—the pruning—the grafting! I need not enlarge on irrigation—on ditching or draining—or on repeated hoeings around the vines—which augment so vastly the ground's productiveness; nor on the benefit of manuring, since I have treated of that in my work on Farming, [*De Re Rustica*.] On this last point, the knowing Hesiod says not a word, though he wrote upon agriculture. But Homer, who I believe was many ages earlier,\* represents Laertes as soothing his grief at his son's long absence, by tilling and *manuring* the ground.†

Nor are field-crops, meadows, groves and vineyards, the only gladdeners of rural life; so, too, are orchards and gardens, cattle-raising, the workings of bees and the endless variety of flowers. And besides the amusement of planting, there is *grafting*, than which, nothing is more curious in the whole art of husbandry.

#### XVI.

I might enumerate many other pleasures in agriculture; but methinks I have already been tedious on the subject. You will pardon me, how-

\* Nævius was a very ancient poet of Campania, older than Ennius. He seems to have been popular, and often quoted in the time of Horace.—*Epist. II. 1.*

†† Two Comedies of Plautus.

‡ Livius Andronicus, the oldest of Roman Poets.

\* Homer and Hesiod are called *contemporaries* by the accurate Gillies.—*Hist. of Greece*, ch. 2, p. 16. And Herodotus, in his history which he read at the Olympic games, in the year 444 before Christ, says, “Homer and Hesiod lived about 400 years ago; not more.”—*Note to Gillies' Greece*, p. 60, ch. 6. University Ed'n.

† See the interview of Ulysses with his father.—*Odyss. B. 24*, vol. 2, p. 191.

ever, at once, because I am far-gone in love for that pursuit, and because Old Age—that I may concede it to be not wholly faultless—is by nature somewhat garrulous. That was the pursuit to which Manius Curius, [Dentatus,] after triumphing over the Sabines, the Samnites, and king Pyrrhus, devoted the last period of his life. When I behold the farm-house of Curius, which stands near my own, I cannot sufficiently admire the moderation of the man, or the steadfast integrity of that age. The Samnites, bringing him a large sum of gold as he sat by his cottage fire, were sternly repelled: “I glory,” said he, “not in the possession of gold, but in ruling its possessors.” Could so noble a spirit fail to make age pleasing? But, not to leave my subject, I return to husbandmen.

Among them have been senators—aye, and aged Senators. L. Quinctius Cincinnatus was ploughing when he received the annunciation that he was chosen Dictator: and, by his mandate, in that office, his general of cavalry Servilius Ahala, slew Spurius Mælius, for attempting to usurp regal power. Curius, too, and other seniors, were in like manner summoned from their farms to the Senate Chamber: whence the summoners were called *viatores*, or pursuivants. Was their old age, then, to be pitied—beguiled and delighted as it was, with tilling the ground? For my part, I doubt if any old age can be happier, whether we regard the good which results—since agriculture benefits all mankind—or the pleasures I have recounted, and the exuberance of whatsoever tends either to nourish man, or to honor the Gods. And, as some persons love these physical enjoyments, I may, by conceding them, make my peace with sensual pleasure. A skilful and industrious farmer’s wine and oil-closet, his larder, and all his homestead, are richly stored. Pork, lamb, kid, poultry; milk, cheese and honey, all abound. A garden, the farmers themselves term a second course of dainties. Then hunting and fowling, an employment for leisure hours, make all these viands more savory. Need I expatiate on the verdure of meadows, the symmetry of tree-rows, or the beauty of vineyards and olive groves? No; I must cut my panegyric short. Nothing can be richer for use, or comelier to the eye, than a well-managed farm: and its attractions, far from being impaired, are rendered more exquisite and more alluring, by old age. For where else can the aged more pleasantly enjoy the sunshine or the fireside, or be more healthfully cooled by water or by shade? The young, then, are welcome to their arms and horses, their club and ball, their running and swimming. Let them only leave to us old people, out of so many sports, our four-sided and six-sided dice; nay, if they choose, not even

these: without any of them, Old Age can still be happy.

## XVII.

Xenophon’s writings are greatly to be prized, on many accounts. I pray you, continue to read them diligently. In his treatise entitled *The Economist*, [*Oeconomicus*—*Οἰκονομικὸς*.] on the art of preserving one’s patrimony, how he showers praises upon agriculture! And, to show that in his eyes nothing was more princely than Husbandry, he there introduces Socrates, telling Critobulus, that when the great Lysander of Lacedæmon visited Sardis, with presents from the Allies to Cyrus the Younger, king of Persia, then towering in glory and power, no less than in mind, Cyrus, amongst other marks of civility and kindness to his guest, showed him a tract of ground carefully enclosed and skilfully planted. Lysander, after admiring the stateliness of the trees, all arranged by rows in *quincunxes*, the soil thoroughly tilled and cleared, and the flowers breathing fragrant odours, declared himself enraptured with the taste, skill and industry, of the person who had planned and directed the work. “It was I,” said Cyrus, “who arranged it all: the planning, the rows are all mine; even many of the trees, my own hands planted.” Lysander, eyeing the purple robes of Cyrus, his Persian ornaments of gems and gold, and the magnificence of his whole person, said: “Justly are you called happy; uniting as you do, wealth and power, with virtuous energy!”

Now, this happiness the aged may always enjoy. Age is no hindrance to our retaining various pursuits, but especially agriculture, till the very close of life. We are told that M. Valerius Corvus, prolonged his mortal career tilling the ground, until his hundredth year. Between his first and sixth consulates, there were forty-six years; honors, with him, filling as much of life as is usually thought to precede old age. And his last period was happier than the middle one, because it was less toilsome, and more influential. The very crest, the diadem of Age, is influence—weight of character. How much of it had Lucius Cæcilius Metellus! and how much had Atilius Calatinus, on whom was pronounced that unrivalled eulogy: “Countless nations agree, that he was the foremost man of all his country!” The well known line is carved upon his tomb. Just is his influence in whose praises all tongues unite! What a man was Publius Crassus, the late chief pontiff; and Marcus Lepidus, who succeeded him! Why speak of Paulus Æmilius, or Scipio Africanus? Or of Fabius Maximus, whom I have so often mentioned!

Authority dwelt, not only in their uttered opinions, but in each one's very nod. Age, especially when crowned with honors, has an influence more to be valued, than all Youth's pleasures of sense.

### XVIII.

Recollect, however, that all my encomiums on Old Age, apply only to that Old Age, whose foundations were laid in youth. Hence it is a truth, (as I said *once*, with universal approval,) that it is a wretched age, which needs an advocate to defend it. Neither gray hairs nor wrinkles, can acquire influence, in a moment; it is the final fruit of a whole life well spent.

Even marks of respect that seem trivial and common-place, are, nevertheless, gratifying: such as being courteously saluted, sought for, consulted, given way to, offered a seat, attended abroad, and escorted home; tokens punctiliously observed among us, and in all other civilized communities. Lysander (whom I spoke of before) was wont to say, that Lacedæmon was the most becoming abode of Age; for that nowhere was it so honored; nowhere did it receive such tributes. Nay, there is a tradition, that in Athens, at a play, a very old man having entered the crowded Theatre, his countrymen would not give him a place; but when he approached the Lacedæmonian Ambassadors, who sat together in a space assigned them, they all rose at once, and admitted him to a seat among them. The whole assembly hereupon giving them rounds of applause, one of the number said: "The Athenians know what is right, but will not practise it.\*"

In our College of Augurs, are many good regulations; but among the best is this: that the oldest always takes the lead in voting. Nor are the seniors preferred only to those who have surpassed them in the enjoyment of honor; but even to those actually invested with power.

And what corporeal pleasures are comparable to the advantages of high authority and influence? those who have used these noble advantages worthily, methinks have played out the drama of life, without failing, like unskilful performers, in the last act.

"But old people are restless, peevish, passionate and hard to please; nay, it may be said, covetous, also." I answer, these faults are chargeable to the individual's character—not to his age. Peevishness in him, however, and those other frailties, have some excuse; not a perfect, but yet an admissible one: he fancies himself de-

\* The common version of the remark is, "The Athenians know what is right, but the *Lacedæmonians* practise it." And the old man is commonly made to utter it.

spised, mocked at, contemptuously treated: besides, to a sore and fragile body, every touch is painful. But to good principles and kindly feelings, everything is agreeable. This is daily seen in real life; and is exemplified on the stage, by those brothers in the *Adelphi*.† How churlish the one, how kind and gentle the other! Such is human nature: for every life, any more than all wine, is not soured by age. In old people, I like a well tempered seriousness; but harshness, never. As to covetousness in the aged, I am unable to comprehend it. For, can there be a greater absurdity, than to lay in more and more travelling provision, as less and less of our journey remains?

### XIX.

There is yet a fourth alleged cause of vexation and disquiet to my present time of life: The near approach of Death.

Certainly, Death cannot be very far from Old Age. But pitiable, indeed, is the man, who in a long life, has failed to discover that Death is a despicable foe! For, evidently, if it annihilates the soul, we need not fear it: and, if it makes us immortal, it is a blessing to be coveted. No third alternative can be found. Then what have I to fear, if, after death, I am to be either happy or not unhappy?

But who is so foolish, however young, as to deem it certain that he will live, even through the present day? Indeed, Youth has many more chances of death, than Age has. The young take disease more readily; are more severely ill; and are cured with more pain. Thus few attain old age. If mankind generally attained it, they would live better and more wisely: for reason, understanding and wisdom, are in the old, without whom no community could subsist.

But I return to the subject of impending death. Should this be charged upon age, when you see that it is shared so equally by youth? In my noble son, and, Scipio, in your brothers who seemed so plainly marked out for the highest dignities, I saw, and keenly felt, that death is common to every age. "But the young man hopes what the old cannot: to live a great while." Then he hopes foolishly. For it is the height of folly to take doubt for certainty, and falsehood for truth. I grant the old man has no room for hope; but his condition is, on that very account, better than the young man's, since what the latter only hopes for, the old has already attained. The one wishes to live long, the other has actually done so. Yet, gracious Heaven! How

† One of the Comedies of Terence.

transitory, at most, is human life! Grant it the extremest length. Let us count upon the age of the Tartessian king, Arganthonius, who (it is written) reigned at Cadiz eighty-five years, and lived one hundred and twenty: still, no duration can be termed long, which has a close. For, when the close comes, all the past has vanished, leaving only the treasured fruits of prudence, and the remembrance of good actions. Hours, days, months, years fleet away, never to return: while the future is veiled from our view. Every man must be contented with his allotted space of life: for, as a player needs not act entirely through the piece in order to please, provided the particular part he plays he approved; so a wise man needs not live through the very last scene. A short life is long enough for the practice of honesty and useful virtue. If yours has been lengthened out, you have no more right to grieve than farmers have for the flight of Spring, or the coming of Summer and Autumn. Spring time is the type of youth, promising future fruits: the seasons that follow, are designed for mowing and gathering in the harvests. Now, the fruit, or harvest of age, is the memory, and the abundance of good actions and virtuous qualities.

All things are good, that accord with Nature: and what is more accordant with Nature, than for old men to die? The young experience the same fate in despite of Nature: so that their death is like the smothering of a flame by a volume of water; while the aged resemble an exhausted fire, going out spontaneously, without an effort. As green apples require force to pluck them from the tree, but if ripe and mellow, they fall of themselves; so life, torn rudely from the young, drops away from the old, through mere ripeness. An end so pleasing to me, that in coming near to Death, I seem like a mariner in sight of land and just entering the haven, after a long, wearisome voyage.

## XX.

All periods of life have their determinate close, except Old Age. But age lives on, and lives well, so long as it continues able to discharge the duties of its particular station, and to despise Death. Hence it is, sometimes more buoyant and stout-hearted than youth. This was the meaning of Solon's answer to the Tyrant Pisistratus, who demanded, 'On what hope he reposed, in braving him so audaciously?' "I rely upon my Age," said Solon.

Life ends best, when, with the mind and all the faculties unimpaired, Nature herself undoes the work she has reared. As the builder of a house or ship most easily demolishes it, so Na-

ture, man's maker, puts the best close to his being. Recent workmanship is taken to pieces with difficulty, old, with ease.

The aged, then, have no cause, either to clasp their brief remnant of life with fondness, or to renounce it with levity. Pythagoras bids us not desert our sentry-post of existence, without orders from our General; that is, God. The wise Solon, somewhere says, that he does not wish his death to occasion any wailing or grief among his friends. Yet, no doubt, he wished for their love. Ennius, I think, has better said,

"Let no vain tears bedew my funeral urn,  
Nor kindred o'er my silent ashes mourn."

He justly thinks that Death, which wins us immortality, is no subject for sorrow. A dying man may have some consciousness of pain, though for a short time, especially if he is old. But after death, he has either pleasing sensations or none whatever.

From early youth, we should habituate ourselves to be fearless of death. Without this, no man can preserve his tranquillity. For die he inevitably must; perhaps on this very day: and how, possibly, can he maintain a calm and steady mind, who is every hour trembling at the prospect of instant death? A long discussion of this point is needless, when we recollect Lucius Brutus, who fell in freeing his country; the two Decii, who spurred on their steeds to a voluntary death; Marcus Atilius Regulus, self-surrendered to torture, rather than violate his faith plighted to an enemy; the two Scipios resolved, even with their own lifeless bodies, to stop the progress of the Carthaginians; your grandfather, Lucius Paulus Æmilius, who paid with his life for his colleague's rashness in the foul rout at Cannæ; Marcus Claudius Marcellus, whose remains a most cruel foe honored with burial-rites; and when we recollect, above all, the whole Legions of Rome that have marched with courage and alacrity to battle-fields, whence they counted upon no return. And should the aged and wise fear, what beardless and unlettered clowns have despised?

It seems to me that the exhaustion of amusements and occupations must create a satiety of life. Boyhood has its favorite pursuits; are they coveted by young men? Youth also has its employments; are these at all essential to that steady time of life, termed the *middle age*? This last, too, has its tastes; does old age covet them? Finally, extreme age has some propensities and pursuits, which end at last, as those of each former stage had done; and then, satiety of life brings on the full, ripe season of death.

## XXI.

I see no reason why I should not fearlessly utter to you my thoughts and feelings about death ; which, to my view, appears more and more agreeable, as I draw nearer to it. Those dear friends of mine, your illustrious fathers, yet live, as I believe ; enjoying that existence, which alone deserves the name of Life. For, while engaged in this corporeal frame, we are burthened with inevitable and toilsome duties and functions : the soul is thrust down from its high home in Heaven, and buried, as it were, in earth : a place utterly unsuited to its divine, unperishing nature. But Providence has infused souls into human bodies, that there might exist beings to guard and till the earth, who, at the same time, contemplating the order of Heaven, might copy it in the plan, and in the even tenor of their own lives. Nor has reason or argument alone brought me to this belief ; but the glorious example and weighty authority of the Princes of Philosophy also, have convinced me. I used to hear that Pythagoras and his followers, almost fellow-countrymen of ours, (and, indeed, formerly called the Italian Philosophers,) entertained no doubt that we had spirits extracted from the Divine, Universal Mind. I was firmly persuaded, too, of the doctrine which Socrates unfolded on the last day of his life, touching the Soul's immortality. He, who was pronounced by Apollo's oracle, the wisest of men. I need not multiply words. I am thoroughly convinced, from the speed of the Mind, from its boundless memory of the past and forecast of the future ; from its innumerable turns of skill ; its wide range of knowledge, and its multifarious ingenuity, that the nature, comprising such faculties, cannot be mortal. And from the Mind's unceasing movement, without any extraneous spring of action—for it is purely self-moving—I infer that its motion will be endless ; since it never can part from itself. Again : from the Mind's being uncompounded—having no admixture of aught unlike itself—I conclude it to be indivisible ; and if so, it cannot perish. Finally, I deem it a strong proof of man's knowing many things before he is born ; that boys, in prosecuting difficult studies, seize upon countless ideas, with a quickness which shows that those ideas are not then for the first time perceived, but are rather recalled to memory.

These are Plato's opinions.

## XXII.

According to Xenophon, the Elder Cyrus, when about to die, spoke as follows :

"Think not, my dearest sons, that when I am gone hence, I shall cease to exist. During my stay here my soul has never been visible to you ; yet, from my actions, you knew that it was in this body. Doubt not that it still exists, though you will not see it. The glory of great men would survive them but a little while, if their minds achieved nothing to make us preserve their memories. Never could I believe that the soul lives while in this perishing frame, but dies on escaping from it ; nor that it becomes insensible when released from the senseless corpse. On the contrary, I hold that being freed from all mixture with the body—being a pure and perfect essence—the soul then becomes divinely wise ; and, after its human parts have mouldered in death, sees other objects afar, and thoroughly sees whether each particle flies away. For all things return to the place whence they sprung. The soul alone is invisible, whether present or departing.

"You perceive that nothing so much resembles death as sleep does. Now, the souls of people asleep, most clearly proclaim their own divine nature ; for, unfettered then, and ranging at large, they give many foreshadowings of the future. Hence we may infer that they will be, when released entirely from the shackles of flesh.

"If all this is true, then cherish the memory of me, as immortal. But if my soul is to perish with my body—still, adoring the Gods who preserve and rule this beautiful Universe—hold me in pious and inviolate remembrance."

Thus spoke the dying Cyrus.

## XXIII.

Let us now look nearer to ourselves. No man will convince me, Scipio, that your father Paulus Æmilius, or your grandsires Paulus and Africanus, or the father,\* or the uncle† of Africanus, or the many illustrious men who might so easily be named, ever could have attempted their memorable deeds, had they not seen that Posterity was theirs. To boast a little of myself, as old men are wont, think you that I would have encountered such mighty toils, night and day, in peace and in war, had my fame been destined to the limits of my own life ? Would it not have been far better to pass my time in ease and tranquillity, without labor or strife ? But my spirit, indescribably lifting itself up, looked steadily for-

\* The father of the Elder Africanus was Publius Scipio, who commanded in Spain when Hannibal's brother, Asdrubal, invaded it, early in the 2d Punic War.

† Cneius Scipio, brother of Publius.

ward to Posterity; as if sure of a long life hereafter. In truth, if our souls were not immortal, every good man's heart would not pant, as it does, for an immortality of renown. Is there no significance in the fact, that each wisest man dies most contentedly—each silliest, most reluctantly? Think you not, that the spirit whose ken is widest and farthest, sees itself bound to a better existence; and that the duller spirit fails to see this? I am transported at the thought of beholding your fathers, whom I so cherished and loved, nor am I eager to see those only, whom I have personally known, but those also, of whom I have heard, and read, and written. When I set out thither, none shall hold me back; or boil me over again, like Pelias.\* Nay, were some god to grant me the privilege of returning to childhood, and puling again in the cradle, I would positively refuse; and not consent, after having run my race, to be recalled from the goal to the starting place. For what solid pleasures does life contain? How full is it not, rather, of trouble! But grant that it has pleasures; they cloy, or else they are shortlived and unsatisfying. Not that I mean to complain of life, as many have done who pass for wise: I am not sorry to have lived, since my life has been such, that methinks I was not born in vain. No; I leave this stage of being as an inn, not as a home: for nature has given it for our transient accommodation; not as our dwelling place.

Glorious day, when I shall fly from this scene of confusion and disgust, to that Heavenly assemblage of spirits! For I shall go, not only to the worthies I spoke of just now, but to my own Cato,† the good and the pious; who should have inurned my ashes, instead of my rendering that sad duty to him. Yet, his spirit, still regarding me with constant love, has gone to those realms whither he knew that I should soon follow. To outward view, I bore my loss of him with fortitude. Not that I failed to grieve; but I consoled myself with the thought, that our parting would be only for a brief season.

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For these reasons, Scipio,—for you said that you and Lælius had often marvelled at the fact—Old Age sits lightly upon me; and, far from being oppressive, is even agreeable.

If I mistake, in supposing the human soul immortal, it is a pleasing error, and one which I would not have wrested from me in this life. But if, as certain Minute Philosophers think, I

\* Pelias was a king of Thessaly, uncle to Jason: and, when very old, was cut into pieces and boiled by his own daughters, under the delusive hope inspired by Jason's wife, Medea, that she would thereby restore his youth.

† Meaning his son Marcus, mentioned in section XIX.

shall be insensible after death; then I need not fear their ridicule for my error, since they also will be dead. Even if we are not to be immortal, still it is desirable that man should have his own time for annihilation. For Nature has her limit to life, as to all other things; and Age is the finishing of life, as of a play, of which we ought to avoid both weariness and satiety.

This is what I had to say of Old Age. May you attain it,—so as to prove, by your own experience, the truth of my testimony!