

alien to the other. The bare hypothesis throws a flood of light on the countless incongruities in humanity. It offers an explanation, and quite a satisfactory one. People unsound in body or in mind, eccentric, unbalanced, discontented, are partly themselves and partly somebody else. The divergent portions quarrel, and their quarrel waxes hotter and more irreconcilable as time goes on. The head and hearts of these are not on terms of understanding, nor are the spirits and the brains. They are, most of the time, in conflict, and the result is wretchedness, which is the condition of so many of the earth's inhabitants.

They that are born themselves are the lucky ones. They enjoy the world into which they come under favorable auspices. They are the optimists, and their preponderating neighbors, the discordant are the pessimists. Is not this solution of the mystery of temperament in a nutshell?

Are we acquainted with our own ages? Do we get accurate reports of an advent on the planet? Not always, by any means. Uneducated people generally do not know when they first saw the light. They vary their statements according to inclination and circumstances.

Very few women, however intelligent and cultured, have any clear ideas on that point. If they have learned of their birthday they try to forget it, after they have reached 20. And they commonly succeed. Why should they try to remember what is unpleasant? Not many women would wish to be more than 25, the most charming age of the sex. And why should they be more? Men would like women to be ever young, and the best way to keep them young is to think them young, and make them believe they are young.

Men laugh at women because they are unwilling to disclose their age. Their unwillingness comes from the fact, perfectly patent, that he considers that their attractiveness diminishes with years and that after a certain time it is wholly lost. Their age is specially their own; they have an indisputable right to withhold it if they choose. It is their proper secret (no satirist will deny they can keep that,) and no one, unless their lover or husband, can claim the privilege of sharing it. They are not so reticent as they have been on this subject, probably because marriage is no longer their sole object in life. Having learned how they may be financially independent, they have grown independent otherwise. Nevertheless, they may have practical grounds for preserving silence concerning their years. Man certainly has; hence he is not, as is commonly thought, ever ready to proclaim his natal hour.

His reasons are commercial, not connubial, and they are valid. But, even setting those aside, he has no more relish than woman has for being old. Age is not alluring to anybody. It may be venerable, but it is hardly interesting to its bearer. We hear a great deal about beautiful old age; but is it ever beautiful to him, or her, who has reached it? Old age is beautiful only to those that are still considerably on this side of it. It is called beautiful because it is less repellant in some cases than in cases generally. But, obviously enough, beauty and old age are incompatible. Can decline, decay, waning powers, approaching helplessness be beautiful at any time, in any sense? The thought is unentertainable, self-contradictory. Death may be beautiful, may be often welcome, especially after a hard, wearing, painful life; but old age, in and of itself, never can be. We accept old age as we accept anything hateful or afflictive, in that it can not be shunned.

Man's commercial opposition to talking of his age, after middle life, arises from fear lest he be thought old. The mass of men are money-earners, many of them dependent on salaries, and they are naturally sensitive in regard to their years. Their employers may think them past their prime, beyond their days of usefulness, and, consequently, reduce their pay or dispense with their service; the same fear will influence men on the down grade, if they are professional or in business on their own account. They may not be considered so capable as formerly; their clients, patients, parishioners, patrons or customers may fall off; may go elsewhere; may seek new connections. Under the shadow of much apprehension stand most men, not momentarily secured against chance and change. They can not, in a word, afford to be thought old, however capable they are, owing to possible injurious result to themselves. Is not this sufficient to justify them in using discretion as to advertisement of their years? Discretion is prompted, not by vanity or weakness, but by a sense of self-protection.

The truth is that no one's age is positive or definite. Only two or three persons can know it, ordinarily, most closely connected with the occurrence. Age does not speak for itself. It is, as the meta-

physicians would put it, more subjective than objective. Years do not make it. Nature fails to disclose it. It depends on feeling. So long as we feel young we remain young, even if we have reached seventy or more. Some persons cannot live long enough to be old; other persons cannot die early enough to be young. The spirit, not the body, the mind, not the organization settles the matter.

Who of us is not acquainted with persons older at 30 than others at 60? There are old children and young veterans. Many of us are born old, and octogenarians frequently die in their youth. Poets are ever youthful; philosophers are ever old; mathematicians, though in their teens, are representatives of antiquity.

Ages are not fully realized by its carrier. He is usually acquainted with the number of years that have been assigned him, though he is apt to think, in his inmost being, that they have been overcounted. He is sure that he does not look as old as he has been taught to believe.

"Can I possibly be 53?" he asks himself. "There must be some mistake about it. My friend Wiggins is 53, and young in appearance, too, for his years. Would my worst enemy have the audacity to presume that I look to be his equal in age? Most of my acquaintances, I am confident, do not suppose me to be much over 40. One man offered to bet me, the other day, that I was not 45; and he is a man of discernment and strict integrity. If I do not know that, I would not have lent him \$50 just before he proposed the wager. He says that he is an excellent judge of ages.

"What fools some fellows are about their ages! There's Jenkins, for example! He swears he is isn't fifty yet; and he's sixty-five if he is a day. He's so awfully made up that some of his associates speak of him as an admirably preserved man. By Jove, that's just what he is! And he never suspects it, simpleton that he is."

As a rule, both sexes are prone to think that those anywhere near their own age are much older. Women think it, but are too tactful to say it. Men blurt it out. They do not find it easy to believe that any one of their associates is materially their minor. Fellows much past sixty, visibly decrepit, are fond of addressing cronies of forty or less as "men of our age;" of using such phrases as "We're no longer young now," "We're getting old," "At our time of life," etc.

Many a man has a strange way of judging of the age of another, almost a stranger perhaps. Hearing that the other is forty, he exclaims (without the slightest information on the subject): "Forty? How absurd! Why, I'm 47, and he's older than I, of course!" The probability is that he is older than he admits. Those who volunteer to declare their age are likely to deduct something from it, before making the declaration. They compound with themselves for their assumed candor by telling a deliberate falsehood. When they deal with so important and so precarious a topic as their own age, they must, they fancy, be allowed large ethical license. At any rate, they take it.

Not only are some individuals, of the same age as others, younger than they in essence as well as appearance; some nations and races seem younger than other nations and races. An Englishman, usually, whether young, in middle life or far beyond it, impresses one as younger than an American of like years. This may be due to constitution, equable temper, calm mind, out-door exercise, regular habits. But be the cause what it may, it is, unquestionably, a fact.

Americans, again, differ from one another in youthful seeming. Those on the sea-coast look younger than those in the interior; those in cities than those in the country proper. A New Yorker, at 70, shows to more physical advantage, is straighter, healthier, fresher, more energetic and alert than a New England farmer at 55 or 60. The former takes far better care of himself than the latter; is better fed, better clad, better lodged; has immeasurably more pride of body and a much easier mind. The old ideas about the superiority of the country to the town in health, content, longevity has been exploded.

Again the French are younger than the Germans from their improved cooking, lighter diet, larger cheerfulness, augmented vivacity more secular disposition. The Italians are younger than the Spaniards, who still cling to mediaevalism, bull fights and intolerance. The Russian, despite their autocratic government, and their total lack of individual development or opportunity for betterment, are younger than the Scandinavians, whose extreme seriousness, poverty, limitations weigh them down, and early and furrows to their brows. The Russians gamble against fortune and destiny, and make madly merry over volcanic craters. But the Scandinavians toil and brood until the true spirit of merriment is extinguished.

Really age is not age. It depends entirely on the man. How many we know who live to 75 and are never mentioned as old! Others, below forty, are seldom spoken of as young. We may make ourselves young or old, irrespective of years. The determination to remain young preserves us from physical and mental decline. The modern philosophers are right. Really, there is no such a thing as Time; it is only a phenomenon.

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