young people are so hardly brought to such a resolution; they are not capable enough of reflecting, and their judgment is not solid enough to resist the charms of sense: but at fifty, a man ought to be governed by his reason; which would convince us, if we would hearken to it, that to gratify all our appetites, without any rule or measure, is the way to become infirm, and to die young. Nor does the pleasure of taste last long; it hardly begins, but it is gone and past: the more one eats the more one may; and the distempers which it brings along with it last us to our graves.

CHAP. III.

A Letter to Signior BARBARO, *Patriarch of* AQUILEA; *concerning the Method of enjoying Old Age.*

IT must needs be owned that the mind of man is one of the greatest works of God, and that it is the masterpiece of the divine architect. Is it not something surprising, to be able by writing to keep up a correspondence with one's friends at a distance? and is not our nature of a wonderful composition, which affords us the means of seeing one another with the eyes of our imagination, as I, sir, behold you at present? It is after this manner that I shall enter into discourse with you, and relate to you several profitable things.

It is true, that what I have to tell you is no news, with respect to the matter thereof; but I never told it you at the age of ninety-one years. It is somewhat

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astonishing that I am able to tell you, that my health and strength are in so good a plight, that instead of diminishing with my age, they seem to increase as I grow old. All mine acquaintance are surprised at it; and I, who know to what I am indebted for this happiness, do every where declare the cause of it. I endeavour all I can to convince all mankind, that a man may enjoy a complete happiness in this world after the age of fourscore, and this cannot be attained without continence and sobriety.

Be pleased then, sir, to know, that for some days past, several doctors of our university, as well physicians as philosophers, came to be informed by me of the method I took in my diet, having understood that I was still healthful and strong, that I had my senses perfect, that my memory, my heart, my judgment, the tone of my voice, and my teeth, were all as sound as in my youth; that I wrote seven or eight hours a day, and spent the rest of the day in walking out, and in taking all the innocent pleasures that are allowed to a virtuous man; even music itself, in which I bear my part.

How sweet a voice would you perceive mine to be, where you to hear me chant forth the praises of God to the sound of my lyre? Those gentlemen particularly admired with what easiness I could write upon subjects which required a great and earnest application of mind, and which were so far from fatiguing, that they diverted me.

Those doctors told me, that I ought not to be looked upon as an old man, since all my works and employments were such as were proper for a youth; and did by no means resemble the works of men advanced in years, who are incapable of doing nothing after fourscore, being loaded with infirmities and distempers.

That if there be any of them who are less infirm, yet their senses are decayed; their sight and hearing

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fail them, their legs tremble, and their hands shake, they can no longer walk; nor are they capable of doing any thing: and should there chance to be one that is free from those disasters, his memory decreases, his spirits sink, and his heart fails him; in short, he does not enjoy life so perfectly as I do. What they wondered at most, was a thing that is really surprising. It is this, that by an invincible sort of antipathy, I cannot drink any wine whatsoever, during the months of July and August, every year. I have so great an aversion to it, that I should certainly die if I forced myself to drink any; for neither my stomach nor my palate can bear it. And yet wine being as it were mother's milk to old men, it seems as if I could not possibly preserve my life without it. My stomach then being deprived of an help so proper for maintaining the heat thereof, I could eat but very little, which, about the middle of August, brought me so low and weak, that jelly-broths and cordials could not keep up my spirits. However this weakness is not attended with any pain, or pernicious accident. Our doctors were of opinion, that if the new wine, which restores me perfectly to my health, in the beginning of September, was not made at that time, I could never escape death. They were no less surprised to see, that in three or four days' time, new wine will restore to me that strength which I had lost by drinking the old; a thing of which they were witnesses these days past, when they saw me in those two different circumstances, without which they could never have believed it.

Several physicians were pleased to prognosticate to me, ten years ago, that it was impossible for me to hold out two years longer; with this pernicious antipathy, however, I still find myself less weak than ever, and am stronger this year than any that went before. This miracle, and the many favours which I received from God, obliged them to tell me, that I brought

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along with me at my birth, an extraordinary and special gift of nature.

To undeceive those gentlemen, and at the same time to instruct them better, I replied, that their way of arguing was wrong; that the favour I received was no special, but a general one: that there was no man alive but what might have received it as well as myself: that man, when he is young, being more subject to his sense than to his reason, gives himself up wholly to his pleasures; that when he is arrived to forty or fifty years of age, he ought to know that he is in the midst of his life. But that when he is arrived to this period, he goes down the hill apace to meet his death, of which the infirmities of old age are the forerunners: that old age is as different from youth, as a regular life is opposite to intemperance; that it is necessary for him at that age, to change his course of life, especially with respect to the quantity and the quality of his diet, because it is on that the health and length of our days chiefly depend. That lastly, if the former part of our lives were altogether sensual, then the latter ought to be rational and regular; order being necessary for the preservation of all things, especially the life of man. In truth, my lord, it is impossible for them who will always gratify their taste, not to break their constitution; and that I might not break mine, when I was arrived at maturity, I entirely devoted myself to a sober life. It is true, it was not without some reluctancy that I abandoned my profuse way of living.

I began with praying to God, that he would grant me the gift of temperance;* and was fully persuaded, that how difficult soever any undertaking be, which a man sets about, he will attain his end if he has but resolution. I used myself to a course of life

* The diet of Cornaro was only suited to a sort of passive existence, and hence not suited for the exertions of individuals in society.

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which was by so much the more severe and austere by how much the more my constitution was become very weak when I began it. In short, my lord, when they had heard my reasons they were forced to submit to them.*

CHAP. IV.

Of the Birth and Death of Man.

THAT I may not be deficient in that duty of charity, which all men owe to one another, I will again write, to inform those who do not know me, of what they, who are acquainted with me, have known and seen. What I am going to say will be looked upon as impossible, but, at the same time, nothing is more certain; it being what a great many know, and what is worthily to be admired by all posterity. I am now ninety-five years of age, and find myself as healthful and brisk, and as airy, as if I were but twenty-five.

What ingratitude should I be guilty of, did I not return thanks to the divine goodness, for all his mercies reached out unto me! Most of your old men have scarce arrived at sixty, but they find themselves loaded with infirmities: they are melancholy, unhealthful, full of the frightful apprehensions of dying; they tremble day and night, being within one foot of their graves.

Some bodies are born with so bad a constitution that they live but a few days, or months.

* The golden rule of health consists in an attention to temper, temperance, and sleep.

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