SURE AND CERTAIN METHODS

OF ATTAINING A

LONG AND HEALTHFUL LIFE.

CHAP. I.

Of a Sober and Regular Life.

NOTHING is more certain than that custom becomes a second nature, and has a great influence upon our bodies. Nay, it has too often more power over the mind than reason itself.*

It is an unhappiness into which the men of this age are fallen, that variety of dishes is *A-la-mode*. Prodigality is at present styled magnificence, generosity, and grandeur, and is esteemed in the world; whilst frugality passes for avarice and sordidness of spirit. Here is a visible error, which custom and habit have established.†

* MAN is the child of custom in every thing; or, as Shakspeare expresses it,—"How use doth breed habit in a man:" by custom, he is reconciled to different kinds of air; and no animal can be made to live in so many various climates.

In respect to food and raiment he is equally the slave of habit, whatever that is; and hence the truth of the observation, "Choose that mode of life which is most proper, for habit will always reconcile you to it." Habit, however, seldom comes to be established until middle age; and, as we advance in life, it rules with despotic authority.

† Luxury may be said to destroy more than the sword; and more die from indulgence in it than disease: the mortality of one half, in great towns, is from this cause. The *ne quid nimis* s the golden rule in whatever regards health; it is the precep

This error has so far seduced us, that it has prevailed upon us to renounce a frugal way of living, though taught us by nature, even from the first age of the world; and has cast us into those excesses which serve only to abridge the number of our days. We become old before we taste the pleasure of being young; and the time which ought to be the summer of our lives, is often the beginning of our winter. We soon perceive our strength to fail and decline, even before we come to perfection. On the contrary, sobriety maintains us in the natural state wherein we ought to be: our youth is lasting, and our manhood attended with a vigour that does not begin to decay till after a great many years. This is so true, that when men were not addicted to voluptuousness, they had more strength and vivacity at fourscore than we have at present at forty.*

It is very easy to avoid the evils which an excess in eating or drinking may bring upon us; nor is it any hard matter to find out a sovereign remedy against repletion, since nature itself has taught us it. Let us only give it what it requires, and not overcharge it; for a small matter suffices nature. The rules of temperance are derived from those of right reason. Let us accustom ourselves to eat only to support life; what is more than necessary for our nourishment, sows the seeds of sickness and death: it is a pleasure for which we must pay very dear, and which can neither be innocent nor excusable.†

of nature, and cannot long be transgressed with impunity. A remarkable instance of the fatal effects of indulgence is given in Dr. Buchan's work, in the case of a favourite child, who, from over indulgence, died of old age and a worn-out constitution at the age of fifteen.

* A temperate diet is always attended with healthful effects on the body, and on the disposition of the mind; the smallest liquors are the best. The best dinner is one dish; and health is put in jeopardy by every additional dish served up on the table.

† Health can only be preserved by self-denial; but that denial must be regulated by circumstances connected with the situation of the individual.

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How many have I seen cut off, in the flower of their days, by the unhappy custom of high feeding? How many excellent friends has gluttony deprived me of, who might have been still an ornament to the world an honour to their country, and have occasioned me as much satisfaction in enjoying them, as now I have sorrow in losing them?

It is to put a stop to this spreading contagion that I have undertaken this small tract. Several young persons, having lost their fathers sooner than they could have expected, have expressed a great desire of being acquainted with my manner of living. Hereupon I was willing to satisfy them, and at the same time to do some service to the public, by declaring what were the motives that induced me to renounce intemperance, and live a sober life; by shewing the method I observe, and what benefit I find thereby; and by demonstrating, that nothing can be more beneficial to a man, than to observe a regimen that is practicable.*

* Cornaro, though a strong instance of the happy effects of a regulated regimen, in the recovery of health, is not the one who deserves the most implicit imitation. The Cardinal De Senlis, under a less restricted plan, lived a hundred years,—an equal age to Cornaro; and his maxim had been, in the progress of his life, to live with the caution of an old man when young, so that when old in years, he was still, in constitution, a youth.

The celebrated John Wesley is another instance, who, with a natural weak and infirm habit, was able to undergo much bodily and mental exertion, for a long life, and to possess the *mens sana in corpore sano*, solely by adhering to certain rules he had laid down.

In more modern times, Sir John Sinclair recovered his health by a similar plan, though without any of those rigid regulations which marks the plan of Cornaro. Sir John observes,—though naturally possessed of a sound constitution, untainted by any hereditary disease, yet, about the year 1797, he fell into a weak and enervated state, found himself unequal to manage his private concerns, of prosecuting useful enquiries, or of applying his mind to political pursuits, with his former zeal and energy; he saw, also, many of his contemporaries die at an early period, before their constitutions had, apparently, suffered much decay. By

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The weakness of my constitution, which was considerably increased by my way of living, cast me into so deplorable a condition, that I was forced to bid a final adieu to all feastings, to which I had all my life a violent inclination. I was so often engaged in excesses of this kind, that my tender constitution could not hold up under them. I fell into several distempers, such as pains of the stomach, the cholic, and the gout. I had a lingering fever, and an intolerable thirst continually hanging upon me. This made me despair of any cure, and though I was then not above forty years old, yet I had no hopes of finding any other end of my distempers, but what should end my life too.*

The best physicians in Italy made use of all their skill for my recovery, but without success. At last, when they quite despaired of me, they told me that they knew only of one remedy that could cure me, if I had resolution enough to undertake and continue it: to wit, a sober and regular life, which they exhorted me to live the remainder of my days, assuring me, that it

reflecting on these circumstances, and a number of others, with which the subject is connected, he came to the conclusion, that more die from their own faults than from actual disease; and that life might, accordingly, be prolonged, and health enjoyed with satisfaction, by a proper and regulated conduct with each individual, in regard to the various circumstances connected with the continuance or support of life; accordingly, by laying down a proper plan of proceeding for himself, he not only recovered his own health, but was enabled, by his advice to others, to render them an equal benefit. These circumstances led him to publish his celebrated work, entitled, "A Code of Longevity," where he brings forward, as a leading professional example of his precepts, the celebrated physician, Galen, who, by a certain plan strictly adhered to, reached the age of one hundred and forty.

* Though a regular diet will lessen the fit of the gout, it will by no means cure it, unless very early begun. The fit is connected with a something like a critical matter, discharged from the constitution, by the secretion of the joints or extreme parts of the body, which will accumulate, though in a less degree under a regulated regimen.

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intemperance had brought so many distempers, it was only temperance that could free me from them.

I relished this proposal; and perceived, that notwithstanding the miserable condition to which my intemperance had reduced me, yet the contrary might recover, or at least ease me. And I was the more easily persuaded to it, because I knew several persons of a great age, and a bad constitution, who only prolonged their lives by observing a regimen; whilst, on the other hand, I knew others who were born with a wonderful constitution, and yet broke it by their debaucheries.*

The physicians beginning to find me tractable, added to what they had before told me, that I must either choose a regimen or death; that I could not live if I did not follow their advice; and that if I deferred much longer taking my resolutions accordingly, it would be too late to do it. This was home; I was loth to die so soon, and could not tell how to bear the thoughts of it; so I resolved upon putting into practice this course of life, how austere soever it seemed to me.

I intreated my physicians to inform me exactly after what manner I ought to govern myself? To this they replied, that I must always manage myself as a sick person; eat nothing but what was good, and that in a small quantity. I did so: in a little time I found relief; and (which may seem to some incredible) at the year's end, I found myself perfectly cured of all my distempers.†

* It is to be regretted that health is seldom attended to till too late; but the foundation for longevity should be laid in youth, and when early began, on a regular system, it is in the power of every one to add twenty or thirty years to his life with satisfaction and comfort.

† The first fruits of Cornaro's regimen were evinced in the space of one year, when, from a low estate of bodily infirmity, he entirely recovered his health: a flattering example for others to follow. But though Cornaro's system is proper, and should be known, in order to establish what nature actually requires, and no more; yet, without such privation, one general line of conduct is only necessary—the rule of temperance and moderation.

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When I saw I was recovered, and began to taste the sweets of this sort of resurrection, I made abundance of reflections upon the usefulness of a regular life: I admired the efficacy of it; and perceived, that if it had been so powerful as to cure me, it would be capable enough of preserving me from those distempers to which I had been always subject.

The experience I had thereof removing all farther scruple, I began to study what food was proper for me. I was minded to try whether what pleased my taste were beneficial or prejudicial to my health; and whether the proverb were true, which says, "That which delights the palate cannot but be good for the heart?" I found it to be false; and that it only serves as an excuse to the sensualists, who are for indulging themselves in whatever might please their appetites.

I loved heady wines, salt meats, high sauces, and baked meats, yet they were prejudicial to me. Hereupon I made no account of the proverb; but being convinced of its falsity, made choice of such wines and meats as agreed with my constitution: I proportioned the quantity thereof to the strength of my stomach. I declined all diet that did not agree with me; and made it a law to myself to lay a restraint upon my appetite; so that I always rose from table with a stomach to eat more. In a word, I entirely renounced intemperance. This has freed me from all my infirmities. I never before lived a year together without falling once at least into some violent distemper: but this never happened to me afterwards; on the contrary, I have been always healthful ever since I have been temperate.

Even this temperance should be regulated by the age and pursuits of the individual; for what is temperance, accompanied with an active and laborious life, would constitute intemperance with the sedentary and indolent: no precise rules, therefore, can exactly apply, but every one will learn, in a certain time, both what quantity his constitution can bear, and what articles best agree with him.

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The nourishment which I take, being in quality and quantity just enough to suffice nature, breeds no such corrupt humours as spoil the best constitutions. It is true, indeed, that besides this precaution, I made use of many others. For instance, I took care to keep myself from heats and colds, I abstained from all violent exercises, as also from ill hours. I no longer lived in places where was an unwholesome air, and took special care to avoid the being exposed to violent winds, or to the excessive heat of the sun. All these cautions may seem morally impossible to those men, who, in their transactions in the world, follow no other guide but their own passions; and yet they are not hard to be practised, when a man can be so just to himself, as to prefer the preservation of his health to the pleasures of sense, and hurry of business.

I likewise found it advantageous to restrain the force of those passions,* whose violence does often break the constitution of the strongest bodies. It is true, indeed, that sometimes I fell into those disorders that I would have avoided; but this rarely happened: and the guard I kept over my appetite, prevented all the pernicious consequences which might have arisen from my petty irregularities.

This is certain, that the passions have less influence, and cause less disorder, in a body that is regular in its diet, than in another which gives the loose to an inordinate appetite. I might produce several authorities to support this opinion; but I will go only upon mine own experience. It was impossible for me sometimes to avoid the extremes of heat and cold, and to get an entire mastery over all the occasions of trouble; but

* The great art of man is to manage well the restless mind, for there lies, in general, the bane of health: the talents adapted to long life are those of the solid, not the brilliant cast; and few brilliant men, or those who possess the real spark of genius, except Fontenelle, have reached to the age of one hundred.

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yet these emotions made no alteration in the state of my health: and I met with many persons who sunk under a less weight, both of body and mind.*

At seventy years of age I had an experiment of the usefulness of my regimen. A business of an extraordinary consequence drawing me into the country, my coach-horses being lashed with the whip, got a-head, and ran away with me. I was overthrown, and dragged a long way before they could stay the horses. They took me out of the coach, with my head broken, and a leg and an arm out of joint. As soon as they had brought me home, they sent for the physicians, who did not expect I could live three days: however, they resolved upon letting me blood, to prevent the fever, which usually happens in such cases. I was so confident the regular life which I had led had prevented the contracting any ill-humours, that I opposed their prescription. I ordered them to dress my head, to set my leg and arm, to rub me with some oils proper for bruises; and without any other remedies I was soon cured, to the great astonishment of the physicians, and of all those who knew me. From hence I infer, that a regular life is an excellent preservative against all natural evils.

About five years ago, I was over-persuaded to do a thing which had like to have cost me dear. My relations, who have a real tenderness for me; my friends, with whom I was willing to comply in any thing reasonable; and lastly, my physicians, did all agree, that I eat too little; that the nourishment I took, was not sufficient for one of my years; that I ought not only to support nature, but likewise to increase the vigour of it, by eating a little more than I did. It was in vain for me to represent to them, that nature is content with a little; that this little having preserved me so long in health, custom was become a second nature to me;

* Equanimity of temper is the golden rule for longevity.

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that it was more reasonable, since natural heat abates in proportion as one grows older, that I should likewise abridge my diet.

But all this could not prevail upon them; and being wearied with their importunities, I was forced to submit. Having therefore before been used to take twelve ounces, in bread, soups, yolks of eggs, and meat, I increased it to fourteen ounces a day: and to fourteen ounces of wine, I added two ounces more, and made it sixteen.

This augmentation of diet was so prejudicial to me, that as brisk as I was, I began to be sad, and out of humour; every thing offended me, and upon the least occasion I broke out into a passion. At twelve days end, I was taken with a violent fit of the cholick, followed by a continual fever, which tormented me five and thirty days together, and for the first fifteen days put me into such an agony, that it was impossible for me to take a quarter of an hour's sleep at a time. There was no occasion to ask my friends whether they despaired of my life, and whether they repented of the advice they had given me; for they several times believed that I was a dying man, just giving up the ghost. However, I recovered, though I was seventy-eight years of age, and though we had a harder winter than is usual in our climate.*

Nothing freed me from this danger but the regimen which I had so long observed. It had prevented me from contracting those ill humours, with which they are troubled in their old age, who are not so wise as to take care of themselves whilst they are young. I did not perceive in me the old leaven of those humours, and having nothing to struggle with, but the new ones,

* Temporary repletion, in moderate people, requires only a fast for a day or two, to restore the system to its regular state. This was the practice of the celebrated John Hume, the author of the Tragedy of "Douglas." When he was in London, and overpowered by the hospitality of his friends, he made it a rule to fast always on Sunday, and take nothing but an egg.

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which were occasioned by this small addition to my diet, I conquered my indisposition, notwithstanding its force.

From this sickness, and my recovery from it, we may discern, what an influence a regimen has over us, which preserved me from death; and what a power repletion has, which in so few days brought me to the last extremity.

If all men would live regularly and frugally, there would be so few sick persons, that there would hardly be any occasion for remedies; every one would become his own physician, and would be convinced that he never met with a better. It would be to little purpose to study the constitution of other men; every one, if he would but apply himself to it, would always be better acquainted with his own, than with that of another; every one would be capable of making those experiments for himself, which another could not do for him, and would be the best judge of the strength of his own stomach, and of the food which is agreeable thereto.*

Since no man, therefore, can have a better physician than himself, nor a more sovereign antidote than a regimen, every one ought to follow my example; that is, to study his own constitution, and to regulate his life according to the rules of right reason.

I own, indeed, that a physician may be sometimes necessary; since there are some distempers which human prudence cannot provide against. There happen some unavoidable accidents, which seize us after such a manner, as to deprive us of our judgment. A physician then may be needful for the recovery of our health: but for the maintaining of that health, there needs no other support but a sober and regular life.

It may be objected, that if one who is well, is dieted like one that is sick, he will be at a loss about the choice

* The Emperor Tiberius thought it shameful in any man, after the age of sixty, not to know his own pulse without having recourse to a physician.

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of his diet when any distemper comes upon him. To this I say, that nature teaches us how we ought to govern ourselves in such a case. It begins by depriving us altogether of our appetites, that we can eat little or nothing. At that time, whether the sick person has been sober or intemperate, no other food ought to be made use of, but such as is proper for the condition wherein he is; such as broth, barley-water, &c. When his recovery will permit him to make use of a more solid nourishment, he must take less than he was used to before his sickness; and, notwithstanding the eagerness of his appetite, he must take care of his stomach, till he has a perfect cure. Should he do otherwise, he would overburden nature, and infallibly relapse into the danger from whence he escaped. But notwithstanding this, I dare aver, that he who leads a sober and regular life will hardly ever be sick; or if he is, it will be but seldom, and for a short time. This way of living preserves us from those humours which occasion our infirmities, and by consequence heals us of all those distempers which they engender.

I do not persuade every body to eat as little as I do, or to debar themselves from the use of many things from which I refrain. I eat but little, because my stomach is nice; and I abstain from certain dishes, because they are prejudicial to me. They who are not offended by them, are not obliged to refrain from them; only they ought to abstain from eating too much, even of that which agrees with them. In short, he that is offended at nothing, has no occasion of enquiring into the quality of his diet, he ought only to be cautious of the quantity.*

* The treatise of Cornaro is written with the garrulity and egotism of an old man, full of the perfection of his own system. The principle of that system is just and correct; but the length to which he has carried it only shews what a trifle will suffice to support nature, though such a life of rigid privation can only expect to be imitated under disease.

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It signifies nothing to tell me, several who deny themselves nothing, yet live as long without infirmities as they who are sober. This is but rare, very uncertain, and in a manner miraculous. And in the mean time it is certain, an infirm old man will live longer by observing a strict regimen, than a young, vigorous, and healthful man will, that gives the loose to his appetite.

However, this is true, that a good constitution, with a regular life, will carry a man farther than a weak one, though managed with an equal degree of care. God and nature may form bodies so strong and robust as to be proof against all that is contrary to us, but among a thousand one shall hardly meet with the like. All others, who are for a long and healthful life, who would enjoy the advantages of a happy old age, will never come to it without sobriety.

Having thus given the reasons which made me abandon an intemperate, and take up with a sober life, as also the method I observed in it, the benefit which I reaped from it, and the advantage which others may receive from the practice thereof; I shall now direct my discourse to those who fancy, that when a man is past seventy, his life is nothing but weakness and misery.

In the first place, I can assure them that they are mightily mistaken; and that I find myself, as old as I am, (which is much beyond what they speak of) to be in the most pleasant and delightsome stage of life.

I am still so strong at fourscore and three, as to mount a horse without any help: I can not only go down stairs without any concern, but likewise descend a hill on foot: I am always pleased, always in good humour; maintaining a happy peace in my own mind, the sweetness and serenity whereof appear at all times in my countenance.

I taste all the pleasures of an agreeable society, with several persons of parts and worth. When I am willing to be alone, I read good books, and sometimes fall

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to writing; seeking always an occasion of being useful to the public, and doing service to private persons. I do all this without the least trouble; and in such times as I set apart for these employments.

Sometimes I take a walk to my Villa, all those streets terminate at a large square; in the midst of which is a pretty neat church, and large enough for the bigness of the parish.

Through this Villa runs a rivulet, and the country about is enriched with fruitful and well-cultivated fields; having, at present, a considerable number of inhabitants. This was not so anciently: it was a marshy place, and the air so bad that it was more proper for frogs and toads than for men to dwell in. I thought it advisable to drain the marsh lands, so that being dry, the air became more wholesome. Several families have settled there, and rendered the place very populous; where, I may say, that I have dedicated to the Lord a church, altars, and hearts to worship him: which reflection is a great comfort to me, as often as I make it.

That which charmed me most, in the little journies I took, was the various prospects of places through which I went: the plains, the hills, the rivulets, the castles, and the villages, where so many objects that afforded a delightful view.

And the pleasures I take, are not imperfect upon the account of the weakness of my organs; I see and hear as well as ever I did in my life; all my senses are as free and as perfect as ever; especially my taste, which is better with that little I eat at present, than when I was a slave to my appetite.

Changing of beds is no hinderance to my repose, I sleep very soundly; and if I dream, my dreams are pleasant.

It is with a great deal of satisfaction that I see the end of a work of such importance to this state, which has rendered so many places fertile, that before were

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uncultivated and useless; a thing I never expected to have seen completed, considering how many states are loth to begin, and weary to carry on, undertakings of so vast a charge, and so difficult to be performed. I was upon the places for two months together, with the commissaries that had the oversight of these works, and this, during the greatest heat of summer: and yet, neither the unwholesome air of the fens, nor the fatigue, did me any injury.

Such as these are the employments and diversions of my old age; which is, blessed be God, free from those disturbances of mind, and infirmities of body, under which so many poor crazy old men, as well as miserable young men, labour.

As an addition to my happiness, I see myself as it were born again by the great number of my descendants. I meet with not only two or three, when I come home, but eleven grand children, the eldest of which is eighteen, and the youngest two years old, all born of the same father and the same mother; all healthful, of good parts, and of promising hopes. I take delight in playing with the youngsters; children between three and five years of age being generally very diverting company. Those who are older entertain me better: I often make them sing, and play upon musical instruments, and sometimes I join in concert with them.

A sober life therefore being so necessary, and the enjoyment of it so beneficial, nothing remains but to conjure all men, as they love themselves, to make the best of life, and lay in a stock of that which being the most precious of all, deserves to be sought after, if we have it not, and to be preserved, if we have it.

It is this divine sobriety, which is pleasing to God, and the friend of nature; she is the daughter of reason, the sister of all other virtues; always cheerful, always modest, always wise and regular in her operations. She is the root of health, of industry, and of whatever

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becomes a great soul to be employed about. She has the laws of God and Nature, both to justify and enforce her. When she reigns, repletion, disorders, evil habits, superfluous humours, fevers, aches, and the fears of death, do not embitter our pleasures.

CHAP. II.

The method of correcting a bad Constitution.

SEVERAL persons whose weak constitutions required great care in the management of them, having been well satisfied with what I have written concerning sobriety; the experience which they have had of the usefulness of my counsels, and the acknowledgments which they have made thereof, encourage me to take up my pen again, that I may convince those who meet with no inconvenience from intemperance, that they are in the wrong in relying so much on the strength of their constitution.

Let it be ever so well composed, yet it holds not good but to such an age. These persons seldom arrive to sixty, before they decay all of a sudden, and perceive themselves loaded with a complication of distempers. Some are gouty, dropsical, and rheumatical; others are subject to cholics, the stone, and piles; yea, to abundance of distempers, which would never have happened to them, if they had been so wise as to have taken care of themselves in their youth. If they die infirm at fourscore years of age, they might have lived

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