



HOW TO LIVE ONE HUNDRED YEARS

A blueprint for a long and healthy life and happy old age. Written over 400 years ago, its message is needed even more today to counter the strains of twentieth-century life.

HOW TO LIVE ONE HUNDRED YEARS

The Famous Treatise written Four Hundred Years ago on Health and
Longevity

by

LUIGI CORNARO

With an Introduction by

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER ONE: ON HEALTH AND LONGEVITY	13
CHAPTER TWO: ON RULES FOR MAINTAINING HEALTH AND PROLONGING LIFE	32
CHAPTER THREE: ON THE JOYS OF OLD AGE	39
LETTERS WRITTEN BY CORNARO	45

INTRODUCTION

FOR the last four hundred years or more the name of Luigi Cornaro has been widely known in all works published on the various aspects of health and longevity. He was, as most people probably know, an Italian nobleman who was born in the year 1467 and died in his ninety-ninth year in 1565. The story of his life appears to be a very simple one. Until he was between thirty-four and forty years of age he lived as became the members of his class at that time, eating and drinking liberally. Being born with a frail constitution, he found himself very much the victim of his own habits, broken in health and spirits and with little prospect of continuing his existence. His physicians, clearly wise men in their generation, told him that there was only one course open to him if he wished to overcome his afflictions; to reform his habits of eating and drinking. The logic of this made a great impression on Cornaro, and he threw himself into the scheme with both intelligence and purpose. The results clearly exceeded his fondest expectations, and within a year or so he felt that physical and mental regeneration had been bestowed on him. This was his own personal background out of which his story developed.

At the age of eighty-three, after long experience of his way of living, he wrote his first treatise, on "A Sober and Temperate Life." This was in the year 1550, a time when in Italy the writing of a treatise was almost an art in itself, and it was peculiarly suited to the message which Cornaro desired to impart. In writing of these times in his *Civilization of the Renaissance* (George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London), Jacob Burckhardt said:

"From the oratory and the epistolary writings of the humanists, we pass on to the other creations, which were all, to a greater or less extent, reproductions of antiquity. Among these must be placed the treatise, which often took the shape of a dialogue. In this case it was borrowed directly from Cicero. In order to do anything like justice to this class of literature—in order not to throw it aside at first sight as a bore—two things must be taken into consideration. The century which escaped from the influence of the Middle Ages felt the need of something to mediate between itself and antiquity in many questions of morals and philosophy; and this need was met by the writer of treatises and dialogues. Much which appears to us a mere commonplace in their writings, was for them and their contemporaries a new and hardly won view of things upon which mankind had been silent from the days of antiquity. The language, too, in this form of writing, whether Italian or Latin, moved more freely and flexibly than in historical narrative, in letters, or in oratory, and thus became itself the source of a special pleasure. Several Italian compositions of this kind still hold their place as patterns of style. Many of these works have been, or will be mentioned on account of their

contents; we will refer to these here as a class. From the time of Petrarch's letters and treatise down to near the end of the fifteenth century, the heaping up of learned questions, as in the case of the orators, is the main business of most of these writers. The whole style, especially in Italian, was then suddenly clarified, till, in the 'Asolani' of Beino, and the 'Vita Sobria' of Luigi Cornaro, a classical perfection was reached."

From this point alone, and quite apart from the contents of these discourses, Cornaro's treatises are well worth reading. They carry with them an atmosphere and flavour that compel one to feel the sincerity of his message: Good health and long life are a reward, a just return for the virtuous efforts of the individual. There is very little appeal to the idea that society may be the great determining factor in health, disease and long life; by doing the right and proper thing the individual could then look forward to the harvest of health and life.

It is interesting to notice that, in spite of the times in which he lived, Cornaro rarely exhorted the individual to seek the services of physicians. Indeed, all through the treatise one senses a certain amount of antagonism to medical practice which must then have been mixed up with all kinds of superstitions and dangerous methods. Although he gives evidence that he came under the influence of astrology, he never appears to have given much credence to the medical practices that were usually associated with that belief. Indeed, so much emphasis is placed on the importance of self-discipline that it leaves no room for extraneous aids. The medical man with his elixirs, his charms, his herbs, his incantations- and history tells us that they existed in abundance at that time - seems to have made very little impression on Cornaro. From the middle of the fifteenth to the beginning of the seventeenth century is usually regarded as the time when the foundation of the modern period of medicine was laid, so that during Cornaro's lifetime the ordinary physician practised the weirdest therapies. He believed in the Zodiac, and blood-letting was at its height, and prognostications for it depended on the signs of the Zodiac. In the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini we prevailing at that time, though of course we must allow learn something of the standard of medical practice a little for the vain boasting and self-glorification of the author. He tells of a great surgeon who came to Rome.

"This clever man, in the course of his other professional duties, took certain desperate cases of the French evil. Now in Rome priests are particularly liable to this disease, especially the richest of them. Well, when this distinguished man became known he declared he would cure the malady by means of fumigations. But before beginning a cure he first bargained for his fees...."

Cellini tells also of his own illnesses and their treatment. His doctors tried

one remedy after the other, and the malady went from bad to worse. He suffered from an insatiable thirst, but was forbidden by the attending physicians from quenching it, until in sheer desperation he persuaded a maid to bring him a huge flask of water, which he drank. From that time his recovery was assured, and no one appeared more surprised than his doctors. It was therefore no mean intellectual accomplishment on the part of Cornaro to be able to discern at such a time the value of self-discipline and sensible habits of living in promoting and maintaining health. Although he advocated a strict adherence to a simple diet, he never lost sight of the fact that "man does not live by bread alone"; he did not commit the folly of arguing, as do, unfortunately, many modern food enthusiasts, that the magic of the cure lies within the food itself. What he insisted upon doing was to make his daily food conform to the needs of his body, and to prevent it from smothering his health and energy through the exercise of uncontrolled and excessive appetite.

That we still have need for the wisdom and teachings of Cornaro may be seen from the letters, from doctors and others, that appear in the medical and daily Press, bewailing the fact that many old people are a nuisance to themselves, consumers of much-needed food, and, in brief, an encumbrance to the earth. Certain questions are implicit in almost all such letters: What can be done about the old people, who are increasing in number? What can be done about those who are a burden on their sons and daughters, not only in the economic sense but in the emotional one also? What can be done about people who grow old not in wisdom and kindness but in selfishness? What can be done about aging folk who go on consuming food and occupying space and contributing very little in return? Would these people, of little use to themselves or to others, agree to voluntary euthanasia? One letter, in particular, which appeared in a medical journal, stated these views with great frankness, and the writer, a doctor in active practice, actually asked for suggestions from his confreres about the problems as they affected him in his professional work. Advancing age among his patients seemed to develop into a time for taking and not for giving, and the doctor appeared to be at a complete loss to know just how to meet the situation. "Why encumber the ground?" he wrote. "Segregation may be one remedy, or, more brutally, they might be induced to agree to voluntary euthanasia. But I doubt even if it were allowed—that many would agree to this. What, Sir, is your suggestion?"

One has only to use a little imagination to realise how much help such a doctor could be to himself and to his patients if he were able to appreciate the philosophy of Cornaro's teachings. Whilst he did not mention the ages of the old people under his care, there is little doubt that few of them were as old as Cornaro, and none of them, of course, appeared to be living any kind of a useful life. It would be an extremely interesting and useful investigation to find out how many such old people are consuming too much food, and are

lacking in the discipline so necessary for the modification of such habits. It is clear from the letter that the doctor has very little conception of the place of the physician as teacher, and there can be very little doubt that he seems to think that he has exhausted his skill when the patient is no longer young and vigorous. But, as Camaro so clearly emphasises, there is a cause for the infirmities of old age apart from the number of one's days, and generally speaking it lies in the adoption of immoderate habits of eating and drinking and living. His essays are a good example of his will and, indeed, his right to live, because no one can deny that his mind was clear and his body active until the end of his life. No one reading the essays would possibly decide that the writer was a *fit* person for euthanasia.

Cornaro's discourses on longevity and the simple life are of real value and interest at the present time, when food is scarce and the number of old people in the world steadily increasing. Of the shortage of food, we must see at once that this must bear relationship not only to the amount of food that is eaten but also to the actual amount that is needed. Few people have excelled Cornaro in pointing out that the difference may mean the difference between poor health and premature death on the one hand, and good health and a long and useful life on the other. Cornaro was born in 1467, so it is well over four hundred years ago since these essays were written; and yet, in spite of whatever medical and social progress that has since been made, no one can gainsay the validity of his arguments.

At the present time the subject of longevity is very much to the fore, and new words, used to describe the care and treatment of the aged, are creeping into common usage. The study of the phenomena of old age, gerontology, is already a commonly found expression in the lay Press, and geriatrics, a word covering the treatment of diseases of old age, abounds in all the medical journals.

The fact is, of course, that people are living longer, and we are already talking about the problems of old people. It is estimated, for example, that in England, in a population of 50,000,000, no less than 6,500,000 are old people, that is to say, men and women who have passed about sixty years of age. Roughly speaking, then, one in every eight of the population is an old person, and it is confidently asserted that in the future this proportion will be much higher.

The increasing number of old people in the community has stressed the urgency of the problem, the problem being, of course, the burden of their growing helplessness. Their inability to earn their food and shelter, their inability to be emotionally stable and self-sufficient are, perhaps, the two most important aspects of the problem. In brief, then, just as poverty is the problem of the poor, so ineffectiveness is the problem of the aged.

There are two ways of attempting to solve the problem. One is that the individual should remain effective to practically the end of his days, and the other is that the community should make provision for the old at a certain age. Already, as we all know, the community has accepted that responsibility, and as a token of that responsibility the old age pension has been instituted. With the extension of social insurance and the provisions of the National Health Service these community responsibilities have been taken still further, although they apply, of course, to the community as a whole and not specifically to the aged.

But no matter how much may be done in this way, it should be clear that the larger part of the problem still remains to be tackled: the persons' own responsibility in the matter. For we must see that for the person who desires, above all things, to be a normal individual, too much care and solicitude may be as bad as too little. Except in cases of emergency there is nothing that will undermine one's morale so much as relieving one of responsibility, and old age is peculiarly a time when so much harm of this kind may be done.

In the general opinion, reaching old age is all a matter of chance even if we could eliminate the possibility of accidents. Everybody knows how from time to time discussion goes on about those who have reached it and how widely divergent have been their habits of living. Some of them have smoked excessively or not at all, some of them have eaten meat whilst others have been practically vegetarians. Some have been big eaters, others small; and so it has gone on until it seems impossible to lay one's finger on a common denominator that would be applicable for the attainment of an effective old age.

But we should not be too willing to accept the arguments that may so readily be drawn from such discussions. In the past, old age has been closely linked with disease, and as long as people believed that they might find an elixir of life, or a specific cure for disease, without relation to causative factors, they found it difficult to think that daily habits played any part either in eradicating disease or in promoting a long and healthy life. It is, we should remind ourselves, a very recent innovation to think in terms of positive health: i.e. a condition in which society and the individual play a conscious part in ensuring physical fitness.

However, the wisdom that Cornaro displayed in perceiving that health and longevity were related makes his contribution to the subject of great value, because not only did he observe that daily habits of moderation and restraint helped to make life more livable by eliminating illness and aches and pains, but they induced also a more philosophic attitude towards the problems that beset a long life. Therein lay a great deal of the strength of his contentions. It was not only the inculcation of good daily habits into his life that helped him; it was a profound belief in the essential rightness of his actions that

sustained him. There can be little doubt that this was a real factor in maintaining his bodily and mental wellbeing.

Cornaro's ideas about a sufficient diet must have been, especially at the time when they were propounded, truly revolutionary. In the social circles in which he lived, feasting and gluttony were undoubtedly the order of the day; no doubt many believed, as they do even today, that their bodily strength was in proportion to the amount of food they consumed - "eating to keep up one's strength"... and, of course, over-eating was a social privilege. This was clearly the background to Cornaro's life until he arrived at about thirty-five years of age, surfeited with food and wines, with aches and pains in his limbs, a deranged digestive system, intermittent fevers, and all the infirmities of body and mind which made his life well-nigh intolerable.

His conversion to a simple diet and sober ways of living was actuated not by a desire to lengthen his life but to overcome his sufferings which medicine had clearly failed to eradicate. That was the first and the hardest test for his new ways of living, and it proved signally successful. In less than a year, he tells us, he had regained his health; aches, pains and fevers which no other treatment could cure had, by the simple expedient of "going on a diet," become just a memory.

Moderation in eating and drinking became his watchword. So long as he kept to his plan all was well, but kindly folk who persuaded him to increase the amount of his food—as they always do in such cases—soon showed him how necessary it was to keep within his limits. By trial and error he was able to satisfy himself of the importance of a rigid adherence to a strictly limited intake of food, and in spite of the professional and popular opinion that such a diet meant early extinction, he went on living with much greater zest than he ever knew before.

Cornaro made another important discovery about his simple diet and its effect upon his health and vitality. After he had met with a severe accident his physicians were called in, and promptly proposed to bleed and purge him, and to apply the usual heroic treatments that were then in vogue. But he instinctively felt that the safer plan was to let Nature heal, and having had his damaged limbs set, he thereupon relied upon his simple diet as a sole means of help. Nor was he disappointed, because he made a wonderful recovery, and his own conviction about the wisdom of his way of life was greatly strengthened.

It is important, I think, to bear in mind that Comaro had had both these experiences with his health and the healing of his accident, because it provided him with a sound basis for making his old age effective and worth while. It is clear that the mere living of a long life might be a tortuous affair if it meant that one had to go on suffering one's infirmities. It might also be an extremely difficult thing to attain if it meant the employment of special

means, and the attendance of highly trained and highly paid physicians with their entourage of nurses and attendants. In such cases it would be a special privilege which could be bought only with considerable wealth.

But Cornaro showed that it was not the possession of wealth which might enable him to buy high medical skill that permitted him to overcome his disabilities; it was the exercises of self-restraint and self-discipline in eating and drinking and his daily habits that brought to him life's greatest wealth: health of mind and body. Indeed, being a nobleman, he was surrounded by the very things that would probably have destroyed him if he had indulged his appetite in an unthinking way.

There is a lesson here that all of us should learn, and especially those who would extend their days into old age. First, perhaps, at the present time is the economic one. The world, we are told, is in danger of starvation. Food supplies are short and populations are increasing. Millions are living on the verge of starvation and will continue to do so for years to come, and even if the food supplies are stepped up the margin will remain a narrow one for a long time to come. Yet the paradox is, as Cornaro showed hundreds of years ago, that, whilst many are eating themselves into disease and discomfort, millions are faced with the spectre of want.

In early life it may be argued that the food intake must be commensurate with the needs of the appetite and the body, and, indeed, when the system is building up its various parts and organs there is much less danger of producing the disorders of which Cornaro has written, but after maturity has been reached there is a real danger in taking foods very much in excess of the physiological needs of the body. The common reply to this argument is that we do, to a great extent, live to eat, and if we merely ate to live we should have to substitute some other form of satisfaction for the enjoyment we undoubtedly get out of over-eating. The question then takes on a moral aspect, because if we are wasting food when others are in dire want we are acting without due regard to our humane and social responsibilities.

As age advances, the need for more rigid economy with food takes on greater importance. As the capacity for production decreases so the need for food decreases also, and to make the system dispose of unnecessary food places a strain on all the organs of the body. It is very important for people in middle age and past to realise this fact, because if they ignore it they not only waste food but they dissipate their own limited store of energy. It was this axiom that Cornaro so clearly grasped and was wise enough to follow.

All through Cornaro's discourses one feels that he is constantly addressing himself to an opposition, and occasionally this opposition is named as coming particularly from the medical profession. It is an interesting historical fact of how much the profession of medicine has opposed and derided any

individual attempt to safeguard health through the exercise of self-care and the adoption of careful daily habits of living. The practice of medicine, as we all know, was rooted in many primitive beliefs and what we now call superstition. In those early days disease was regarded as something akin to evil spirits, which attacked the individual, and methods of treatment were largely based upon ideas of exorcising the afflicting evil. Disease and chaos became almost synonymous terms, and when the patient was sick something had to be done to put matters right. So long as people considered disease to be a condition in which something had gone wrong in the economy of the system, they felt impelled to try to put matters right. This led to the idea that disease might be cured by means of foreign substances, and all the world was searched for agents to cure it. The herbs of the fields, the metals of the earth, there is not a known element that has not been used in this way, and even today we find it very difficult to get away from the idea of cure, implying, of course, that the system could be restored to normality without regard for causative factors.

To argue, therefore, as Cornaro did, that the body could cure itself if the individual corrected his daily habits of eating and living, and, indeed, that this, too, was the key to longevity, was surely flying in the face of both popular and scientific opinion. If Cornaro was right and the secret of good health and a long life lay in such simple measures as he propounded, what on earth would have become of the practice of medicine!

Cornaro perceived, therefore, that not only could people live on a diet of the utmost simplicity and thus reduce the necessity for expending undue labour and resources in food production, but at the same time, and by the same means, they could revolutionise medical teachings, and reduce to a bare minimum the cost of medical attention which is always a considerable item in the lives of people, especially in old age.

That these economies would be of supreme importance at the present time no one will deny, and by holding out to the aging individual a simple way in which he could to a large extent control his health and well-being, and thus be independent, was an attractive programme for a long life. The fear of a long life - and many rational people do have this fear in mind—is based on the fear of being dependent on others. There is the fear that one may be dependent on one's children, not only, of course, economically but emotionally also. There is the fear, too, that one may be dependent on society, and although society at the present time seems to be more aware of its responsibility in the matter, no person, old or young, can contemplate such help and succour without a feeling of resentment that we should regard old age and dependence as synonymous terms.

Here, again, we may turn to Cornaro for real words of wisdom. It was not enough for him that a simple diet should merely prolong his days: these days

had to be filled with usefulness. Such usefulness depended on the preservation of his senses and the development of a philosophic outlook, and these attributes were his in abundance. He wrote: "I have been visited by many of the learned doctors of this university, as well as physicians as philosophers, who were all acquainted with my age, my life and my manners; knowing how stout, hearty and gay I was, and in what perfection all my faculties still continued; likewise my memory, spirits, and understanding and even my voice and teeth."

It was important, Cornaro maintained, to know not only how to live but how to die, and the death that he visualised had to come without sickness and without suffering. Of the phenomenon of natural death we know little today because of its rarity. The vast majority die because of accident or disease. Again, Cornaro perceived something about the transition of life to death which still puzzles the scientist and the philosopher.

Of his actual demise Antonio Maria Grazianj wrote:
"The excellent old man, feeling that he was approaching the termination of his life, did not regard the awful change with dread, but simply as a passage from one mansion to another. He was reclining upon the very narrow cot which he always used, and was attended by his wife, Veronica, who was nearly as old as himself. With a strong and clear voice, he told me that he cheerfully awaited the stroke of death; and wished all manner of prosperity to my patron, Commendoni, to whom he declared that he would write a letter of friendly counsel, with his own hand. He said that he thought he would survive two days longer; and being shortly after overpowered by sudden debility and faintness, he desired to have recourse anew to the consolations of religion. . . He then disposed himself with dignity, and closing his eyes as if in slumber, gave a gentle sigh and expired."

HARRY CLEMENTS

CHAPTER ONE

ON HEALTH AND LONGEVITY

[In the year 1550 Luigi Cornaro, then eighty-three years of age, took up his pen and wrote his famous Treatise on Health and Longevity, showing how by the use of simple food, eaten regularly and with great self-discipline, old age could become the most pleasant time of life.]

The Making of Good and Bad Habits

It is a thing past all doubt that custom, by time, becomes a second nature, forcing men to use that, whether good or bad, to which they have been habituated: nay, we see habit in many things get the better of reason. This is so undeniably true that virtuous men, by conversing with the wicked, very often fall into the same vicious course of life. The contrary, likewise, we see sometimes happen: viz, that, as good morals easily change to bad, so bad morals change again to good. For instance, let a wicked man, who was once virtuous, keep company with a virtuous man, and he will again become virtuous; and this alteration can be attributed to nothing but the force of habit, which is, indeed, very great. Seeing many examples of this and, besides, considering that, in consequence of this great force of habit, two bad customs have got footing in Italy within a few years, even within my own memory—the first flattery and ceremoniousness, the second intemperance—and that these two vices, like so many cruel monsters, leagued, as indeed they are, against mankind, have gradually prevailed so far as to rob civil life of its sincerity, the soul of its piety, and the body of its health, I have resolved to treat of the last of these vices and prove that it is an abuse, in order to extirpate it if possible. As to the first, flattery, I am certain that some great genius or another will soon undertake the task of exposing its deformity and effectually suppressing it. Therefore, I firmly hope that before I die I shall see these two abuses conquered and driven out of Italy, and this country of course restored to its former laudable and virtuous customs.

Intemperate Habits Destroy Many People in the Flower of their Youth

To come then to that abuse of which I have proposed to speak—namely, intemperance—I say that it is a pity it should have prevailed so much as entirely to banish sobriety. Though all are agreed that intemperance is the offspring of gluttony, and sober living of abstemiousness, the former, nevertheless, is considered as a virtue and a mark of distinction, and the latter as dishonourable and the badge of avarice. Such mistaken notions are entirely owing to the power of custom, established by our senses and irregular appetites; these have blinded and besotted men to such a degree that, leaving the paths of virtue, they have followed those of vice, which lead them before their time to an old age, burdened with strange and mortal infirmities, so as to render them quite decrepit before forty, contrary to the effects of sobriety, which, before it was banished by this destructive intemperance, used to keep man sound and hearty to the age of eighty and upwards.

O wretched and unhappy Italy! Do not you see *that* intemperance murders every year more of your subjects than you could lose by the most cruel plague, or by fire and sword in many battles? Those truly shameful feasts - now so much in fashion, and so intolerably profuse that no tables are large enough to hold the dishes, which renders it necessary to heap them one upon another!— those feasts, I say, are so many battles; and how is it possible to support nature by such a variety of contrary and unwholesome foods? Put a stop to this abuse, for God's sake, for there is not, I am certain of it, a vice, more abominable than this in the eyes of the Divine Majesty. Drive away this new kind of death, as you have banished the plague, which, though it formerly used to make such havoc, now does little or no mischief, owing to the laudable practice of attending more to the goodness of the provisions brought to our markets.

There are means still left to banish intemperance, and such means, too, that every man may have recourse to them without any assistance. Nothing more is requisite for this purpose than to live up to the simplicity dictated by nature, which teaches us to be content with little, to pursue the medium of holy abstemiousness and divine reason, and to accustom ourselves to eat no more than is absolutely necessary to support life, considering that what exceeds this is disease and death, and merely gives the palate a satisfaction which, though but momentary, brings on the body a long and lasting train of disagreeable sensations and diseases, and at length destroys it along with the soul. How many friends of mine—men of the finest understanding and most amiable dispositions

—have I seen carried off by this plague in the flower of their youth? These men, were they now living, would be an ornament to the public, and their company I should enjoy with as much pleasure as I now feel concern at their loss.

Old Age is the Time of Life for Prudence and Reason

In order, therefore, to put a stop to so great an evil, I have resolved by this short discourse to demonstrate that intemperance is an abuse which may be easily removed, and that the good old sober living may be substituted in its stead. This I undertake the more readily as many young men of the best understanding, knowing that it is a vice, have requested it of me, moved thereto by seeing their fathers drop off in the flower of their youth, and me so sound and hearty at the age of eighty-three. They express a desire to reach the same term, nature not forbidding us to wish for longevity, and old age being, in fact, the time of life in which prudence can be best exercised, and the fruits of all the other virtues enjoyed with less opposition, the passions being then so subdued that man gives himself up entirely to reason. They besought me to let them know the method pursued by me to attain it; and then, finding them intent on so laudable a pursuit, I have resolved to treat of that method, in order to be of service not only to them but to all those who may be willing to peruse this discourse. I shall, therefore, give my reasons for renouncing intemperance, and betaking myself to a sober course of life, declare freely the method pursued by men for that purpose, and then set forth the effects of so good a habit upon me, whence it may be clearly gathered how easy it is to remove the abuse of intemperance. I shall conclude by showing how many conveniences and blessings are the consequences of a sober life.

“I Find Myself Broken in Mind and Body at an Early Age”

I say, then, that the heavy train of infirmities, which had not only invaded but even made great inroads in my constitution, were my motives for renouncing intemperance, to which I had been greatly addicted; so that, in consequence of it, and the badness of my constitution, my stomach being exceedingly cold and moist, I was fallen into different kinds of disorders, such as pains in my stomach and often stitches and spices of the gout, attended by—what was still worse—an almost continual slow fever, a stomach generally out of order, and a perpetual thirst. From these natural and acquired disorders, the best delivery I had to hope for was death, to put an end to the pains and miseries of life: a period very remote in the regular course of nature, though I had hastened it by my irregular manner of living.

Finding myself, therefore, in such unhappy circumstances between my thirty-fifth and fortieth year, everything that could be thought of having been tried to no purpose to relieve me, the physicians gave me to understand that there was but one method left to get better of my complaints provided I would resolve to use it and patiently persevere in it. This was a sober and regular life, which they assured me would be still of the greatest service to me and would be as powerful in its effects as the intemperate and irregular one had been in reducing me to the present low condition: and that I might be fully satisfied of its salutary effects, for though by my irregularities I was

become infirm, I was not reduced so low but that a temperate life, the opposite in every respect to an intemperate one, might still entirely recover me. And besides, it in fact appears, such a regular life, whilst observed, preserves men of a bad constitution and far gone in years, just as a contrary course has the power to destroy those of the best constitution and in their prime; for this plain reason, that different modes of life are attended by different effects, are following, even herein, the steps of nature, with equal power to correct natural vices and imperfections. This is obvious in husbandry and the like. They added that if I did not immediately have course to such a regimen, I could receive no benefit from it in a few months, and that in a few more I must resign myself to death.

Adopts a Diet and is Benefited in a Few Days

These solid and convincing arguments made such an impression on me that, mortified as I was besides by the thoughts of dying in the prime of life, and at the same time perpetually tormented by various diseases, I immediately concluded that the foregoing contrary effects could not be produced but by contrary modes of living; and, therefore, full of hopes, resolved, in order to avoid at once both death and diseases, to betake myself to a regular course of life. Having, upon this, inquired of them what rules I should follow, they told me that I must not use any food, solid or liquid, but such as, being generally prescribed to sick persons, is for that reason called diet, and both very sparingly.

These directions, to say the truth, they had before given me; but it was at a time of life when, impatient of such restraint and finding myself satiated, as it were, with such food, I could not put up with it, and therefore ate freely of every thing I liked best, and likewise, feeling myself in a manner parched up by the heat of my disease, made no scruple of drinking, and in large quantities, the wines that best pleased my palate. This, indeed, like all other patients, I kept a secret from my physicians. But when I had once resolved to live sparingly and according to the dictates of reason, seeing that it was no difficult matter - nay, that it was my duty as a man to do so - I entered with so much resolution upon this new course of life that nothing has been since able to divert me from it. The consequence was that in a few days I began to perceive that such a course agreed with me very well; and by pursuing *it*, in less than a year I found myself (some persons, perhaps, will not believe it) entirely freed from all my complaints.

The Paramount Importance of Careful Habits of Eating and Drinking

Having thus recovered my health, I began seriously to consider the power of temperance, and say to myself, that if this virtue had efficacy enough to subdue such grievous disorders as mine, it must have still greater to preserve me in health, to help my bad constitution, and comfort my very weak stomach. I therefore applied myself diligently to discover what kinds of food suited me best. But first I resolved to try whether those which 'pleased my

palate agreed or disagreed with my stomach, in order to judge for myself the truth of that proverb, which I once held for true, and is universally held as such in the highest degree, insomuch that epicures, who give a loose to their appetites, lay it down as a fundamental maxim. This proverb is that whatever pleases the palate must agree with the stomach and nourish the body; or whatever is palatable must be equally wholesome and nourishing. The issue was that I found it to be false: for though rough and very cold wines, as likewise melons and other fruits, salad, fish, and pork, tarts, garden-stuff, pastry, and the like, were very pleasing to my palate, they disagreed with me notwithstanding. Having thus convinced myself that the proverb in question was false, I looked upon it as such; and, taught by experience, I gave over the use of such meats and wines, and likewise of ice, and chose wine suited to my stomach, drinking of it but the quantity I knew I could digest. I did the same by my meat, as well in regard to quantity as to quality, accustoming myself never to cloy my stomach with eating or drinking, but constantly rise from table with a disposition to eat and drink still more. In this I conformed to the proverb which says that a man, to consult his health, must check his appetite.

Having in this manner and for these reasons conquered intemperance and irregularity, I betook myself entirely to a temperate and regular life, which affected me in the alteration already mentioned; that is, in less than a year it rid me of all those disorders which had taken so deep a root in me - nay, as I have already observed, had made such a progress as to be in a manner incurable. It had likewise this other good effect, that I no longer experienced those annual fits of sickness with which I used to be afflicted while I followed a different- that is, a sensual - course of life; for then I used to be attacked every year with a strange kind of fever which sometimes brought me to death's door. From this disease, then, I freed myself, and became exceedingly healthy, as I have continued from that time forward to this very day; and for no other reason than that I never trespassed against regularity, which by its infinite efficacy has been the cause, and that the meat I constantly ate and the wine I constantly drank, being such as agreed with my constitution and taken in proper quantities, imparted all their virtue to my body, and left it without difficulty and without engendering in it any bad humours.

Health of Body the Greatest Safeguard against Dejection and Melancholy

In consequence therefore of my taking such methods I have always enjoyed, and (God be praised) actually enjoy, the best of health. It is true, indeed, that, besides: the two foregoing more important rules relative to eating and drinking, which I have ever been very scrupulous to observe—that is, not to take of anything but as much: as my stomach can easily digest, and to use those things. only which agree with me—I have carefully avoided, heat, cold, and extraordinary fatigue, interruption of my; usual

hours of rest, excessive venery, making any stay' in bad air, and exposing myself to the wind and sun; for these, too, are great disorders. But then, fortunately, there is no great difficulty in avoiding them, the love of life and health having more sway over men of understanding than any satisfaction they could find in doing what must be extremely hurtful to their constitution. I have likewise done all that lay in my power to avoid those evils which we do not find so easy to remove; these are melancholy, hatred, and other violent passions, which appear to have the greatest influence over our bodies. However, I have not been able to guard so well against either one or the other kind of those disorders as not to suffer myself now and then to be hurried away by many, not to say all, of them; but I have reaped the benefit of knowing by experience that these passions have, in the, main, no great influence over bodies governed by the two foregoing rules of eating and drinking, and therefore can do them but very little harm; so that it may with great truth be affirmed that whoever observes these two capital rules is liable to very little inconvenience from any other excesses.

Galen, who was an eminent physician, observed this before me. He affirms that so long as he followed these rules relating to eating and drinking he suffered but little from other disorders - so little that they never gave him a day's uneasiness. That what he says is true I am a living witness, and so are many others who know me, and have seen how often I have been exposed to heats and colds and such other disagreeable changes of weather, and have, likewise, seen me (owing to various misfortunes which have more than once befallen me) greatly disturbed in mind. For they can not only say of me that such disturbance of mind has done me very little harm, but they can aver, of many others who did not lead a sober and regular life, that it proved very prejudicial to them, amongst whom were a brother of my own and others of my family who, trusting to the goodness of their constitution, did not follow my way of living. The consequence hereof was a great misfortune to them, the perturbations of the mind having thereby acquired an extraordinary influence over their bodies. Such, in a word, was their grief and dejection at seeing me involved in expensive law suits, commenced against me by great and powerful men, that, fearing I should be cast, they were seized with that melancholy humour, with which intemperate bodies always abound; and these humours had such an influence over them, and increased to such a degree, as to carry them off before their time; whereas I suffered nothing on the occasion, as I had in me no superfluous humours of that kind.

Nay, in order to keep up my spirits, I brought myself to think that God had raised up these suits against me, in order to make me more sensible of my strength of body and mind, and that I should get the better of them with honour and advantage, as it, in fact, came to pass: for, at last, I obtained a decree exceeding favourable to my fortune and my character, which, though it gave me the highest pleasure, had not the power to do me any harm in other respects. Thus it is plain that neither melancholy nor any other

affection of the mind can hurt bodies governed with temperance and regularity.

Proper Living Habits the Best Way of Helping Nature to Heal Injuries

But I must go a step further and say that even my fortunes themselves can do but very little mischief, or cause but very little pain to such bodies; and that this is true I have myself experienced at the age of seventy. I happened, as is often the case, to be in a coach which, going at a pretty smart rate, was upset, and in that condition drawn a considerable way by the horses before means could be found to stop them; whence I received so many shocks and bruises, that I was taken out with my head and all the rest of my body terribly battered and a dislocated leg and arm. When I was brought home the family immediately sent for the physicians, who, on their arrival, seeing me in so bad a plight, concluded that within three days I should die. Nevertheless, they would try what good two things would do me; one was to bleed me, the other was to purge me, and thereby prevent my humours altering, as they every moment expected, to such a degree as to ferment greatly and bring on a high fever. But I, on the contrary, who knew that the sober life I had led for many years past had so well united, harmonised and disposed my humours as not to leave it in their power to ferment to such a degree, refused to be either bled or purged. I caused my leg and arm to be set, and suffered myself to be rubbed with some oils which they said were proper on the occasion. Thus, without using any other kind of remedy, I recovered, as I thought I should, without feeling the least alteration in myself or any other bad effects from the accident: a thing which appeared miraculous even in the eyes of the physicians.

Hence we are to infer that whoever leads a sober and regular life, and commits no excess in his diet, can suffer but very little from disorders of any other kind or external accidents. On the contrary, I conclude, especially from the late trial I have had, that excesses in eating and drinking are fatal. Of this I convinced myself four years ago, when, by the advice of my physicians, the instigation of my friends and the importunity of my own family, I consented to such an excess which, as it will appear hereafter, was attended with far worse consequences than could naturally be expected. This excess consisted in increasing the quantity of food I generally made use of, which increase alone brought on me a most cruel fit of sickness. And as it is a case so much in point to the subject in hand, and the knowledge of it may be useful to some of my readers, I shall take the trouble to relate it.

Twelve Ounces of Food Found to be the Proper Amount to Keep Me in Normal Health

I say, then, that my dearest friends and relations, actuated by the warm and laudable affection and regard they have for me, seeing how little I ate, represented to me, in conjunction with my physicians that the sustenance I

took could not be sufficient to support one so far advanced in years, when it was become necessary not only to preserve nature but to increase its vigour, and that, as this could not be done without food, it was absolutely incumbent upon me to eat a little more plentifully. I, on the other hand, produced my reasons for not complying with their desires. These were that nature is content with little, and that with this little I had preserved myself so many years, and that to me the habit of it was become a second nature; that it was more agreeable to reason that, as I advanced in years and lost my strength, I should rather lessen than increase the quantity of my food; further that it was but natural to think that the powers of the stomach grew weaker from day to day, on which account I could see no reason to make such an addition. To corroborate my arguments I alleged those two natural and very true proverbs - one, that he who has a mind to eat a great deal must eat but little, which is said for no other reason than this, that eating little makes a man live very long, and living very long he must eat a great deal; the other proverbs that what we leave after making a hearty meal does us more good than what we have eaten. But neither these proverbs nor any other arguments I could think of, were able to prevent their teasing me more than ever. Wherefore, not to appear obstinate, or affect to know more than the physicians themselves, but above all to please my family, who very earnestly desired it, from a persuasion that such an addition to my usual allowance would preserve my strength, I consented to increase the quantity of food, but with two ounces only; so that, as before, what with bread, meat, the yolk of an egg, and soup, I ate as much as weighed in all twelve ounces, neither more nor less, but I now increased it to fourteen, and as before I drank fourteen ounces of wine, I now increased it to sixteen.

This increase and irregularity had, in eight days' time, such an effect upon me, that, from being cheerful and brisk, I began to be peevish and melancholy, so that nothing could please me, and was constantly so strangely disposed that I knew neither what to say to others nor what to do with myself. On the twelfth day I was attacked with a most violent pain in my side, which held rue twenty-two hours, and was succeeded by a terrible fever, which continued thirty-five days and as many nights, without giving me a moment's respite; though, to say the truth, it began to abate gradually on the fifteenth. But notwithstanding such abatement, I could not, during the whole time, sleep half a quarter of an hour together, insomuch that everyone looked upon me as a dead man. But, God be praised, I recovered merely by my former regular course of life, though then in my seventy-eighth year, and in the coldest season of a very cold year, and reduced to a mere skeleton; and I am positive that it was the great regularity I had observed for so many years, and that only, which rescued me from the jaws of death. In all that time I never knew what sickness was, unless I may call by that name some slight indisposition of a day or two's continuance; the regular life I had led, as I have already taken notice, for so many years, not having permitted any superfluous or bad humours to breed in me - if they did, to acquire such

strength and malignity as they generally acquire in the superannuated bodies of those who live without rule. And as there was not any old malignity in my humours (which is the thing that kills people) but only that which my new irregularity had occasioned, this fit of sickness, though exceeding violent, had not strength enough to destroy me. This it was, and nothing else, that saved my life; whence may be gathered, how great is the power and efficacy of regularity, and how great, likewise, is that of irregularity, which in a few days could bring on me so terrible a fit of sickness, just as regularity had preserved me in health for so many years.

No Man can be a Perfect Physician to Anyone but Himself

And it appears to me a no weak argument that, since the world, consisting of the four elements, is upheld by order, and our life, as to the body, is no other than a harmonious combination of the same four elements, so it should be preserved and maintained by the very same order; and, on the other hand, it must be worn out by sickness or destroyed by death, which are produced by the contrary effects. By order, the arts are more easily learned; by order, armies are rendered victorious; by order, in a word, families, cities, and even states are maintained. Hence I concluded that orderly living is o other than a most certain cause and foundation of,, health and long life; nay, I cannot help saying that it is, the only and true medicine, and whoever weighs the matter well must `also conclude that this is really the case.

Hence it is that when a physician comes to visit a patients the first thing he prescribes is to live regularly. I In like manner, when a physician takes leave of a patient, on his being recovered, he advises him, as he values his health, to lead a regular life. And it is not to be doubted that, were a patient so recovered to live in that manner, he could never be sick again, as it removes every cause of illness, and so for the future he would never want either physician or physic. Nay, by attending duly to what I have said, he would become his own physician, and indeed the best he could have, since, in fact, no man can be a perfect physician to any one but himself. The reason of which is that any man may, by repeated trials, acquire a perfect knowledge of his own constitution and the most hidden qualities of his body, and what wine and food agree with his stomach. Now it is so far from being an easy matter to know these things perfectly of another that we cannot without much trouble discover them in ourselves, since a great deal of time and repeated trials are requisite for that purpose.

No Better Physic than a Regular Life

These trials are, indeed (if I may say it), more than necessary, as there is a greater variety in the natures and constitutions of different men than in their persons. Who could believe that old wine, ' wine that has passed its first year, should disagree with my stomach, and new wine agree with it, and that

pepper, which is looked upon as a warm spice, should not have a warm effect upon me, insomuch that I find myself more warmed and comforted by cinnamon? Where is the physician that could have informed me of these two latent qualities, since I myself, even by a long course of observation, could scarce discover them? From all these reasons it follows that it is impossible to be a perfect physician to another. Since, therefore, a man cannot have a better physician than himself, nor any physic better than a regular life, a regular life he ought to embrace.

A Regular Life Preserves Man to the Age of a Hundred and Upwards

I do not, however, mean that, for the knowledge and cure of such disorders, as often befall those who do not live regularly, there is no occasion for a physician and that his assistance ought to be slighted. For if we are apt to receive such great comfort from friends who come to visit us in our illness, though they do no more than testify their concern for us and bid us be of good cheer, how much more regard ought we to have for the physician, who is a friend that comes to see us in order to relieve us and promises us a cure? But for the bare purpose of keeping us in good health I am of opinion that we should consider as a physician this regular life, which, as we have seen, is our natural and proper physic, since it preserves men, even those of a bad constitution, in health, makes them live sound and hearty to the age of one hundred and upwards, and prevents their dying of sickness or through a corruption of their humours, but merely by a dissolution of their radical moisture when quite exhausted - all which effects several wise men have attributed to potable gold and the elixir sought for by many but discovered by few. However, to confess the truth, men, for the most part, are very sensual and intemperate, and love to satisfy their appetites and to commit every excess. Therefore, seeing that they cannot avoid being greatly injured by such excess as often as they are guilty of it, they say, by way of apologising for their conduct, that it is better to live ten years less and enjoy themselves; not considering of what importance are ten years more of life, especially a healthy life and at a maturer age, when men become sensible of their progress in knowledge and virtue, which cannot gain to any degree of perfection before this period of life.

Proper Diet the Most Important Factor in Achieving Long Life

Not to speak, at present, of many other advantages, I shall barely mention that in regard to letters and the sciences. Far the greatest number of the best and most celebrated books extant were written during that period of life and those ten years which some make it their business to undervalue, in order to give a loose to their appetites. Be that as it will, I would not act like them. I rather coveted to live these ten years, and, had I not done so, I should never have finished those tracts which I have composed in consequence of my having been sound and hearty these ten years past, and which I have the pleasure to think will be of service to others.

These sensualists add that a regular life is such as no man can lead. To this I answer, Galen, who was so great a physician, led such a life and chose it as the best physic. The same did Plato, Cicero, Isocrates, and many other great men of former times, whom, not to tire the reader, I shall forbear naming; and, in our own days, Pope Paul Farnese led it, and Cardinal Bembo, and it was for that reason they lived so long; likewise our two doges, Lando and Donato, besides many other of meaner condition, and those who live not only in cities but also in different parts of the country, who all found great benefit by conforming to this regularity.

Therefore, since many have led this life, and many actually lead it, it is not such a life but that everyone may conform to it, and the more so as no great difficulty attends it, nothing, indeed, being requisite but to begin in good earnest, as the above-mentioned Cicero affirms, and all those who now live in this manner. Plato, you will say, though he himself lived very regularly, affirms notwithstanding that in republics men cannot do so, being often obliged to expose themselves to heat, cold and several other kinds of hardship and other things, which are all so many disorders attended with any bad consequence or which affect either health or life. Then the man who undergoes them observes the rules of sobriety and commits no excess in the two points concerning diet which a republican may very well avoid—nay, it is requisite he should avoid, because by so doing he may be sure either to escape those disorders which otherwise it would be no easy matter for him to escape while exposed to these hardships, or, in case he could not escape them, he may more easily and speedily prevent their bad effects.

Regular Living Extirpates the Seeds of Illness

Here it may be objected, and some actually object, that he who leads a regular life, having constantly, when well, made use of food fit for the sick, and in small quantities, has no resource left in case of illness. To this I might in the first place answer that nature, desirous to preserve man in good health as long as possible, herself informs him how he is to act in time of illness; for she immediately deprives him, when sick, of his appetite, in order that he may eat but a little, because nature (as I have said already) is satisfied with little; wherefore it is requisite that a man, when sick, whether he has been a regular or irregular liver, should use no meats but such as are suited to his disorder, and of these even in a much smaller quantity than he was wont to do when in health.

For were he to eat as much as he used to do he would die by it, because it would be only adding to the burden with which nature was already oppressed, by giving her a greater quantity of food than she can in such circumstances support; and this, I imagine, would be a sufficient caution to any sick person. But, independent of all this, I might answer some others, and still better, that whoever leads a regular life cannot be sick, or at least but seldom and for a short time, because by living regularly he extirpates

every seed of sickness, and thus by removing the cause prevents the effect; so that he who pursues a regular course of life need not be apprehensive of illness, as he who has guarded against the cause need not be afraid of the effect.

One Must be Moderate in All Things Appertaining to Nutrition

Since it therefore appears that a regular life is so profitable and virtuous, so lovely and so holy, it ought to be universally followed and embraced, and the more so as it does not clash with the means or duties of any station, but is easy to all; because to lead it a man need not tie himself down to eat so little as I do, or not to eat fruit, fish and other things of that kind, from which I abstain, who eat little, because it is sufficient for my puny and weak stomach, and fruit, fish, and other things of that kind disagree with me, which is my reason for not touching them. Those, however, with whom such things agree may, and ought, to eat them, since they are not by any means forbid the use of such sustenance. But, then, both they and all others are forbidden to eat a greater quantity of any kind of food, even of that which agrees with them, than their stomachs can easily digest; the same is to be understood of drink. Hence it is that those with whom nothing disagrees are not bound to observe any rule but that relating to the quantity, and not to the quality, of their food: a rule which they may, without the least difficulty in the world, comply with.

A Regular Life Leads to a Natural Death, when the Flame of Life Goes Out like the Flame of a Lamp

Let nobody tell me that there are numbers who, though they live most irregularly, live in health and spirits to those remote periods of life attained by the most sober; for, this argument being grounded on a case full of uncertainty and hazard, and which besides so seldom occurs as to look more like a miracle than the work of nature, men should not suffer themselves to be thereby persuaded to live irregularly, nature having been too liberal to those who did so without suffering by it—a favour which very few have any right to expect. Whoever, trusting to his youth, or the strength of his constitution, or the goodness of his stomach, slights these 4 observations must expect to suffer greatly by so doing, and live in constant danger of disease and death.

I therefore affirm that an old man, even of a bad constitution, who leads a regular and sober life is surer of a long one than a young man of the best constitution who leads a disorderly life. It is not to be doubted, however, that a man blessed with a good constitution may, by living temperately, expect to live longer than? one whose constitution is not so good, and that God and nature can dispose matters so that a man shall bring into the world with him so sound a constitution as to live lo and healthy without observing such strict rules, and the die in a very advanced age through a mere dissolution of his elementary parts.

This was the case in Venice of the procurator Thomas Contarini and in Padua of the cavalier Antonio Capo di Vacca. But it is not one man in a thousand that so much can be said of. If others have a mind to live long and healthy and die without sickness of body or mind, but by mere dissolution, they must submit to live regularly, since they cannot otherwise expect to enjoy the fruits of such a life, which are almost infinite in number, and each of them, in particular, of infinite value. For, as such regularity keeps the humours of the body cleansed and purified, it suffers no vapours to ascend from the stomach to the head; hence the brain of him who lives in that manner enjoys such a constant serenity that he is always perfectly master of himself.

He therefore easily soars above the low and grovelling concerns of this life to the exalted and beautiful contemplation of heavenly things, to his exceeding great comfort and satisfaction, because by this means he comes to consider, know, and understand that which otherwise he would never have considered, known, or understood that is, how great is the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Deity.

He then descends to nature and acknowledges her for the daughter of God, and sees and even feels with his hands that which in any other age or with a perception less clear he could never have seen or felt. He then truly discerns the brutality of that vice into which they fall Who know not how to subdue their passions and those three importunate lusts which, one would imagine, came all together into the world with us, in order to keep us in perpetual anxiety and disturbance. These are the lust of the flesh, the lust of honours, and the lust of riches, which are apt to increase with years in such old persons who do not lead a regular life, because in their passage through the stage of manhood they did not, as they ought, renounce sensuality and their passions and take up with sobriety and reason, virtues which men of a regular life did not neglect when they passed through the above-mentioned state. For, knowing such passions and such lusts to be inconsistent with reason, by which they are entirely governed, they at once broke loose from all temptations to vice and, instead of being slaves to their inordinate appetites, they applied themselves to virtue and good works; and by these means they altered their conduct and became men of good and sober lives.

When therefore, in process of time, they see themselves brought by a long series of years to their dissolution, conscious that, through the singular mercy of God, they had sincerely relinquished the paths of vice as never afterwards to enter them, and moreover hoping, through the merits of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, to die in His favour, they do not suffer themselves to be cast down at the thoughts of death, knowing that they must die. This is particularly the case when, loaded with honour and sated with life, they see themselves arrived at that age which not one in many thousands of those who live otherwise ever attain. They have still the greater reason not to be dejected at the thoughts of death, as it does not attack them violently and by

surprise, with a bitter and painful turn of their humours, with feverish sensations and sharp pains, but steals upon them insensibly, and with the greatest ease and gentleness; such an end proceeds entirely from exhaustion of the radical moisture, which decays by degrees like the oil of a lamp, so that they pass gently, without any sickness, from this terrestrial and mortal to a celestial and eternal life.

Immoderation Leads only to Misery

O holy and truly happy regularity! How holy and happy should men, in fact, deem thee, since the opposite habit is the cause of such guilt and misery, as evidently appears to those who consider the opposite effects of both! Men should know thee by thy voice alone, and thy lovely name; for what a glorious name, what a noble thing, is an orderly and sober life - as, on the contrary, the bare mention of disorder and intemperance is offensive to our ears. Nay, there is the same difference between the mentioning these two things as between the uttering of the words angel and devil.

Old Age Should Be an Enjoyable Period of Life

Thus I have assigned my reasons for abandoning intemperance and betaking myself entirely to a sober life, with the method I pursued in doing so, and what was the consequence of it, and, finally, the advantages and blessings which a sober life confers upon those who embrace it. Some sensual, inconsiderate persons affirm that a long life is no blessing, and that the state of man who has passed his seventy-fifth year cannot really be called life, but death. But this is a great mistake, as I shall fully prove; and it is my sincere wish that all men would endeavour to attain my age, in order that they too may enjoy that period of life which of all others is the most desirable.

Bodily and Mental Activity in Old Age is the Reward of a Sensible Way of Life

I will therefore give an account of my recreations, and the relish which I find at this stage of life, in order to convince the public (which may likewise be done by all those who know me) that the state I have now attained to is by no means death, but real life—such a life as by many is deemed happy, since it abounds with all the felicity that can be enjoyed in this world. And this testimony they will give, in the first place, because they see, and not without the greatest amazement, the good state of health and spirits I enjoy, how I mount my horse without any assistance or advantage of situation, and how I not only ascend a single flight of stairs, but climb up a hill, from bottom to top, afoot and with the greatest ease and unconcern; then bow gay, pleasant and good-humoured I am, how free from every perturbation of mind and every disagreeable thought, in lieu of which joy and peace have so firmly fixed their residence in my bosom as never to depart from it. Moreover, they know in what manner I pass my time, so as not to find life a burden, seeing I can contrive to spend every hour of it with the greatest

delight and pleasure, having frequent opportunities of conversing with many honourable gentle men, men valuable for their good sense and manners, their acquaintance with letters, and every other good quality. Then, when I cannot enjoy their conversation, I betake myself to the reading of some good book. When I have read as much as I like, I write, endeavouring, in this as in everything else, to be of service to others to the utmost of my power. And all these things I do with the greatest ease to myself, at their proper seasons, and in my own house, which, besides being situated in the most beautiful quarter of this noble and learned city of Padua, is in itself really convenient and handsome—such, in a word, as it is no longer the fashion to build; for in one part of it I can shelter from extreme heat, and in the other from extreme cold, having contrived the apartments according to the rules of architecture, which teaches us what is to be observed in practice.

The Various Activities of a Healthy Life

Besides this house I have my several gardens, supplied with running waters, and in which I always find something to do that amuses me. I have another way of diverting myself, which is going every April and May, and likewise every September and October, for some days, to enjoy an eminence belonging to me in the Euganean mountains, and in the most beautiful part of them, adorned with fountains and gardens and, above all, a convenient and handsome lodge, in which place I likewise now and then make one in some hunting party suitable to my taste and age. Then I enjoy for as many days my villa in the plain, which is laid out in regular streets, all terminating in a large square, in the middle of which stands the church, suited to the condition of the place. This villa is divided by a wide and rapid branch of the River Brenta, on both sides of which there is a considerable extent of country consisting entirely of fertile and well-cultivated fields. Besides, this district is now, God be praised, exceedingly well inhabited, which it was not at first, but rather the reverse; for it was marshy, and the air so unwholesome as to make it a residence fitter for snakes than men. But, on my draining off the waters, the air mended, and people resorted to it so fast and increased to such a degree that it soon acquired the perfection in which it now appears: hence I may say with truth that I have offered this place, an altar and a temple to God, with souls to adore him. These are things which afford me infinite pleasure, comfort, and satisfaction as often as I go to see and enjoy them.

“And All My Dreams are Pleasant and Delightful”

At the same seasons every year I revisit some of the neighbouring cities, and enjoy such of my friends as live there, taking the greatest pleasure in their company and conversation; and by their means I also enjoy the conversation of other men of parts, who live in the same places, such as architects, painters, sculptors, musicians and husbandmen, with whom this age most certainly abounds. I visit their new works; I revisit their former ones; and I always learn something which gives me satisfaction. I see the palaces, gardens, antiquities, and with these, the squares and other public

places, the churches, the fortifications, leaving nothing unobserved, from whence I may reap either entertainment or instruction. But what delights me most in my journeys backwards and forwards is to contemplate the situation and other beauties of the places I pass through: some in the plain, others on hills, adjoining to rivers or fountains, with a great many fine houses and gardens. Nor are my recreations rendered less agreeable and entertaining by my not seeing well, or not hearing readily everything that is said to me, or by any other of my faculties not being perfect; for they are all, thank God, in the highest perfection—particularly my palate, which now relishes better the simple fare I eat, wherever I happen to be, than it formerly did the most delicate dishes when I led an irregular life. Nor does the change of beds give me any uneasiness, so that I sleep everywhere soundly and quietly, without experiencing the least disturbance; and all my dreams are pleasant and delightful.

Old Age May be Lived without Fatigue

It is likewise with the greatest pleasure and satisfaction that I behold the success of an undertaking so important to this state, I mean that of draining and improving so many uncultivated pieces of ground - an undertaking begun within my memory, and which I never thought I should live to see completed, knowing how slow republics are apt to proceed in enterprises of great importance.

Nevertheless, I have lived to see it, and was even in person in these marshy places, along with those appointed to superintend the draining of them, for two months together, during the greatest heats of summer, without ever finding myself the worse for the fatigues or inconveniences I suffered; of so much efficacy is that orderly life which I everywhere constantly lead.

On Taking an Interest in Social Affairs and the Future

What is more, I am in the greatest hopes, or rather sure, to see the beginning and completion of another undertaking of no less importance, which is that of preserving our estuary or port, that last and wonderful bulwark of my dear country, the preservation of which (it is not to flatter my vanity I say it, but merely to do justice to truth) has been more than once recommended by me to this republic, by word of mouth and in writings which cost me many nights' study. And to this dear country of mine, as I am bound by the laws of nature to do everything from which it may reap any benefit, so I most ardently wish perpetual duration and a long succession of every kind of prosperity.

Such are my genuine and no trifling satisfactions; such are the recreations and diversions of my old age, which is so much the more to be valued than the old age, or even youth, of other men, because, being freed by God's grace from the perturbations of the mind and the infirmities of the body, it

no longer experiences any of those contrary emotions which torment a number of young men and many old ones destitute of strength and health and every other blessing.

“I Write a Comedy at Eighty-three Years of Age”

And if it be lawful to compare little matters, and such as are esteemed trifling, to affairs of importance, I will further venture to say that such are the effects of this sober life that at my present age of eighty-three I have been able to write a very entertaining comedy, abounding with innocent mirth and pleasant jests. This species of composition is generally the child and offspring of youth, as tragedy is that of old age; the former being by its facetious and sprightly turn suited to the bloom of life, and the latter by its gravity adapted to riper years. Now, if that good old man Sophocles, a Grecian by birth and a poet, was so much extolled for having written tragedy at the age of seventy-three, and on that account alone reputed of sound memory and understanding— though tragedy be a grave and melancholy poem—why should I be deemed less happy, and to have a smaller share of memory and understanding, who have, at an age ten years more advanced than his, written a comedy which, as everyone knows, is a merry and pleasant kind of composition? And, indeed, if I may be allowed to be an impartial judge in my own cause, I cannot help thinking that I am now of sounder memory and understanding, and heartier, than he was when ten years younger.

The Immortality of Family Life

And, that no comfort might be wanting to the fullness of my years, whereby my great age may be rendered less irksome, or rather the number of my enjoyments increased, I have the additional comfort of seeing a kind of immortality in a succession of descendants. For as often as I return home I find there before me, not one or two, but eleven grandchildren, the oldest of them eighteen and the youngest two—all the offspring of one father and one mother, all blessed with the best health and, by what as yet appears, fond of learning and of good parts and morals. Some of the youngest I always play with; and, indeed, children from three to five are only fit to play. Those above that age I make companions of; and, as nature has bestowed very fine voices upon them, I amuse myself besides with seeing and hearing them sing and play on various instruments. Nay, I sing myself, as I have a better voice now, and a clearer and louder pipe, than at any other period of life. Such are the recreations of my old age.

Youth Presumes Too Much on its Strength, which is Easily Undermined by an Irregular Life

Whence it appears that the life I lead is cheerful, and not gloomy, as some persons pretend who know no better; to whom, in order that it may appear what value I set on every other kind of life, I must declare that I would not exchange my manner of living or my grey hairs with any of those young men, even of the best constitution, who give way to their appetites;

knowing, as I do, that such are daily—nay, hourly - subject to, as I have already observed, a thousand kinds of ailments and deaths. This is, in fact, so obvious as to require no proof. Nay, I remember perfectly well how I used to behave at that time of life. I know how inconsiderately that age is apt to act, and how foolhardy young men, hurried on by the heat of their blood, are wont to be; how apt they are to presume too much on their own strength in all their actions; and how sanguine they are in their expectations, as well on account of the little experience they have had for the time past as by reason of the power they enjoy in their own imaginations over the time to come. Hence they expose themselves rashly to every kind of danger; and, banishing reason, and bowing their necks to the yoke of concupiscence, endeavour to gratify all their appetites, not minding, fools as they are, that they thereby hasten, as I have several times observed, the approach of what they would most willingly avoid, I mean sickness and death. Of these two evils one is troublesome and painful, the other above all things dreadful and insupportable: insupportable to every man who has given himself up to his sensual appetites, and to young men in particular, to whom it appears a hardship to die an early death; dreadful to those who reflect on the errors to which this mortal life is subject, and on the vengeance which the justice of God is wont to take on sinners by condemning them to everlasting punishment. On the other hand I, in my old age (praise to the Almighty), am exempt from both these apprehensions: from the one because I am sure and certain that I cannot fall sick, having removed all the causes of illness by my divine medicine; from the other, that of death, because from so many years' experience I have learned to obey reason. Whence I not only think it a great piece of folly to fear that which cannot be avoided, but likewise firmly expect some consolation, from the grace of Jesus Christ, when I shall arrive at that period.

Further Reflections on the Naturalness of Death

Besides, though I am sensible that I must, like others, reach that term, it is yet at so great a distance that I cannot discern it, because I know I shall not die except by mere dissolution, having already, by my regular course of life, shut up all the other avenues of death, and thereby prevented the humours of my body from making any other war upon me than that which I must expect from the elements employed in the composition of this mortal frame.

I am not so simple as not to know that as I was born, so I must die. But that is a desirable death, which nature brings on us by way of dissolution. For Nature, having herself formed the union between our body and soul, knows best in what manner it may be most easily dissolved, and grants us a longer day to do it than we could expect from sickness, which is violent. This is the death which, without speaking like a poet, I may call not death, but life. Nor can it be otherwise. Such a death does not overtake one till after a very long course of years, and in consequence of an extreme weakness, it

being only by slow degrees that men grow too feeble to walk and unable to reason, becoming blind, and deaf, decrepit, and full of every kind of infirmity. Now I (by God's blessing) may be quite sure that I am at a very great distance from such a period. Nay, I have reason to think that my soul, having so agreeable a dwelling in my body as not to meet with anything in it but peace, love, and harmony, not only between its humours but between my reason and the senses, is exceedingly content and well pleased with her present situation, and, of course, that a great length of time and many years must be requisite to dislodge her. Whence it must be concluded for certain that I have still a series of years to live in health and spirits and enjoy this beautiful world, which is, indeed, beautiful to those who know how to make it so, as I have done, and likewise expect to be able to do, with God's assistance, in the next; and all the means of virtue and that divine regularity of life which I have adopted, concluding an alliance with my reason and declaring war against my sensual appetites; a thing which every man may do who desires to live as he ought.

Nature Bestows her Rights and Liberties on Those who Follow her Laws

Now, if this sober life be so happy, if its name be so desirable and delightful, if the possession of the blessings which attend it be so stable and permanent, then all I have still left to do is to beseech (since I cannot compass my desires by the powers of oratory) every man of liberal disposition and sound understanding to embrace with open arms this most valuable treasure of a long and healthy life.—a treasure which, as it exceeds all the other riches and blessings of this world, so it deserves above all things to be cherished, sought after, and carefully preserved. This is that divine sobriety, agreeable to the Deity, the friend of Nature, the daughter of reason, the sister of all the virtues, the companion of temperate living, modest, courteous, content with little, regular, and perfect mistress of all her operations. From her, as from their proper root, spring life, health, cheerfulness, industry, learning, and all those actions and employments worthy of noble and generous minds. The laws of God and man are all in her favour. Repletion, excess, intemperance, superfluous humours, diseases, fevers, pains, and the dangers of death vanish, in her presence, like clouds before the sun. Her comeliness ravishes every well-disposed mind. Her influence is so sure as to promise to all a very long and agreeable existence; the facility of acquiring her is such as ought to induce everyone to look for her and share in her victories.

And, lastly, she promises to be a mild and agreeable guardian of life, as well of the rich as of the poor, of the male as of the female sex, of the old as of the young; being that which teaches the rich modesty, the poor frugality, men continence, women chastity, the old how to ward off attacks of death, and bestows on youth firmer and securer hopes of life.

Sobriety renders the senses clear, the body light, the understanding lively, the soul brisk, the memory tenacious, our motions free, and all our actions regular and easy. By means of sobriety the soul - delivered, as it were, of her earthly burthen - experiences a great deal of her natural liberty; the spirits circulate gently through the arteries; the blood runs freely through the veins; the heat of the body, kept mild and temperate, has mild and temperate *effects*: and, lastly, our faculties, being under a perfect regulation, preserve a pleasing and agreeable harmony.

Sobriety of Habit Preserves All Life

O most innocent and holy sobriety of habit, the sole refreshment of nature, the nursing mother of human life, the true physic of soul as well as of body, how ought men to praise thee and thank thee for thy princely gifts! Since thou bestowest on them the means of preserving this blessing, I mean life and health, than which it has not pleased God we should enjoy a greater on this side of the grave, life and existence being a thing so naturally coveted and willingly preserved by every living creature. But, as I do not intend to write a panegyric on this rare and excellent virtue, I shall put an end to this discourse, lest I should be guilty of excess in dwelling so long on so pleasing a subject. Yet as numberless things may still be said of it, I leave off, with an intention of setting forth the rest of its praises at a more convenient opportunity.

CHAPTER TWO

ON RULES FOR MAINTAINING HEALTH AND PROLONGING LIFE

[In the year 1553 Cornaro took up his pen again and wrote another short treatise on the subject to which he was devoted. He was now eighty-six years of age, but his writing had lost none of his clearness of expression and he was even more convinced of the essential rightness of his teachings.]

Man May by Dint of Art Mend his Infirm Constitution and Live to Old Age

My treatise on a sober life has begun to answer my desire in being of service to many persons born with a weak constitution, who, every time they committed the least excess, found themselves greatly indisposed, a thing

which it must be allowed does not happen to robust people. Several of these persons of weak constitutions, on seeing the foregoing treatise, have betaken themselves to a regular course of life, convinced by experience of its utility. In like manner I should be glad to be of service to those who are born with a good constitution and, Presuming upon it, lead a disorderly life; whence it comes to pass, that, on their attaining the age of sixty or thereabouts, they are attacked with various pains and diseases - some with the gout, some with pains in the side, and others with pains in the stomach, and the like - to which they would not be subject were they to embrace a sober life; and as most of them die before they attain their eightieth year, they would live to a hundred, the time allowed to man by God and nature. And it is but reasonable to believe that the intention of this our mother is that we should attain that term, in order that we might all taste the sweets of every state of life. But, as our birth is subject to the revolutions of the heavens, these have great influence over it, especially in rendering our constitutions robust or infirm - a thing which nature cannot ward against, for if she could we should all bring a good constitution with us into the world. But then she hopes that man, being endowed with reason and understanding, may of himself compensate, by dint of art, the want of that which the heavens have denied him; and, by means of a sober life, contrive to mend his infirm constitution, live to a great age, and always enjoy good; health.

Man May, by Taking Thought of His Diet and Habits, Change his Disposition and Better his Temper

For man, it is not to be doubted, may by art exempt himself in part from the influence of the heavens, it being the common opinion that the heavens give an inclination but do not impel us, for which reason the learned say that a wise man rules the stars. I was born with a very choleric disposition, insomuch that there was no living with me; but I took notice of it, and considered that a person swayed by his passion must at certain times be no better than a madman—I mean at those times when he suffers his passions to predominate, because he then renounces his reason and understanding. I therefore resolved to make my choleric disposition give way to reason; so that now, though born choleric, I never suffer anger entirely to overcome me. The man who is naturally of a bad constitution may, in like manner, by dint of reason and a sober life, live to a great age and in good health, as I have done, who had normally the worst, so that it was impossible I should live above forty years, whereas I now find myself sound and hearty at the age of eighty-six; and were it not for the long and violent fits of illness which I experienced in my youth to such a degree that the physicians gave me over, and which robbed me of my radical moisture, a loss absolutely irreparable, I might expect to attain the above-mentioned term of one hundred. But I know for good reasons that it is impossible, and therefore do not think of it. It is enough for me that I have lived forty-six years beyond the term I had a right to expect, and that during this so long a respite all my

senses have continued perfect, and even my teeth, my voice, my memory, and my strength. But what is still more, my brain is more itself now than ever it was. Nor do any of these powers abate as I advance in years; and this is because, as I grow older, I lessen the quantity of my solid food.

Less Food is Required as Man Grows Older

This retrenchment is necessary, nor can it be avoided, since it is impossible for a man to live for ever; and as he draws near his end, he is reduced so low as to be no longer able to take any nourishment, unless it be to swallow, and that too with difficulty, the yolk of an egg in the four and twenty hours, and thus end by mere dissolution, without any pain or sickness, as I expect will be my case. This is a blessing of great importance, yet may be expected by all those who shall lead a sober life, of whatever degree or condition, whether high, or middling, or low; for we are all of the same species, and composed of the same four elements. And, since a long and healthy life ought to be greatly coveted by every man, as I shall presently show, I conclude that every man is bound in duty to exert himself to obtain longevity, and that he cannot promise himself such a blessing without temperance and sobriety.

Two Mistakes Many People Make when Assessing Longevity

Some allege that many, without leading such a life, have lived to be a hundred, and that in constant health, though they ate a great deal and used indiscriminately every kind of viands and wine; and, therefore, flatter themselves that they shall be equally fortunate. But in this they are guilty of two mistakes: the first is that it is not one in a hundred thousand that ever attains that happiness; the other mistake is that such, in the end, most assuredly contract some illness, which carries them off, nor can they ever be sure of ending their days otherwise. So the safest way to obtain a long and healthy life is, at least after forty, to embrace sobriety. This is no such difficult affair, since history informs us of so many who in former times lived with the greatest temperance; and I know that the present age furnishes us with many such instances, reckoning myself one of the number. We are all human beings, and endowed with reason, consequently we are masters of all our actions.

The Two Rules for Maintaining Health and Prolonging Life

This sobriety is reduced to two things, quality and quantity. The first, namely quality, consists in nothing: but not eating food or drinking wines prejudicial to the stomach. The second, which is quantity, consists in not eating or drinking more than the stomach can easily digest, which quantity and quality every man should be a perfect judge of by the time he is forty, or fifty, or sixty. And whoever observes these two rules may be said to live a regular and sober life. This is of so much virtue and efficacy that the humours of such a man's body become most homogeneous, harmonious, and perfect and, when thus improved, are no longer liable to be corrupted or

disturbed by any other disorders whatsoever, such as suffering excessive heat or cold, too much fatigue, want of natural rest, and the like, unless in the last degree of excess.

Wherefore, since the humours of persons who observe these two rules relative to eating and drinking cannot possibly be corrupted and engender acute diseases, the sources of an untimely death, every man is bound to comply with them; for whoever acts otherwise, living a disorderly instead of a regular life, is constantly exposed to disease and mortality and also, in consequence of such disorders, others without number, each of which is capable of producing the same destructive effect. It is, indeed, true that even those who observe the two rules relating to diet, the observance of which constitutes a sober life, *may*, by committing any one of the other irregularities, find himself the worse for it for a day or two; but not so as to breed a fever. He may likewise be affected by the revolutions of the heavens; but neither the heavens nor those irregularities are capable of corrupting the humours of a temperate person. And it is but reasonable and natural it should be so, as the two irregularities of diet are interior, and the others exterior.

No Constitution Can Withstand Excessive Eating

But as there are some persons, stricken in years, who are notwithstanding very gluttonous, and allege that neither the quantity nor quality of their diet makes any impression upon them, and therefore eat a great deal, and of everything without distinction, and indulge themselves equally in point of drinking, because they do not know,, in what part of their bodies their stomachs are situated; such, no doubt, are beyond all measure sensual, and slaves to gluttony. To these I answer that what they say is impossible in the nature of things, because it is impossible that every man who comes into the world should not bring with him a hot, a cold, or a temperate constitution; and that hot foods should agree with hot constitutions, cold with cold ones, and things that are of a temperate nature with temperate ones, is likewise impossible in nature. After all, these epicures must allow that they are now and then out of order, and that they cure themselves by taking evacuating medicines and observing a strict diet. Whence it appears that their being out of order is owing to their eating too much, and of things disagreeing with their stomachs.

The Arguments of Old Gluttons

There are other old gluttons who say that it is necessary they should eat and drink a great deal to keep up their natural heat, which is constantly diminishing as they advance in years; and that it is, therefore, necessary to eat heartily, and of such things as please their palate, be they hot, cold, or temperate; and that, were they to lead a sober life, it would be a short one. To these I answer that our kind Mother Nature, in order that the old men may live to a still greater age, has contrived matters so that they should be able to subsist on little as I do; for large quantities of food cannot be

digested by old and feeble stomachs. Nor should such persons be afraid of shortening their days by eating too little, since when they happen to be indisposed they recover by lessening the quantity of their food; for it is a trifle they eat when confined to a regimen, by observing which they get rid of their disorder. Now, if by reducing themselves to a very small quantity of food they recover from the jaws of death, how can they doubt but that with an increase of diet, still consistent however with sobriety, they will be able to support nature when in perfect health?

Eat What You Like, When You Like—and Die Young

Others say that it is better for a man to suffer every year three or four returns of his usual disorders, such as gout, pain in the side, and the like, than be tormented the whole year by not indulging his appetite and eating everything his palate likes best; since, by a good regimen alone, he is sure to get the better of such attacks. To this I answer that, our natural heat growing less and less as we advance in years, no regimen can retain virtue sufficiently to conquer the malignity with which disorders of repletion are ever attended; so that he must die at last of these periodical disorders, because they abridge life, as health prolongs it.

No Man has a Right to Destroy Himself in the Most Useful Years of His Life

Others pretend that it is much better to live ten years less than not to indulge one's appetite. To this I answer that longevity ought to be highly valued by men of parts; as to others, it is no great matter if it is not duly prized by them, since they are a disgrace to mankind, so that their death is rather of service to the public. But it is a great misfortune that men of bright parts should be cut off in that manner, since he who is already a cardinal might, perhaps, by living to eighty, attain the papal crown; and in the state many, by living some years extraordinary may acquire the ducal dignity; and so in regard to letters, by which a man may rise so as to be considered as a g upon earth; and the like in every other profession.

Small Meals is the Wisest Course in Promoting Old Age

There are others who, though their stomachs become weaker and weaker with respect to digestion as they advance in years, cannot, however, be brought to retrench the quantity of their food; nay, they rather increase it. And because they find themselves unable to digest the great quantity of food with which they must load their stomachs, by eating twice in the four and twenty hours, they make a resolution to eat but once, that the long interval between one meal and the other may enable them to eat at one sitting as much as they used to do in two; thus they eat till their stomachs, over burthened with much food, pall, and sicken, and change the superfluous food into bad humours, which kill a man before his time. I never knew any person who led that kind of life to live to be very old. All these old men I have been speaking of would live long if, as they advanced in years, they lessened the

quantity of the food, and ate oftener, but little at a time; for old stomachs cannot digest large quantities of food, old men changing in that respect to children, who eat several times in the four and twenty hours.

Moderation is the True Parent of Health and Longevity

Others say that temperance may, indeed, keep a man in health, but that it cannot prolong his life. To this answer that experience proves the contrary, and that: myself am a living instance of it. It cannot be said that sobriety is apt to shorten one's days, as sickness does and that the latter abbreviates life is most certain. More over, a constant succession of good health is preferable to frequent sickness, as the radical moisture is thereby preserved. Hence it may be fairly concluded that holy sobriety is the true parent of health and longevity.

"I Felt Like Singing a Song after my Simple Meals"

O thrice holy sobriety, so useful to man, by the services thou renderest him! Thou prolongest his days, by which means he greatly improves his understanding, and by such improvement he avoids the bitter fruits of sensuality, which are an enemy to reason, man's peculiar privilege those bitter fruits are the passions and perturbations of the mind. Thou, moreover, freest him from the dreadful thoughts of death. How greatly is thy faithful disciple indebted to thee, since by thy assistance he enjoys this beautiful expanse of the visible world, which is really beautiful to such as know how to view it with a philosophic eye, as thou hast enabled me to do! Nor could I, at any other time of life, even when I was young, but altogether debauched by an irregular life, perceive its beauties, though I spared no pains or expense to enjoy every season of life. But I found that all the pleasures of that age had their alloy; so that I never knew till I grew old that the world was beautiful. O truly happy life, which, over and above all these favours conferred on thine old man, hast so improved and perfected his stomach that he has now a better relish for his dry bread than he had formerly in his youth for the most exquisite dainties. And all this he has compassed by eating rationally, knowing that bread is, above all things, man's proper food, when seasoned by a good appetite; and, whilst a man leads a sober life, he may be sure of never wanting that natural sauce, because by always eating little, the stomach, not being much burthened, need not wait long to have an appetite. It is for this reason that dry bread relishes so well with me; and I know it from experience, and can with truth affirm, I find such sweetness in it that I should be afraid of sinning against temperance were it not for my being convinced of the absolute necessity of eating it, and that we cannot make use of a more natural food.

And thou, kind parent, Nature, who actest so lovingly by thy aged offspring in order to prolong his days, hast contrived matters so in his favour that he can live upon very little; and, in order to add to the favour, and do him still greater service, hast made him sensible that, as in his youth he used to eat

twice a day, when he arrived at old age he ought to divide that food, of which he was accustomed before to make but two meals, into four,, because thus divided it will be more easily digested; and, as in his youth he made but two meals in the day, he should in his old age make four, provided, however, that he lessens the quantity as his years increase. And that is what I do, agreeably to my own experience; and therefore my spirits, not oppressed by much food, but barely kept up, are always brisk; especially after eating, so that I am accustomed then to sing a song, and afterwards to write.

Simple Foods for the Rich, and Simple Foods for the Poor

Nor do I *ever* find myself the worse for writing immediately after *meals*, nor is my understanding ever *clearer*, nor am I apt to be *drowsy*, the food I take being in too small a quantity to send up any *fumes* to the brain. O, how advantageous it is to an old man to *eat* but little! Accordingly I, who know it, eat but just enough to keep body and soul together; and the things I eat are as follows: First, bread, panado, some broth with an egg in it, or such other good kinds of soup or spoon meat. Of flesh meat I eat veal, kid and mutton. I eat poultry of every kind. I eat partridges and other birds, such as thrushes. I likewise eat fish; for instance, the goidney and the like, amongst sea fish, and the pike and such like, amongst fresh-water fish.

All these things are fit for an old man, and therefore he ought to be content with them and, considering their number and variety, not hanker after others. Such old men as are too poor to allow themselves provisions of this kind may do very well with bread, panado and eggs - things which no poor man can want, unless it be common beggars and, as we call them, vagabonds, about whom we are not bound to make ourselves uneasy, since they have brought themselves to that pass by their indolence and had better be dead than alive, for they are a disgrace to human nature. But though a poor man should eat nothing but bread, panado and eggs, there is no necessity for his eating more than his stomach can digest. And whoever does not trespass in point of either quantity or quality cannot die but by mere dissolution. O, what a difference there is between a regular and an irregular life! One gives longevity and health, the other produces diseases and untimely deaths.

In Old Age One may Live to Mourn Friends who would not Heed Good Sincere Advice

O unhappy, wretched life, my sworn enemy, who art good for nothing but to murder those who follow thee! How many of my dearest relations and friends hast thou robbed me of, in consequence of their not giving credit to me—relations and friends whom I should now enjoy. But thou hast not been able to destroy me, according to thy wicked intent and purpose. I am still alive in spite of thee, and have attained to such an age as to see around me eleven grand-children, all of fine understanding and amiable dispositions, all given to learning and virtue, all beautiful in their persons and lovely in their manners,

whom, had I obeyed thy dictates, I should never have beheld. Nor should I enjoy those beautiful and convenient apartments which I have built from the ground, with such a variety of gardens, as required no small time to attain their present degree of perfection. No! thy nature is to destroy those who follow thee before they can see their houses or gardens so much as finished; whereas I, to thy no small confusion, have already enjoyed mine for a great number of years. But since thou art so' pestilential a vice as to poison and destroy the whole world, and I am determined to use my utmost endeavours to extirpate thee, at least in part, I have resolved to counteract thee so that my eleven grandchildren shall take pattern after me, and thereby expose thee for what thou really art—a most wicked, desperate, and mortal' enemy of the children of men.

Reflect that as a Man Lives so shall his Health and Life be

I really cannot help admiring that men of fine parts, and such there are, who have attained a superior rank in letters or any other profession, should not betake themselves to a regular life when they are arrived at the age of fifty or sixty, or as soon as they find themselves attacked by any of the foregoing disorders, of which they might easily recover; whereas, by being permitted to get ahead, they become incurable. As to young men, I am in no way surprised at them, since, the passions being strong at that age, they are, of course, the more easily overpowered by their baleful influence. But after fifty our lives should, in everything, be governed by reason, which teaches us that the consequences of gratifying our palate and our appetite are disease and death. Were this pleasure of the palate lasting it would be some excuse; but it is so momentary that there is scarce any distinguishing between the beginning and the end of it, whereas the diseases it produces are very durable. But it must be a great contentment to a man of sober life to be able to reflect that, in the manner he lives, he is sure that what he eats will keep him in good health and be productive of no disease or infirmity.

Now I was willing to make this short addition to my treatise, founded on new reasons, few persons caring to peruse long-winded discourses, whereas short tracts have a chance of being read by many; and I wish that many may see this addition, to the end that its utility may be more extensive.

CHAPTER THREE

ON THE JOYS OF OLD AGE

[In the year 1562 Cornaro had reached the grand old age of ninety-five, and he then set down his last treatise, exhorting all men to heed his words so that they might learn how to obtain the blessings of good health of mind and body and enjoy life, as he was doing, into ripe old age.]

Sound and Healthy; Content and Cheerful at Ninety-five

Not to be wanting to my duty—that duty incumbent upon every man - and not to lose at the same time the satisfaction I feel in being useful to others, I have resolved to take up my pen and inform those who, for want of conversing with me, are strangers to what those know and see with whom I have the pleasure of being acquainted. But as certain things may appear to some persons scarce credible, nay impossible, though actually fact, I shall not fail to relate them for the benefit of the public. Wherefore I say, being (God be praised) arrived at my ninety-fifth year, and still finding myself sound and hearty, content and cheerful, I never cease thanking the Divine Majesty for so great a blessing, considering the usual fate of other old men. These scarce attain the age of seventy without losing their health and spirits, growing melancholy and peevish, and continually haunted by the thoughts of death—apprehending their last hour from one day to another, so that it is impossible to drive such thoughts out of their minds; whereas such things give me not the least uneasiness, for, indeed, I cannot at all make them the object of my attention, as I shall hereafter more plainly relate.

I shall besides demonstrate the certainty I have of living to a hundred. But to render this dissertation more methodical, I shall begin by considering man at his birth, and from thence accompany him through every stage of life to his grave.

Shortness of Life may Sometimes be beyond Human Power to Prevent

I therefore say that some come into the world with the stamina of life so weak that they live but a few days or months or years; and it cannot be clearly known to what such shortness of life is owing—whether to some defect in the father or the mother in begetting them; or to the revolutions of the heavens, or to the defect of nature, subject as she is to the celestial influence. For I could never bring myself to believe that Nature, the common parent of all, should be partial to any of her children. Therefore, as we cannot assign the causes, we must be content with reasoning from the *effects*, such as they daily appear to our view.

An Irrational View of the Requirements of Old Age

Others are born sound, indeed, and full of spirits, but, notwithstanding, with a poor, weakly constitution; and of these some live to the age of ten, others to twenty, others to thirty and forty; yet they do not live to extreme old age. Others, again, bring into the world a perfect constitution and live to old age; but it is generally, as I have already said, an old age full of sickness and sorrow. For this they have to thank themselves, because they most unreasonably presume on the goodness of their constitution, and cannot by any means be brought to depart, when grown old, from the mode of life they pursued in their younger days, as if they still retained all their primitive vigour. Nay, they intend to live as irregularly when past the meridian of life as they did all the time of their youth, thinking they shall never grow old, nor their constitution ever be impaired. Neither do they consider that their

stomach has lost its natural heat, and that they should on that account pay a greater regard to the quality of what they eat and what wines they drink; and likewise to the quantity of each, which they ought to lessen - whereas, on the contrary, they are for increasing it, saying that, as we lose our health and vigour by growing old, we should endeavour to repair the loss by increasing the quantity of our food, since it is by sustenance that man is preserved.

Less Food is Needed as the Body Grows Older

In this, nevertheless, they are greatly mistaken, since, as the natural heat lessens as a man grows in years, he should diminish the quantity of his meat and drink; nature, especially at that period, being content with little. Nay, though they have all the reason to believe this to be the case, they are so obstinate as to think otherwise, and still follow their usual disorderly life. But were they to relinquish it in due time, and betake themselves to a regular and sober course, they would not grow infirm in their old age, but would continue, as I am, strong and hearty, considering how good and perfect a constitution it has pleased the Almighty to bestow upon them, and would live to the age of one hundred and twenty. This has been the case of others, who, as we read in many authors, have lived a sober life, and, of course, were born with this perfect constitution; and had it been my lot to enjoy such a constitution I should make no doubt of attaining the same age. But as I was born with feeble stamina, I am afraid I shall not outlive an hundred. Were others, too, who are also born with an infirm constitution, to betake themselves to a regular life, as I have done, they would attain the age of one hundred and upwards, as will be my case.

Illness does not happen without Cause—Remove Cause and Illness Disappears

And this certainty of being able to live to a great age is, in my opinions a great advantage, and highly to be valued, none being sure to live even a single hour except such as adhere to the rules of temperance. This security of life is built on good and true natural reasons, which can never fail; it being impossible in the nature of things that he who leads a sober and regular life should breed any sickness, or die of an unnatural death, before the time at which it is absolutely impossible he should live. But sooner he cannot die, as a sober life has the virtue to remove all the usual causes of sickness; and sickness being removed, an untimely and violent death must be prevented.

All my Faculties, at Ninety-five, as Good as Ever: Judgment, Memory, Spirits

And there is no doubt that temperance has the virtue and efficacy to remove such causes; for since health and sickness, life and death, depend on the good or bad quality of the humours, temperance corrects their vicious tendencies and renders them perfect, being possessed of the natural power of making them unite and hold together, so as to render them inseparable

and incapable of alteration or fermenting - circumstances which engender cruel fevers and end in death.

It is true, indeed, and it would be a folly to deny it, that, let our humours be originally ever so good, time, which consumes everything, cannot fail to consume and exhaust them, and that man, as soon as that happens, must die of a natural death; but yet without sickness, as will be my case, who shall die at my appointed time, when these humours shall be consumed, which they are not at present. Nay, they are still perfect; nor is it possible they could be otherwise in my present condition, when I find myself hearty and content, eating with a good appetite and sleeping soundly. Moreover, all my faculties are as good as ever, and in the highest perfection: my understanding clearer and brighter than ever, my judgment sound, my memory tenacious, my spirits good, and my voice, the first thing which is apt to fail others, grown so strong and sonorous that I cannot help chanting out loud my prayers morning and night, instead of whispering and muttering them to myself as was formerly my custom.

In Old Age there is no Room for Sensuality with its Bitter Fruits

And these are all so many true and sure signs and tokens that my humours are good, and cannot waste but with time, as all those who converse with me conclude. O, how glorious this life of mine is like to be, replete with all the felicities which man can enjoy on this side of the grave, and even exempt from that sensual brutality which age has enabled my better reason to banish; because where reason resides there is no room for sensuality nor for its bitter fruits, the passions and perturbations of the mind, with a train of disagreeable apprehensions. Nor yet can the thoughts of death find room in my mind, as I have no sensuality to nourish such thoughts.

Neither can the death of grandchildren and other relations and friends make any impression on me, but for a moment or two; and then it is over. Still less am I liable to be cast down by losses in point of fortune (as many have seen to their no small surprise). And this is a happiness not to be expected by any but such as attain old age by sobriety, and not in consequence of a strong constitution; and such may moreover expect to spend their days happily, as I do mine, in a perpetual round of amusement and pleasure. And how is it possible a man should not enjoy himself, who meets with no crosses of disappointments in his old age, such as youth is constantly plagued with, and from which, as I shall presently show, I have the happiness of being exempt?

The Joys and Comforts of Living Old and Still being Able to Enjoy Study And Friendship

The first of these is to do service to my country. Oh what a glorious amusement, in which I find infinite delight, as I thereby show her the means of improving her important estuary or harbour beyond the possibility of its

filling for thousands of years to come, so as to secure to Venice her surprising and miraculous title of a modern city, as she really is, and the only one in the whole world. She will, moreover, thereby add to the lustre of her great and excellent surname of queen of the sea. Such is my amusement, and nothing is wanting to make it complete.

Another amusement of mine is that of showing this maid and queen in what manner she may abound with provisions by improving larger tracts of land, as well as marshes and barren sands, to great profit. A third amusement—and an amusement, too, without any alloy—is the showing how Venice, though already so strong as to be in a manner impregnable, may be rendered still stronger; and, though extremely beautiful, may still increase in beauty; though rich, may acquire more wealth; and may be made to enjoy better air, though her air is excellent.

These three amusements, all arising from the idea of public utility, I enjoy in the highest degree. And who can say that they admit of any alloy, as in fact they do not?

Another comfort I enjoy is that, having lost a considerable part of my income, of which my grandchildren had been unfortunately robbed, I, by mere dint of thought, which never sleeps, and without any fatigue of body and very little of mind, have found a true and infallible method of repairing such loss more than double by the means of that most commendable of arts, agriculture. Another comfort I still enjoy is to think that my treatise on temperance, which I wrote in order to be useful to others, is really so, as many assure me by word of mouth, mentioning that it has proved extremely useful to them, as it in fact appears to have been; whilst others inform me by letter that, under God, they are indebted to me for life. Still another comfort I enjoy is that of being able to write with my own hand; for I write enough to be of service to others, both on architecture and agriculture. I likewise enjoy another satisfaction, which is that of conversing with men of bright parts and superior understanding, from whom, even at this advanced period of life, I learn something.

What a comfort is this that, old as I am, I should be able, without the least fatigue, to study the most important, sublime, and difficult subjects!

Thoughts on Death and Celestial Life

I must further add, though it may appear impossible to some and may be in some measure, that at this age I enjoy, at once, two lives; one terrestrial, which I possess in fact; the other celestial, which I possess in thought; and this thought is equal to actual enjoyment, when founded upon things we are sure to attain, as I am sure to attain that celestial life, through the infinite goodness and mercy of God.

Thus I enjoy this terrestrial life, in consequence of my sobriety and temperance, virtues so agreeable to the Deity; and I enjoy, by the grace of the same Divine Majesty, the celestial, which he makes me anticipate in

thought - a thought so lively as to fix me entirely on this object, the enjoyment of which I hold and affirm to be of the utmost certainty. And I hold that dying, in the manner I expect, is not really death, but a passage of the soul from this earthly life to a celestial, immortal, and infinitely perfect existence; neither can it be otherwise. And this thought is so superlatively sublime that it can no longer stoop to low and worldly objects, such as the death of this body, being entirely taken up with the happiness of living a celestial and divine life; whence it is that I enjoy two lives. Nor can the terminating of so high a gratification, which I enjoy in this life, give me any concern; it rather affords me infinite pleasure, as it will be only to make room for another, glorious and immortal life.

One Never Tires of Real Joys

Now, is it possible that any one should grow tired of so great a comfort and blessing as this which I really enjoy, and which everyone else might enjoy by leading the life I have led? An example which everyone has it in his power to follow; for I am a mere man, and no saint - a servant of God, to whom so regular a life is extremely agreeable.

The Road to Heaven through Simple Living

And whereas many embrace a spiritual and contemplative life, which is holy and commendable, the chief employment of those who lead it being to celebrate the praises of God, O, that they would likewise betake themselves entirely to a regular and sober life! How much more agreeable would they render themselves in the sight of God! What a much greater honour and ornament would they be to the world! They would then 'be considered as saints, indeed, upon earth, as those primitive Christians were held who joined sobriety to so recluse a life. By living like them to the age of one hundred and twenty, they might like them expect, by the power of God, to work numberless miracles; and they would, besides, enjoy constant health and spirits, and be always happy within themselves; whereas they are now for the most part infirm, melancholy and dissatisfied.

Now, as some of these people think that these are trials sent them by God Almighty, with a view of promoting their salvation, that they may do penance in this life for their past errors, I cannot help saying that in my opinion they are greatly mistaken. For I can by no means believe that it is agreeable to the Deity that man, His favourite creature, should live infirm, melancholy and dissatisfied; but rather enjoy good health and spirits, and be always content within himself. In this manner did the holy fathers live, and by such conduct did they daily render themselves more acceptable to the Divine Majesty, so as to work the great and surprising miracles we read in history.

How beautiful, how glorious a scene should we then behold! Far more beautiful than in those ancient times, because we now abound with so many religious orders and monasteries which did not then exist; and were the

members of these communities to lead a temperate life, we should then behold such a number of venerable old men as would create surprise. Nor would they trespass against their rules; they would rather improve upon them; since every religious community allows its subjects bread, wine, and sometimes eggs (some of them allow meat) besides soups made with vegetables, sallets, fruit, and cakes, things which often disagree with them and even shorten their lives. But as they are allowed such things by their rules, they freely make use of them, thinking, perhaps, that it would be wrong to abstain from them, whereas it would not. It would rather be commendable if, after the age of thirty, they abstained from such food, and confined themselves to bread, wine, broths and eggs; for this is the true method of preserving men of a bad constitution, and it is a life of more indulgence than that led by the holy fathers of the desert, who subsisted entirely on wild fruits and roots and drank nothing but pure water, and, nevertheless, lived, as I have already mentioned, in good health and spirits, and always happy within themselves. Were those of our days to do the same they would, like them, find the road to heaven much easier; for it is always open to every faithful Christian, as our Saviour Jesus Christ left it, when He came down upon earth to shed His precious blood, in order to deliver us from the tyrannical servitude of the Devil; and all through His immense goodness.

Exhortation to all Men to Learn of the Basic Truths of Life

So that, to make an end of this discourse, I say that since length of days abounds with so many favours and blessings, and I happen to be one of those who are arrived at that state, I cannot (as I would not willingly want charity) but give testimony in favour of it, and solemnly assure all mankind that I really enjoy a great deal more than what I now mention, and that I have no other reason for writing but that of demonstrating the great advantages which arise from longevity, to the end that their own conviction may induce them to observe those excellent rules of temperance and sobriety. And therefore I never cease to raise my voice, crying out to you, my friends: may your days be long, that you may be the better servants of the Almighty!

LETTERS WRITTEN BY CORNARO

[Two letters which were written by Cornaro have been preserved. They were addressed to the Right Reverend Barbaro and to Signor Speroni respectively, and they are given in that order. They are included here not

only for their intrinsic value, but because they reveal how persistently Cornaro tried to persuade his friends to accept his ideas. He deplored - and if he lived at the present time he would still have reason to deplore - the fact that so many useful people are cut off in the prime of their lives. The obituary column of the Press daily confirms the fact that an enormous amount of valuable life is lost in this way, and with it the priceless years of experience. Business men and professional men, like doctors and others, in spite of our increased knowledge, pay a heavy toll in this respect, and Cornaro's message is as urgent today as it was when he penned it so very many years ago.)

Letter to Right Reverend Barbaro

My Lord, The human understanding must certainly have something divine in its constitution and frame. How divine the invention of conversing with an absent friend by the help of writing! How divinely it is contrived by nature that men, though at a great distance, should see one another with the intellectual eye, as I now see your lordship! By means of this contrivance I shall endeavour to entertain you with matters of the greatest moment.

It is true that I shall speak of nothing but what I have already mentioned; but it was not at the age of ninety-one, to which I have now attained—a thing I cannot help taking notice of, because as I advance in years, the sounder and heartier I grow, to the amazement of all the world. I, who can account for *it*, am bound to show that a man may enjoy a terrestrial paradise after eighty; which I enjoy; but it is not to be obtained except by temperance and sobriety, virtues so acceptable to the Almighty because they are enemies to sensuality and friends to reason.

Now, my lord, to begin, I must tell you that within these few days past I have been visited by many of the learned doctors of this university, as well physicians as philosophers, who were all acquainted with my age, my life, and manners, knowing how stout, hearty, and gay I was and in what perfection all my faculties still continued, likewise my memory, spirits, and understanding and even my voice and teeth. They knew, besides, that I constantly employed eight hours every day in writing treatises with my own hand on subjects useful to mankind, and spent many hours in walking and singing. O my lord, how melodious my voice is grown! Were you to hear me chant my prayers, and that to my lyre, after the example of David, I am certain it would give you great pleasure, my voice is so musical.

Now, when they told me that they had been already acquainted with all these particulars, they added that it was indeed next to a miracle how I could write so much, and upon subjects that required both judgment and spirit. And indeed, my lord, it is incredible what satisfaction and pleasure I have in these compositions. But as I write to be useful, your lordship may easily conceive what pleasure I enjoy. They concluded by telling me that I ought

not to be looked upon as a person advanced in years, since all my occupations were those of a young man, and by no means like those of other aged persons who, when they have reached eighty, are reckoned decrepit. Such, moreover, are subject, some to the gout, some to the sciatica, and some to other complaints, to be relieved from which they must undergo such a number of painful operations as cannot but render life extremely disagreeable. And if by chance one of them happens to escape a long illness, his faculties are impaired and he cannot see or hear so well, or else fails in some one or another of the corporeal faculties, and cannot walk, or his hands shake; supposing him exempt from these bodily infirmities, his memory, his spirits, or his understanding fail him, and he is not cheerful, pleasant, and happy within himself, as I am.

Besides all these blessings I mentioned another which I enjoyed - and so great a blessing that they were all amazed at it, since it is altogether beside the usual course of nature. This blessing is that I had already lived fifty years, in spite of a most powerful and mortal enemy, which I can by no means conquer, because it is natural or an occult quality implanted in my body by nature; and this is that every year, from the beginning of July till the end of August, I cannot drink any wine of whatever kind or country, for, besides being during these two months quite disgusting to my palate, it disagrees with my stomach. Thus losing my milk—for wine is, indeed, the milk of old age—and having nothing to drink—for no change or preparation of waters can have the virtue of wine, nor of course do me any good—having nothing, I say, to drink, and my stomach being thereby disordered, I can eat but very little; and this spare diet, with the want of wine, reduces me by the middle of August extremely low; nor is the strongest capon broth or any other remedy of service to me; so that I am ready, through mere weakness, to sink into the grave.

Hence, they inferred, that were not the new wine—for I always take care to have some ready by the beginning of September—to come in so soon, I should be a dead man. But what surprised them still more was that this new wine should have power sufficient to restore me in two or three days to that degree of health and strength of which the old wine had robbed me—a fact they themselves have been eye-witnesses of within these few days, and which a man must see to believe it, insomuch that they could not help crying out: "Many of us, who are physicians, have visited him annually for several years past, and ten years ago we judged it impossible for him to live a year or two longer, considering what a mortal enemy he carried about him, and his advanced age; yet we do not find him so weak at present as he used to be."

This singularity and the many other blessings they see me enjoy obliged them to confess that the joining of such a number of favours was, with regard to me, a special grace conferred on me at my birth by nature or by

the stars; and to prove this to be a good conclusion, which it really is not (because not grounded on strong and sufficient reasons, but merely on their own opinions), they found themselves under a necessity to display their eloquence and to say a great many very fine things. Certain it is, my lord, that eloquence in men of bright parts has great power—so great as to induce people to believe things which have neither actual nor possible existence. I had, however, great pleasure and satisfaction in hearing them; for it must no doubt be a high entertainment to hear such men talk in that manner.

Another satisfaction, without the least mixture of alloy, I at the same time enjoyed was to think that age and experience are sufficient to make a man learned who without them would know nothing; nor is it surprising they should, since length of days is the foundation of true knowledge. Accordingly it was by means of it alone I discovered their conclusion to be false. Thus you see, my lord, how apt men are to deceive themselves in their judgment of things when such judgment is not built upon a solid foundation. And, therefore, to undeceive them and set them right, I made answer that their conclusion was false, as I should actually convince them by proving that the happiness I enjoyed was not confined to me but common to all mankind, and that every man might equally enjoy it, since I was but a mere mortal, composed, like all others, of the four elements, and endued, besides existence and life, with rational and intellectual faculties which are common to men. For it has pleased the Almighty to bestow on his favourite creature, man, these extraordinary blessings and favours above other animals, which enjoy only the sensible perceptions in order that such blessings and favours may be the means of keeping him long in good health; so that length of days is a universal favour granted by the Deity, and not by nature and the stars.

But man, being in his youthful days more of the sensual than of the rational animal, is apt to yield to sensual impressions and when he afterwards arrives at the age of forty or fifty, he ought to consider that he has attained the noon of life by the vigour of youth and a good tone of stomach—natural blessings, which favoured chanting my prayers; nor do the dreadful thoughts of death give me the least uneasiness, though, considering my great age, it cannot be far distant, knowing as I do that I was born to die, and reflecting that such numbers have departed this life without reaching my age.

Nor does that other thought, inseparable from the former, namely the fear of those torments to which wicked men are hereafter liable, give me any uneasiness; because I am a good Christian, and bound to believe that I shall be saved by the virtue of the most sacred blood of Christ, which He has vouchsafed to shed in order to free us from those torments. How beautiful the life I lead! How happy my end!

To this the young gentleman, my antagonist, had nothing to reply, but that he was resolved to embrace a sober life in order to follow my example,

and that he had taken another, more important, resolution, which was that, as he had always been very desirous to live to be old, so he was now equally impatient to reach that period, the sooner to enjoy the felicity of old age.

The great desire I had, my lord, to converse with you at this distance has forced me to be prolix, and still obliges me to proceed, though not much further. There are many sensualists, my lord, who say that I have thrown away my time and trouble in writing a treatise on temperance and other discourses on the same subject, to induce men to lead a regular life. They allege that it is impossible to conform to it, so that my treatise must answer as little purpose as that of Plato on government, who took a great deal of pains to recommend a thing impracticable; whence they inferred that as his treatise was of no use, mine will share the same fate.

Now this surprises me the more, as they may see by my treatise, that I had led a sober life for many years before I had composed it, and that I should never have composed it had I not previously been convinced that it was such a life as a man might lead and, being a virtuous life, would be of great service to him; so that I thought myself under an obligation to represent it in a true light. I have the satisfaction now to hear that numbers, on seeing my treatise, have embraced such a life; and I have read that many, in times past, have actually led it; so that the objection to which Plato's treatise on government is liable can be of no force against mine. But such sensualists, enemies to reason and slaves to their passions, ought to think themselves well off if, whilst they study to indulge their palate and their appetite, they do not contract long and painful diseases, and are not, many of them, overtaken by an untimely death.

Letter to Sperone Speroni

Most excellent Signor Sperone,—I would that you, who know so many things, and are continually making discoveries of the causes and reasons of their origin, could find what I have long sought for in vain, and thus make me perfectly happy. I am endeavouring to devise some method whereby my friends can be brought to believe that the irregularities of living to which they subject themselves cause them to die in their youth. I preach this to them continually, but they do not believe me, and continue to fall victims to their excesses.

These events keep me in a state of unhappiness, which is now more trying to me than the grief I felt at the death of our dear friend Ruzzante, which of itself would have caused my death if such an event could kill an abstemious man at less than ninety years of age. But it did not suffice to kill me, since regularity in living has made me, in a measure, immortal, and has given me the vigour of thirty-five at the age of fifty-eight, and every day demonstrates the fact that this system of itself is enough to restore a sick man to health.

I preach and insist upon these things every day, but all continue incredulous, which alone would be enough to render me miserable, were I otherwise than the happiest man in the world.

To the end, therefore, that you may believe me and endeavour to furnish me with the means of solving this difficulty, the purpose of which will be known to God alone, listen, and learn whether anything else is wanting to complete my felicity.

I was weakly at my birth, and of a very feeble constitution, which I further injured by great irregularities. Being convinced of my errors, I commenced by reforming myself, as respected those most hurtful to me, and continued to shun disorderly courses, until I acquired the perfect health which I at present enjoy. I then regained the rank of a noble in my native country, although my ancestors had forfeited theirs, so that it was no advantage to me that they had been Senators and Princes and had filled the highest offices of the State.

I have, by my own exertions, made myself rich, although born without wealth. My wealth, furthermore, has been acquired by the pursuit of means the most laudable and beneficial to my fellow-men; since it has been drawn from agriculture, and has not been amassed by means of warlike achievements, rapine and plunder, nor by traversing the seas at the imminent hazard of death, nor by any other means attended with similar dangers and vicissitudes, but has been entirely obtained by this one laudable occupation.

At the same time I have incurred large expenses, and have never withheld the expenditures nor denied myself the enjoyments and recreations which are suit-able to the rank of a noble, but which are forborne by those who are destitute of property or desire solely to accumulate it. My liberal expenditures have, however, been incurred in the erection of a church, and the dedication of it to God, and, furthermore, in giving to myself, and also to God, the people whom I have been the means of bringing into the world, by dissipating the unwholesome vapours and exhalations which formerly existed around my villa and rendered it im-possible to rear children. I have drained off the stagnant waters, and have thus caused the accession of a numerous population; and while increasing my own property, I have also contributed to enrich numbers who have been my agents and tenants.

I have likewise used my means to promote the liberal arts, and have been the patron and protector of literary men, musicians, architects, painters and sculptors; and while creating all this wealth, I have expended thousands upon thousands of crowns in constructing splendid edifices and laying out beautiful gardens.

Consider, then, whether I have not the right to term myself happy, and

when I am in possession of these three blessings, health, nobility and wealth, with the added consolation that the latter has been acquired by the most honourable of pursuits and used with a becoming liberality. But there are still other reasons why I should deem myself most happy, since I have been blessed with exceeding good fortune in the selection of a son-in-law, who seems to have been created on purpose to enhance my happiness and that of my daughter. He is attached to the court, and has brought me three grandchildren - little angels in miniature.

All these blessings I enjoy in perfect health, and inhabiting the commodious mansions and beautiful gardens of my own creation, which rarely falls to the lot of anyone, since those who construct them seldom live to enjoy them; but I enjoy them, and shall continue to do so, years upon years. With all this, how do you conceive it possible that I should not be happy? I am happy, and my happiness will be complete if you can only devise some method of removing this single annoyance.

Do not think that I have not had to encounter other obstacles to my felicity heretofore, and that, therefore, I have not cause to be relieved from this till now. It is true that every trifling misadventure tends to make us unhappy, and you well know that I lost many thousand crowns through the family of the Cardinal. Though this was an act of great injustice, it has been no cause of sadness to me but, on the contrary, rather a source of gratification; since, if this wrong had not been committed, the world would not have believed that after enriching my agents and servants I still had enough remaining to give a fortune to a Cardinal. So, also, when I sustained such great damage by the acts of the Comptrollers of the Waters, I assure you that I felt much rejoiced; since that event caused me to turn my attention to a subject of vast public importance and to become in a manner the saviour of my country, this injury done me having been the occasion of my discovering a mode of preserving the Lagune and thus saving my country.

In this manner neither of the above events ruffled my mind, but, on the contrary, showed to the world that I possess as much fortitude and equanimity in adversity as foresight, prudence and gaiety in prosperity—a circumstance which, by the rule of contraries, had been deemed an impossibility, while I enjoyed uninterrupted good fortune. Nevertheless, I have been put to the test, and have proved to all that I can turn misfortune to advantage and derive additional benefit from reverses.

To close the recital of my troubles, I have remaining only one cause of unhappiness, the continual loss of friends by death, which keeps me constantly miserable. Wherefore, to revert to my opening request, devise some remedy, I pray you.

I know that you have promised yourself much pleasure in witnessing Signor

Agnalo's representation of your admirable tragedy; and I assure you, that you may not think me wanting in friendly offices, that as soon as I come to Padua, which will be soon, I shall be with you. I commend myself to your favour.

LUIGI CORNARO
Codovico.

