

On the virtues of sage, in lenthening human life. With rules to attain old age in health and cheerfulness / [John Hill].

Contributors

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V I R T U E S

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S A G E,

I N

Lengthening Human Life.

W I T H

RULES to attain OLD AGE

In HEALTH and CHEERFULNESS.

By Dr. H I L L.

L O N D O N :

Printed for the AUTHOR; and sold by R. BALDWIN in
Pater-noster-Row, and J. RIDLEY in Saint James's
Street.

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ON THE
VIRTUES of SAGE,
I N
Lengthening Human Life.

AN old man, of a hearty constitution, and in extraordinary possession of his faculties and senses, told me he owed the benefit to SAGE: he laughed at country folks who eat it in their cheese; and called them Milksofs who made tea of it: affecting to have a secret in his way of using it.

THE thing remained upon my mind : it brought into my thoughts the mighty praises that have been written of Sage ; and the little that we see of it, in comparison with those wonders.

IF there be any thing that can prolong human life, it is our interest, and our duty to apply it : if it can but preserve, during the natural term, the memory perfect and the senses unabated, as in that man, to know it will be an advantage superior to any other merely human consideration.

IT should seem the antients, wiser than ourselves in things of use, though not in speculative science, knew this power in Sage ; and that in the course of time, from them to us, it has been lost, with many other valuable matters : 'tis at least worth enquiring whether it be so ; and I shall not be thought to trifle if I pursue through a few pages my old man's story.

THERE

THERE is no absurdity in the opinion, that life may be prolonged : we see it can be shortened by imprudent courses; and it is just to infer a better regulated conduct may extend it : and, what perhaps is more, may give that cheerfulness and ease to the last years, which is their greatest value.

THE thought of making men immortal here is vain, as every thing must be which tends to counteract the course of nature, and the purposes of God. We blush to think men could propose, and men receive the doctrine : and yet philosophers and chymists have pretended to it. 'Tis not too harsh to say the first were fools ; the latter cheats : or both enthusiasts too wild for truth or reason.

BUT, though the thought of escaping death be idle ; there is nothing foolish nor absurd in the attempt of putting back his visit. More moderate men have thought this might be done ; and some of the first name in wisdom have attempted it. If they
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have failed, we have a right to say that they mistook the means; not that the end is unattainable. They have sought it by the richest and most precious things in nature, as if they fixed upon them merely for being the most rich and precious: but nature often, nay most frequently, gives the greatest virtues to the most common things. They have endeavoured it also by matters in their own nature the most permanent and durable, as if forgetting that this very quality made them incapable of conveying any virtue to the body.

It is certain human life may be prolonged, and medicine may contribute to it; but it is not in *Gold* and *Gems* we are to seek that medicine, whatever reverence we owe their names who have proposed it. Pearls are shell, and there is more virtue in the oyster that breeds them; and if the emerald have any virtue, we know that copper is the source of it, for that gives the colour; and copper is a horrible thing in medicine. Bezoar, the goats pearl, is as great a trifle as

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the oysters; and the rhinoceros's horn a jest. The other gems, however pompous in their names, and precious in the purchase, are as destitute of good as the emerald or the sapphire are of mischief: their texture is too close to let the little out they may contain, either of good or ill. A reasonable man would no more believe any one who talked of having prolonged his life by powders of these gems, than he would credit old de Boot's relation of his neck being saved in a fall, by having one of them in a ring upon his finger.

IF we would rationally attempt lengthening our lives, we must attend first to the causes of their decay. The human frame, made for a limited time, contains within itself the means of its destruction; the body wears away by use, nor can we prevent it: but by attending to the cause of this decline, we may put back the evil hour, and make its progress easier.

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WE live by perfect circulation ; we decline as it becomes impaired ; and when it stops we die. It is thus in age we perish by degrees, and lose in every step some strength of sense and faculties. Death has a thousand doors to rush upon us ; but this by which he makes his slow and regular advance, is always open. We enjoy our faculties and memory by the brain ; which to afford them perfect must be full and tender. When this shrinks and dries, we feel them all impaired, and in the extremes of that condition lose one or more of them entirely, according to the part most dried and shrivelled.

IN the prime of life the larger arteries contract and expand strongly, and freely : their contraction forces the blood forward, with a strength that carries it through the most distant and small vessels in the extreme parts ; and their expansion afterwards gives free room to the heart, the seat and source of life, to throw into them the blood it has received from the veins, in consequence of
 their

their first motion. While this is well performed we live, and are in health: but age brings on a hardness in the larger vessels, and that impedes their motion. The force being weakened which drove the blood forward, it stops in many of the smaller vessels at the extremities; and old mens hands, and feet from hence grow lean, and cold; for warmth and nourishment are its gift: at last these larger vessels grow mere bone; they can contract, they can dilate no more; the heart unable to force into them the blood it has received from the veins, ceases to beat; and life ceases with it. This is the death of age, without disease: thus old men die merely by being old. When the cause is plain before us, we know at least which way to direct our course in trying to retard it.

THE matter is as evident with respect to the faculties. As to keep up life we must prevent the hardening of the larger vessels; to preserve these and the memory, we must prevent the shrivelling up, and drying of the brain. We see the object of our at-

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tention; how far, and by what means we can succeed, remains the question.

To give age health and faculties like youth, we must endeavour to make the state of the body in age, as nearly as we can, like that of youth; we cannot make it equal.

LABOUR brings age before its time; and violent passions and intemperance, disturb and hurt the brain; giving the bodily infirmities of age a double power upon it: therefore let those who would be old and well, live as much as possible at their ease; with calmness, and with temperance: these will do more than medicine; but let us see what that can add to them.

THE medicine that can serve us for this purpose must have power,

1. To urge the blood along gently, but with certainty, through the smallest vessels: for the great ones begin first to harden by obstructions of the lesser in their coats.

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2. To soften with a lasting, mild, and gentle dew, the vessels and the membranes, wheresoever it passes: for this will equally prevent the hardening of those parts, and the shrinking of the brain: a balsam must do this, but not a hard dry balsam of the resinous kind; it must be one that penetrates without heat, and remains in effect long when it has found entrance.

3. To cheer, and raise, and elevate the spirits: for this keeps up their motion, and expands the substance of the brain, preventing what we fear.—It is for this purpose wine has been recommended, and called the old man's milk: but they who praised it lived in other countries; wine is not wine with us; and distilled spirits counteract every purpose we should pursue.

4. To calm and moderate the passions; for medicine can do this, since it can regulate the motion of the spirits: and what is happiest for us, the same medicines which curb them when they are violent, raise them

when depressed; for these disorders rise from turbulence or slowness in their motions; and the effect of such simples is to make their motion equal.

WE want therefore, in the language of physicians, a gentle stimulus, a mild and temperate balsam, a cordial, and a sedative. These virtues the wisest writers assert are all in Sage; my old man therefore might not be mistaken. Let us see more particularly what they say of it. That it continues health, preserves the faculties, and memory, and by a grateful warmth cheers, revives, refreshes, and recruits, all are agreed: nor are these praises given to any other plant. The *Greek* physicians universally give it the singular character of being warm without acrimony, most friendly to the brain, and grateful to the stomach; preventing coldness, flatulencies, and indigestions there, and giving constantly a moderate, never a voracious appetite; curing also a numbness, deafness, dimness of sight, and dullness of apprehension. 'Twas therefore named by them

them THE SACRED HERD. These were its general, and uncontroverted properties.

Particular histories of its effects abound in authors of the greatest credit ; and this not only in those who have written on the medicines and diseases of one country ; but universally. Nature seems to have taught its use everywhere ; and the general consent of mankind to have confirmed its power. Wherever Sage is found, and that is almost every where, we read in earlier and later times equally its praises. That trembling of the limbs, which in the extreme is commonly called the *live palsy*, and which in a lesser degree is almost universal in an advanced age, *Simon Pauli* tells us, was in his time cured with certainty by Sage ; and we read in *Bontius*, that palsies are cured with it in the *Indies*. *Aëtius* gives the plant the highest praises, as friendly to conception ; and history confirms his great opinion of it, at least so far as to shew that it was universally received ; for when a plague had wasted *Ægypt*, that wise people forced Sage down
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the throats of men and women, without exception, to hasten on the peopling of their country. At all times its virtues, in disorders of the head and nerves, have been set very high, and lethargies are reported to have been cured by it; and apoplexies prevented from returning.

When sober writers give it all this praise, we must not wonder that in those of warmer imaginations, we see the plant recorded as a PANACÆA; that we read of madmen cured, and fools restored to sense by it; or that we hear a thousand times repeated the old famous line,

Cur moriatur homo cui Salvia crescit in horto?

These are the excesses and extravagances of praise, by which enthusiastic minds are apt to hurt the subject they would honour; but they generally have their source in truth, though carried into folly.

We have here the whole account before us: and it is easy to perceive where truth ends,

ends, and where fancy takes its fruitful origin. It were idle to discredit what is real, because imaginations have been grafted on it. We see what sober authors say of Sage, and we have reason to believe it has the virtues they record of it: let us examine how we may obtain them, and apply them best. Our fathers seem not to have doubted the former point, but to have failed in this.

TRADITION told them Sage had all these virtues; and the faithful, though coarse, writers on their household affairs, joined to confirm them in the belief of it. They therefore introduced the plant by many ways into their food and physick; they drank it for their tea; they eat it in their cheese, and made it a most serious duty also to eat it all the month of May upon their bread and butter. There are some housewifely families in the country, where these customs are yet faithfully preserved. I have with care attended for the last two or three years to their effects, but cannot say those families are
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any thing more healthy than their neighbours, and who enjoy the same advantages of air and sober living.

One might have concluded rashly from this, that Sage has not those virtues which have been ascribed to it; but beside the concurrent testimony of all antiquity, and in a manner of all nations, in its favour, I could not but remember also, that to corroborate my present old man's testimony, I had both seen and heard things to the same purpose: and those so strong, that they could not but make some impression. I can remember a woman of the little town of *Stanground*, near *Peterborough*, so old, that for that reason only, so far as I ever heard, she was called a witch. About five yards square of ground, enclosed with a mud-wall before the door of her little habitation, was planted with Sage; and 'twas not only her account, but that of all the place, that she lived upon it. Her exact age could not be known, for she was older than the register; but the people in general remem-

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bered their fathers calling her the old woman.

IN the cathedral church of *Peterborough*, on the left-hand as one enters the great isle, is a picture and monumental inscription of a man who once was sexton of the place, I think the name is *Scarlet*, who lived so long in that office as to bury, so says the inscription, all the inhabitants of the place twice over. The full date of his age is not mentioned; but he was considered by more than one generation, as a living miracle. There is great reason to attribute this also to Sage: for I remember to have seen at that place, when I was a boy, a spot of ground near the church-yard, where there was at that time left against an old South-wall of stone, the remainder of of a broad oak bench; which they then used call this old man's bed: on this 'tis said he slept away almost the whole day, during the latter years of his life. By it there were then, and perhaps are still, some antient tufts of Sage and Rue, planted alternately,

of which mixed together, he used, I imagine, to make his drink. People there remember still an old Latin line, which he learned I suppose from some of the clergy of the place, and which he was continually repeating.

Salvia cum ruta facient tibi pocula tuta.

Things that we see when boys, are long remembered; and often old stories have procured great advantages: indeed half that we call new knowledge, is but the old revived. These things weighed against the other, left the question about the virtues of Sage, at least in my mind, still undetermined. Thus much indeed is fairly proved from the former instance, that Sage with bread and butter, Sage cheese, and Sage in tea, have not the effects related of that plant: but there may be a great deal in the form in which a medicine is given; and, what is much more to the present purpose, it is certain that in plants some parts possess a virtue, which others

others want entirely; or possess in so very remiss a degree, as to have little efficacy.

The leaves of Sage are used in all these instances; but 'tis not in the leaves of plants their principal virtues reside. The roots and seeds in general possess the greatest powers; and in some particular kinds, yet other parts. It appears possible also, that a proper *menstruum* has not been used in these common cases: but was perhaps in those peculiar instances where Sage produced such visible effects, for the manner wherein the present old man uses his Sage, is yet a secret; and I do not believe the sexton's *pocula tuta* were cups of tea. It appears therefore yet possible, that Sage may possess all the virtues old writers have attributed to it; and that most people have, of late time, fought them in vain, because they did not take the parts of principal power, or use them properly.

I have laid down these, and shall in the same way deliver the succeeding articles,

as they arose in my own mind in the course of this enquiry: perhaps the method may be useful to others not accustomed to strict researches; and may in some measure tend to prevent that rashness of opinion, by which things possible are given up as vain, for failing in some articles; and which perhaps has tended more than ignorance itself, to shut the gates of knowledge.

The enquiry, pursued thus far, directed me to examine next the several parts of Sage, its several kinds, and these as they grow in different soils, and at various seasons. I have been engaged at times some years in this enquiry: my garden at *Bayswater* (I thank God, the King, and my Great Patron) gives me ample opportunities. All plants are there; and all soils ready to receive them. I have found that of the several kinds, the common red Sage has the greatest virtue: and in respect of this, I have found also that *Dioscorides* is vastly in the right, when he recommends for medicinal use that which has grown in barren.

dry, and rugged places; for with me the plants of the same species that have grown on a dry gravelly soil, have far higher virtues than such as have taken their nourishment from a moist pure mould. Mine is a garden into which no manure is admitted, because I would see every thing in a state of nature: how much inferior then to the worst of mine, must be the Sage which is commonly raised with dung in kitchen gardens?

OF the best kind of Sage growing in the soil most favourable to its virtues, I tried with care, not the leaves only, but the roots and seeds. The leaves are best for use a little before the flower stalks rise: this is in May. They were therefore right who told our ancestors to eat them at that season. Those who would use them constantly, should dry them at that time for the rest of the year. I gave them in large doses, and attended to their operations carefully. They are lightly cordial, strengthening, and stomachic. There are in them more virtues than

than those think, who know no use of them except in tea; but not such as by any means come up to the antient character of the plant.

THE roots are slightly flavoured, and of little value; of the nature of the leaves, but inferior by many degrees. It remained to try the seeds, from which, according to the general course of nature, I had much more expectation: they are warm and cordial beyond the leaves, carminative, and friendly to the nerves; but still in no way adequate, or indeed approaching to the powers attributed to the plant.

FEWER disappointments have stopped many an enquiry: but the faith I placed in the old writers; a faith founded on experience in many other instances, led me still to prosecute this subject.

I HAVE long observed, that there are certain juices contained in, or secreted from, particular parts of plants at certain seasons,
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which do not exist in the same plant at other seasons, or in any other part. Start not, reader, at the doctrine! it shall be proved by many instances; and will lead us farther than all the rest in this.

THE cups of the flowers in the *Hypericum Campoclarense* of *Columna* are covered with glands in August, like short pins: these contain a scarlet resinous juice, dissoluble in a weakened spirit of wine; and sovereign in its virtue against worms. The antheræ of the flowers also in this and some other species, have the same coloured juice, and in a remiss degree the same virtue. It would be vain to seek this juice in any other part of the plant, or at any other time: nor has the rest of the herb any such virtue. It is a slight detergent: nothing more.

In *Fraxinella*, whose root, the part used in medicine, is a useless chip: the cups of the flowers sweat out in July a pure and perfect resin, fragrant in the highest degree, so as to scent the fingers many hours by only touch-

touching it. This I have found a diuretic, inferior but to few. It is a virtue not at all existent in the rest of the plant; nor is the colour, taste, or smell, of this peculiar juice, to be found in any other part of it, or at any other season.

A STRICT attention to the growing plants might furnish instances to fill a volume in the proof of this observation. I shall add only one more, because a most familiar one; the rose. We know the delicate smell of this flower, which nothing equals, and we know its virtues. We use the flowers, which in some species are purgative, in others astringent; but we overlook a juice of a different kind in the cups of them, peculiar to that part, not found in the shrub at any other season, and differing perfectly in quality and virtues from all the rest. It is a delicate and fragrant resin, present in some degree in the cups of all roses in the bud; and during the time of flowering; but most of all in that we call the Moss Provence Rose. In this the cup is large, diffused, and elegant

gant in shape ; and is throughout the time of flowering wet with its own balmy dew : a kind of liquid balsam exsudates continually from it, sticking to the hands, and scenting them most sweetly. These cups infused in a spirit of a due strength, part with their balsam freely ; and such a tincture I have found of great use in the gravel ; possessing the virtues of Capivi, without its horrible flavour.

UPON these thoughts I carefully examined this last year the cups of Sage ; and found there, what I had sought before in every other part of the plant so much in vain. Just when the flowers of Sage begin to open, there is in their cups a fragrant resin of this kind, high flavoured, balmy, delicate, and to the taste one of the most delicious cordials that can be thought ; warm, and aromatic, without all acrimony. I no longer doubted any thing that had been said of Sage : the smell, the taste, the flavour here promised all ; and I could not but reflect, at the same time, that there are other instances wherein the antients have spoke largely of virtues in plants,

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which we do not find them to possess, in the usual course of practice. I suspect a kind of disingenuousness here; that they really concealed a great deal of their knowledge, while they affected to tell it all so freely; in that they did not teach us where, or how to find the virtues they so much applauded, although they named the subjects which possessed them. The instance of Hypericum seems to speak this strongly. They had the kind here mentioned, for I have received it often from places which were very well known to them: they say it is good against worms; but after-ages tried the plant in vain; and blamed them. I suppose they used the cups alone, and therefore succeeded; we used the rest of the plant, and failed; because to the account of its virtues, they did not add in what peculiar part they dwelt.

HAVING found where the rich balsam of the Sage resided, the next care was to try in what way to obtain it in the best condition for use. I have been accustomed to proceed in enquiring after the virtues of plants by
 methods

methods altogether my own : and, as I persuade myself they have been in some degree useful, I shall take this opportunity of laying them before the world ; that others may apply them to more purposes.

THE great virtues of plants I have found generally to reside in a resinous juice. This is pure resin but in very few : in the generality it is mixed with gum, and makes what 'tis the custom to call a *Gum Resin*. This kind of juice is obtained separate from all others in many cases by wounding the plant, in hot climates : with us it scarce ever can : but it still resides in the plant in peculiar parts, and at certain seasons, and may be drawn forth by solution. This is to be performed by a spirit of a due degree of strength. Pure resin is dissolved by rectified spirit of wine, pure gum by water ; gum resin by a mixture of spirit and water, proportioned in strength to the more resinous or more gummy nature of the juice. As we do not obtain this separate, we can only find

what degree of strength in the menstruum is fit to draw it forth. We know only two degrees of spirit in common practice; but it is useful to have many more: I keep twenty-one. They are easily made, by additions of water in different proportions to a pure rectified spirit. When the virtues of a plant are to be tried, I put a quantity, by weight, of the plant into a quantity, by measure, of each of these spirits: they stand in the same heat, have the same shakings, and are allowed the same time: at the end of this they are severally examined with the utmost attention; and when it is found which is the richest tincture, that degree of spirit is used for ever after in the preparation.

In this manner I prepared twenty-one tinctures of the cups of Sage: in one of which, the third from alcohol, I found the virtue of the plant perfect and entire. The cups when separated and washed were altogether insipid, and the tincture, saturated with their balsamic juice, was fragrant, full of the virtues of the plant, and promised to be
highly

highly useful. I have been since endeavouring to improve and exalt this ; for simple tinctures commonly admit that advantage ; and am not without hopes that we may at last find in Sage all that has been said by good writers in its favour.

LORD BACON laments justly that physicians have applied themselves solely to the cure of diseases ; neglecting the prolongation of human life. Perhaps this enquiry may be allowed to have done something toward wiping off that reproach : at least it seems evident, a medicine may be thus obtained from Sage, which will retard that rapid progress of decay that treads upon our heels so fast in the latter years of life ; which will preserve the faculties and memory, more valuable to a rational mind than life itself without them ; and will relieve under that faintness, strengthen under that weakness, and prevent absolutely that sad depression of spirits which age often feels, and always fears : which will long prevent the hands from trembling, and the eyes from dimness,

and make the lamp of life, so long as nature lets it burn, burn brightly.

To assist its efficacy by a proper conduct, and management of life, is always in our power; and a few plain and simple rules for it, compleat the purpose of this little treatise.

If we would live long and well, let us observe what kind of men they were who have in all times lived longest, healthiest, and happiest. We shall find them to have been the wise, and good; almost without exception.

TEMPERATE men have been long-lived at all times. Perhaps the wise and good live long because they are temperate.

CHEARFULNESS promotes long life; and this springs best of all from the same source; for what is so chearful as innocence. It is not mirth that is meant here, for that arises
often

often from intoxication ; at least it is a turbulence of mind ; and tends to wear, not to preserve the faculties.

SINCE therefore wisdom helps to give long life, 'tis good to employ the mind, but not fatigue it. Temperance is in the power of all ; and virtue. These will give that calmness and tranquillity to the disposition, which preserve life by keeping up its fire ; and are the exact contraries of riotous mirth, and violent passions, which give a blaze indeed, but which consume much more than they enlighten.

THEREFORE to assist medicine in prolonging life, the old man must avoid equally fatigue of mind and body ; but by no means extend this rule to the banishing of either exercise, or thought : pleasant employment, and wearysome drudgery, are things perfectly distinct ; and he will never live his natural time, who does not know the rule of moderation.

AGE requires more sleep than youth, and nature shews that she expects it. Let her be indulged; but still with moderation; too much bed banishes sleep, and 'tis in easy rest, animated perhaps a little with light amusing dreams, that age finds true refreshment.

ANGER wastes, and even tears, the frame by the disturbance it creates within us. It is not worth the old man's while for any thing to give himself this discomposure: to live at ease, is what he has to wish; and to sum up all, to live at ease is the sure method to live long.

THE END.