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G. Stanley Hall

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THE DANGEROUS AGE

By G. STANLEY HALL

The easiest division of every whole is into two halves. Thus day and night are bisected by noon and midnight, the year by both the solstice and the equinox; the racer turns in the middle of his course; curricula, apprenticeships, and long tasks have, from immemorial time, celebrated the completion of their first moiety; and half-way houses divide established courses of travel. So, too, we speak of middle age and think vaguely of it as half-way between birth and death or between adolescence and senescence. If we think of life as a binomial curve rising from a base line at birth and sinking into it at death, midway is the highest point with the longest ordinate, and as the crest of a wave has its spindrift, so life at this point often foams, or at the best shows emulsive tendencies. We come in sight of the descent while the ascent behind is still visible. The man of thirty-five hopes to live the "allotted" span of seventy, and at forty he knows that in another two-score years his work will cease; and thus some comparison of the past and future is inevitable. Some begin taking stock of what has been and what remains to be done, reckoning only from the date of entering upon their careers and trying thus to judge its future by its past. Thus sooner or later there comes to all a realization that the tide that "drew us from out the boundless deep" begins to "turn again home."

These meridional perturbations usually come earlier in women than in men, and this has been called their "dangerous age."* Both sexes recognize that they face the bankruptcy of some of their youthful hopes, and certain temperaments make a desperate, now-or-never effort to realize their extravagant expectations and are thus led to excesses of many kinds; while others capitulate to fate, lose heart, and perhaps even lose the will to live. Osler was the evil genius, the croaking Poe raven of this period. If such pronouncements as his stimulate talent, which is longer lived, they depress genius, which thrives earlier.

* K. Michaëlis: *The Dangerous Age*. N. Y., 1912.

On the height of life we ought to pause, circumspect, turn from the dead reckonings of the start, and ascend as into an outlook tower to see, before it is too late, if we need to reorient our course by the eternal stars. Here we begin the home stretch toward the finish. Change, or at least thoughts of change, arise, even in those most successful—as biography so abundantly shows—while even partial failure impels many to seek new environments and perhaps callings, and some are driven to mad new ventures. Most, however, despite a certain perturbation, go on perhaps a score of years, and instead of anticipating old age wait till it is upon them and they have to restrict their activities or retire; then only do they accept the burden of years. The modifications in the *vita sexualis* which middle life brings are only now beginning to be understood in their true significance. Its first flush has come and gone, and some settle to the tranquil fruition of a happy married life while others stray into secret and forbidden ways or yield to the excitements of overindulgence just when Nature begins to suggest moderation, so that love grows gross just when its sublimation should begin to be most active. One close and experienced observer points out that the forties is the decade of the triangle, of the paramour, and of divorces for man, and that the preceding decade is so for women; but of course we have no confirmatory statistics for such a conclusion save only for divorce.

The following epitomes, which might be indefinitely multiplied, must suffice here for illustrations of this theme.

The sensational press has so perverted the statements made by Dr. William Osler in his farewell address on leaving the Johns Hopkins University in 1905, and his remarks are so pithy, although semi-humorous, that it seems worth while to quote his words, as follows:¹

"I have two fixed ideas well known to my friends, harmless obsessions with which I sometimes bore them, but which have a direct bearing on this important problem. The first is the comparative uselessness of men above forty years of age. This may seem shocking, and yet, read aright, the world's history bears out the statement. Take the sum of human achievement in action, in science, in art, in literature—subtract the work of the men above forty, and, while we should miss great treasures, even priceless treasures, we should practically be where we are today. It is difficult to name a great and far-reaching conquest of the mind which has not been given to the world by a man on whose back the sun was still

¹ *Sci. Am.*, March 25, 1905.

shining. The effective, moving, vitalizing work of the world is done between the ages of twenty-five and forty years—these fifteen golden years of plenty, the anabolic or constructive period, in which there is always a balance in the mental bank and the credit is still good.

"In the science and art of medicine there has not been an advance of the first rank which has not been initiated by young or comparatively young men. Vesalius, Harvey, Hunter, Bichat, Laennec, Virchow, Lister, Koch—the green years were yet on their heads when their epoch-making studies were made. To modify an old saying, a man is sane morally at thirty, rich mentally at forty, wise spiritually at fifty—or never. The young men should be encouraged and afforded every possible chance to show what is in them. If there is one thing more than another upon which the professors of the university are to be congratulated, it is this very sympathy and fellowship with their junior associates, upon whom really in many departments, in mine certainly, has fallen the brunt of the work. And herein lies the chief value of the teacher who has passed his climacteric and is no longer a productive factor; he can play the man midwife, as Socrates did to Theaetetus, and determine whether the thoughts which the young men are bringing to the light are false idols or true and noble births.

"My second fixed idea is the uselessness of men above sixty years of age, and the incalculable benefit it would be in commercial, political, and in professional life if, as a matter of course, men stopped work at this age. Donne tells us in his "*Biathanatos*" that by the laws of certain wise states *sexagenarii* were precipitated from a bridge, and in Rome men of that age were not admitted to the suffrage, and were called *depontani* because the way to the senate was *per pontem* and they from age were not permitted to come hither. In that charming novel, the "*Fixed Period*," Anthony Trollope discusses the practical advantages in modern life of a return to this ancient usage, and the plot hinges on the admirable scheme of a college in which at sixty men retired for a year of contemplation before a peaceful departure by chloroform. That incalculable benefits might follow such a scheme is apparent to any one who, like myself, is nearing the limit, and who has made a careful study of the calamities which may befall men during the seventh and eighth decades!

"Still more when he contemplates the many evils which they perpetuate unconsciously and with impunity! As it can be maintained that all the great advances have come from

men under forty, so the history of the world shows that a very large proportion of the evils may be traced to the sexagenarians—nearly all the great mistakes politically and socially, all of the worst poems, most of the bad pictures, a majority of the bad novels, and not a few of the bad sermons and speeches. It is not to be denied that occasionally there is a sexagenarian whose mind, as Cicero remarks, stands out of reach of the body's decay. Such a one has learned the secret of Hermippus, that ancient Roman, who, feeling that the silver cord was loosening, cut himself clear from all companions of his own age, and betook himself to the company of young men, mingling with their games and studies, and so lived to the age of 153, *puerorum habitu refocillatus et educatus*. And there is truth in the story, since it is only those who live with the young who maintain a fresh outlook on the new problems of the world.

"The teacher's life should have three periods—study until twenty-five, investigation until forty, professional until sixty, at which age I would have him retired on a double allowance. Whether Anthony Trollope's suggestion of a college and chlo-roform should be carried out or not, I have become a little dubious, as my own time is getting so short."

E. G. Dexter² disputes Osler's conclusions by referring to such well-known cases as Gladstone, Bismarck, Moltke, Rockefeller, Morgan, etc., and finds that according to the last census there are 4,871,861 persons over sixty in the United States. He recognizes the fact, however, that many corporations refuse to add new men to their working force who are over forty years of age. Dexter had previously tabulated the age of the nearly 9,000 persons mentioned in the 1900 edition of "Who's Who?" and found that comparatively few attained the distinction of being included in this list who were under forty. Of 6,983 men the median age was 46, only one in six being below 40; that is, some 16% were within Osler's period of most effective work. But he concludes that in "Who's Who" older men did not receive the recognition given to their younger confreres. This ratio he finds to be as follows:

20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69
3.9%	39.5%	36.4%	17.6%	2.4%

Thus the decade from 30 to 39 shows only very slightly greater productivity than the next one, and less than one-half made good, so far as public recognition is concerned, before the age of forty. This is irrespective of vocation.

² "Age and Eminence." *Pop. Sci. Mo.*, 66:538 (1904).

From all the studies of genius³ it would seem that musicians do their best work earliest and that prodigies are most common in this field. In those callings that require a long preparation, science promises earliest recognition because this line of work is entered with better intellectual equipment. Here, too, belong professors, librarians, and teachers. Next come actors and authors, in whom ability is partly born and partly made. Compared with science, inventive genius gains a foothold on the ladder of fame late in life. The business man and financier, the lawyer, doctor, and minister, must often enter their profession from the bottom, and no great inventor is below forty. For women, however, recognition comes earlier, and attractiveness of person has a greater premium here than with her brother; but having outlived her youth, progress is harder.

W. A. Newman Dorland⁴ studied the histories of four hundred great men of modern times and concluded that they refute Osler's theory, the large majority of them being still active at sixty, although he distinguishes between workers and thinkers.

E. S. P. Haynes⁵ resents the idea sometimes expressed that people should retire from public affairs at forty, although he recognizes that near this age, in both men and women, there is often an impatience with a future which promises to be just like the past, and that there is a peculiar liability to amorous, financial, or other adventures. If people do anything, they are labeled and so get into grooves, and their friends, if they break out in new lines (as, e.g., Ruskin did), are shocked. But the groove is liable to grow narrow; and when this is realized, abrupt changes may occur. Nature protests against decay, and hence it is that we often see the spectacle of impatient old people who are in a hurry, due perhaps to a sub-conscious effort to feel young again. This is akin to the "dangerous age" in women. Life is not a bed of roses for those who have succeeded, for it is sometimes as difficult to retain as it is to achieve success. Very often our ideas, when we are young, are ahead of our age, but may catch up with us in middle or later life. Very often, too, by ostentatiously turning their backs upon some new movement, the old thereby compel the young to take it up in order to deploy themselves.

In this connection one may reflect, with Louise Creighton, that as older people caused the war, while the younger fought

³ See *Pop. Sci. Mo.*, July, 1902.

⁴ *The Age of Mental Virility*. The Century Co., 1908.

⁵ "The Age Limit." *Living Age*, 1914, p. 214.

it, when the latter come home places will have to be found for them, involving a great deal of displacement, so that the tension between old and young has been greatly increased since the close of the war. We also recall the view of George A. Sims,⁶ that the effect of the war upon the old was depressing because they felt they must die when the world was in darkness and without realizing the prayer of Simeon. The young, on the other hand, anticipated the harvests of peace, whereas for the old, the prospect of dying before this harvest was garnered was often pathetic.

Charles W. St. John⁷ resumes the experimental studies of Ranschburg and Balint, which show that all activities of judgment, association, etc., are retarded, errors increased, and ideas impoverished, in old age. De Fursac tabs the traits of normal senile dementia as (1) impaired attention and association, (2) inaccurate perception of the external world, with illusions and disorientation, (3) disordered memory, retrograde amnesia, and perhaps pseudo-reminiscence, (4) impoverishment of ideas, (5) loss of judgment, (6) loss of affectivity, along with morbid irritability, (7) automatism. There may be ideas of persecution or delusions of greatness. Youthful items of experience hitherto only in the fringe of consciousness now press to the center, and youthful contents are revived. There is a tendency to depart from inductive procedure toward *a priori* methods, where feelings and beliefs are criteria, and especially, as Fechner showed, a tendency to introversion. There is less control, and regression first shows itself in the intellect, which is last to develop.

St. John proceeds to characterize four eminent men who underwent more or less radical transformations in the early stages or youth of old age as follows. Tolstoi⁸ was a typical convert. He witnessed the horror of his grandmother's death, which profoundly affected all his later views. When he was about twelve a schoolmate told him that there was no God and that all thought about Him was an invention. Tolstoi accepted this news and went on in a few years to Nihilism. In later life he realized that if he became "more famous than Gogol, Pushkin, Shakespeare, and Molière, what then?" and he could not answer. The ground crumbled under him. There was no reason to live. Every day was bringing him

⁶ "The Old Folks and the War." *Living Age*, 1918.

⁷ *The Psychology of Senescence*. Master's Thesis, Clark University, Worcester, Mass., 1912.

⁸ P. Birukoff: *Leo Tolstoy, his life and work*. Lond., 1906. A Maude: *The Life of Tolstov*. Lond., 1908.

nearer to the precipice and yet he could not stop. He felt he could live no longer, and the idea of suicide as a last resort was always with him and he had to practice self-deception to escape it. Yet he had a pagan love of life. He found his status summed up in an eastern fable of a traveler who is attacked by a wild beast and attempts to escape by letting himself down into a dried-up well, at the bottom of which he finds a dragon, and so is forced to cling to a wild plant which grows on the wall. Suddenly he sees two mice (one black and one white—day and night) nibbling at the plant from which he hangs, and in despair he looks about, still with a faint hope of escape. On the leaves of this wild plant he sees a few drops of honey, and even with fear at his heart he stretches out his tongue and licks them. Thus the dragon of death inevitably awaits him, while even the honey which he tries to taste does not make him rejoice, for it is no longer sweet. "I cannot turn my eyes from the mice or the dragon. Both are no fable."

Thus the fear of death, which had long haunted him, now excluded everything else and he was in despair. He turned to the working people, whom he had always liked, to study them, and found that although they anticipated death they did not worry about it but had a simple faith that bridges the gulf between the finite and the infinite, although they held much he could not accept. Thus for a year, while he was considering whether or not to kill himself, he was haunted by a feeling he describes as searching after God, not with his reason but with his feelings. Kant and Schopenhauer said they could not know Him. Tolstoi first feared that these experiences presaged his own mental decline. He had joined the church and clung to orthodoxy for three years, but in the end left and was later excommunicated. He became a peasant and finally left his pleasant home for a monastery; as the church had failed, he turned to the Gospels, the core of which he found in the Sermon on the Mount. Here was the solution of his problem. If everyone strives for self there is no happiness. Nor is there any love of family and friends alone, but love must extend to all mankind and even to being, and this must be all-embracing. No doubt of immortality can come to any man who renounces his individual happiness. Instead of God he now worships the world-soul and attains the goal of perfection he once sought in self-development.

Fechner,⁹ born in 1801, made professor of physics in 1833, turned to more psychological studies in 1838. He had visual troubles and could not work without bandaging his eyes, lived in a blue room, had insomnia, and seemed about to die. But in 1843 he improved and felt he was called by God to do extraordinary things, prepared for by suffering. The old was gone, and his philosophical inclinations now came into the foreground. He was on the way to the secret of the universe. He believed in sight rather than induction. But this was in the decades when German philosophy was at its lowest ebb, so that his works fell dead. Not only Buchner and Moleschott but Kant belonged to what he called the "night side," for the latter's *Ding-an-Sich* was a plot to banish joy. Fechner knew no epistemology and thought we could come into direct contact with reality itself. Man lives three times, once before birth and in sleep, second alternating, and finally, in death, comes to the eternal awakening. The spirit will then communicate with others without language, and all the dead live in us as Christ did in His followers. The earth will return its soul to the sun. Visible phantoms may be degenerate souls. In his *Zend-Avesta* (Living Word) he gives us a philosophy which he deems Christian and which really sums up his final view of things. The childish view is nearest right, and the philosopher only reverts to it. Fechner died November 18, 1887, at the age of eighty-six, and after his crisis was really more poet than scientist.

August Comte,¹⁰ born 1798, married at the age of twenty-seven, was divorced at forty-four. He experienced losses by the failure of his publisher, and had his first crisis when he was forty. He met Clotilde DeVaux when he was forty-seven, but she died in one year. He then became the high-priest of humanity, developing his *Politique Positive* and a new religion. His father, a government official, had given him an excellent scientific education, but during his early years his emotional life was entirely undeveloped, and this now took the ascendancy.

⁹ W. Wundt: *Gustav Theodor Fechner*. Leipzig, 1901; K. Lasswitz: *Gustav Theodor Fechner*. Stuttgart, 1896. G. S. Hall: *Founders of Modern Psychology*. N. Y., Appleton, 1907.

¹⁰ J. Croley: *The Love Life of Auguste Comte*. Modern Thinker, 2nd edition, 1870. J. Mill: *Auguste Comte and Positivism*. Lond., 1907, 5th ed. A. Poey: *The Three Mental Crises of Auguste Comte*. Modern Thinker, 2d ed., Lond., 1870.

Emanuel Swedenborg¹¹ was born in 1688. He had his first vision in London in 1745 at the age of fifty-seven, became a seer and mystic, and changed from a subjective to an objective type of thought and developed his doctrine of correspondencies. The change was due to overwork and eyestrain, as was the case with Comte.

Giovanni Segantini¹² affords us perhaps the very best picture of a man who died at the age of forty-three of what might be called meridional mental fever. His life was a struggle against an obsessive death-thought and a compensatory will-to-live. His first painting, at the age of twelve, was of a child's corpse, which he tried to paint back into life. Haunted by the idealized image of his mother, who died when he was very young and which he fancied he at length found in a peasant girl whom he made his model for years, this life-affirming motif was always in conflict with the thought of death, which in later years became an obsession. His struggle for sublimation was typified by his removal from the world and retirement to a high Alpine village, where the mountains, in the ideal of which it was his final ambition to embody all the excelsior motives of life, became his inspiration and so drew him that he had a passion for exploring their heights and once slept, almost to the permanent impairment of his health, in the snow. He had several narrow escapes from death, which afterwards always provoked greater activity.

He painted an upright corpse, the fall of which he thought, with the characteristic superstition of neurotics, was ominous. Death became, in the end, his muse, as his mother had been in the earlier stages of his development. He seemed fascinated with the idea of anticipating death in every way, even though this was a more or less unconscious urge. It was as if he revolted against the ordinary fate of man to await its gradual approach with the soporific agencies which old age normally supplies, and was anxious to go forth and meet it face to face at the very summit of his powers. At times he let down all precautions and took great risks, so characteristic a result of acute disappointments or of general disenchantment with life. He seemed to revel in the stimulus of the hurry-up motive, which often supervenes, but far more slowly, in those who realize that they have reached the zenith of their powers.

¹¹ G. Trobridge: *Emanuel Swedenborg, his life, teachings, and influence*. Lond., 1911. B. White and B. Barrett: *Life and Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*. 1876. J. Wilkinson: *Emanuel Swedenborg: a biography*. Bost., 1849. Also Emerson's essay.

¹² See Karl Abraham's work of this title (Leipzig, 1911), based on Seravia's biography.

Love of his mother made him an artist, and he early married a wife who was the mother-image, which was never marred by any childish jealousy of his father, of whom he had known little, but was sublimated into love of mankind and even of animals. But his later greater love of death obscured the mother-image and even overcame his passion for home, which he had idealized, and dominated his exquisite feeling for and worship of nature, which he always regarded as charged with symbolic meanings.

At a crisis in the early thirties, a prevalent depressive mood gave way to the joy of creation, and his character and the method of his art seemed to undergo a transformation. His resentment at his own fate seemed to vent itself in the desire to banish, if not, as Abraham thinks, to punish, his mother by representing her in scenes of exquisite suffering. And when at the age of thirty-six his Alpinism made him at home only with the mountains, the break with his past life became more and more marked. The ordinary vicissitudes of life were not sufficient, and he wished to gamble not with the mere abatement or reinforcement of life but with life and death themselves. Even his dreams were haunted by a thanatic mood, and his superstitions were such that they almost made life itself a hateful dream. He tells us of fancying himself sitting in a retired nook which was at the same time like a church, when a strange figure stood before him, a creature of dreadful and repulsive form, with white gleaming eyes and yellow flesh tone, half cretin and half death. "I rose, and, with impressive mien, ordered it away after it had ogled me sideways. I followed it with my eye into the darkest corner until it had vanished." And this vision he thought ominous. When he turned around he shuddered, for the phantom was again before him. Then he arose like a fury, cursed and threatened it, and it vanished and did not return, for it was more obedient than Poe's raven. His ambivalent reaction against this was not only to work harder but to affirm that there was no death, and thus to revive much of the earlier religiosity of his childhood.

One of his pictures was of a dying consumptive which he transformed into one of blooming life. More and more the death-thought mastered his consciousness—almost as much as it did the soul of the insane painter, Wertz,—and provoked him to greater enthusiasm, and ever longer and more arduous programs for his future life. But from the subconscious he was always hearing more and more clearly the call of death, for which his deeper nature seems to have passionately longed,

while the opposite will-to-live became more and more impotent. All his prodigious activity in later life seems to have been thus really due to a subdominant will to die. When he fell ill for the first time in his life, "the dark powers of his unconscious nature came in to help the disease and make the disintegrative process easier and to invite death," as if love of it were the consummation of his love of all things that lived and the latter would not have been complete without the former.

Another case of a genius who hurried through the table d'hôte Nature provides and left the table sated to repletion when her regular guests were but half through the course was the German poet, Lenau.¹³ Born 1802, he studied philosophy, law, and medicine successively, sought contact with primeval nature in America at thirty, returned to find himself famous and after a period of prolonged chastity becoming promptly infected with syphilis, became insane at forty-two and died of progressive paralysis at forty-eight. This is perhaps the most psychalgic of all diseases which afflict man, for it not only poisons the arrows of love and makes its ecstasy exquisite pain, but weakens all the phyletic instincts, like the climacteric, and, like it, brings hyperindividuation in its train. He knew both the joys and the pains of life, the depth of misery and the heights of euphoria. Eros and Thanatos were inseparable in his soul, and both had their raptures and inspired him by turns. Amorousness brought acute religiosity, and between his erotic adventures he lapsed far toward the negation of all faiths and creeds. When not in love his violin was treated as a paramour, and he forgot it when the tender passion glowed again in his soul. I doubt if any poet ever had a truer and deeper feeling for nature or was a more eloquent interpreter of all her moods and aspects. He exhausted both homo- and heterosexual experiences, remaining through a series of love affairs true to his Sophie, who was like his mother and with whom his relations were pure and whose influence was beneficent. Even before his infection, megalomania alternated with misanthropy, and he had all the fluctuations of mood which are such characteristic stigmata of hysteria. Spells of lassitude alternated with Berserker energy; masochism with sadism; excesses, including those of drink, with spells of depression. In his aggressive moods he stormed up mountains, which to him were symbols of mental elevation, until he was completely exhausted. Sometimes he fancied

¹³ J. Sadger: *Aus dem Liebeslebens Nicolaus Lenaus*. Leipzig, 1909, 96 p. See also his biography by B. E. Castle.

himself a nobleman or even a monarch, and always strove to reduce all about him to servile satellites. The Job-Faust-Manfried motive often took possession of him, and sometimes he played his violin half the night, dancing in rapt ecstasy and unable to keep time. In his periods of self-reproach after orgasms of ecstasy he became ascetic. His poetry and converse were, especially for such a man, singularly pure. He said he carried a corpse around within him.

Most insanities are only an exaggeration or breaking out of previous traits, and this was exceptionally so in his case. At one time he seemed to want to break with all his old and to find a new set of friends. In the high temperature at which he lived, with so many impulses which were either frustrated or crucified, always hot with love or its ambivalent hate, he died—not, like Segantini, because he was hypnotized by death at the very acme of his power and willed it actively, though unconsciously, as surely as if he had committed suicide, but he rather turned to it from sheer repletion of life, most of the experiences of which he had exhausted. It was as if a congeries of souls took possession of him by turns, so that in middle life he had already played most of the parts in the drama and thus knew it far more exhaustively than those who lead more unitary lives, however prolonged they may be. He was by no means theoretically a miserablist or even a pessimist, but was simply burned out (*blasé*, *abgelebt*). As if to anticipate the *Weltschmerz* that his diathesis made it certain would later become acute, his passionate love for nature, deep and insightful as it was, did not prove an adequate compensation, and we cannot but wonder whether, if he had lived more normally and without infection to fourscore, his life would not inevitably have ended with the same, though less acute, general symptoms. Yet even he never cursed the fate which brought him into life or inveighed against his parentage. His life was like a candle in the wind blown every way by turns, now and then flaring up and emitting great light and heat and now almost put out, and smoking, sputtering, and malodorous in a socket like a blue flame just before its final extinction.

The psychograph of the poet Heinrich von Kleist (x 1811, a. e. 34) affords another example of a genius who died of premature old age near the period of its dawn or at the critical turn of the tide.¹⁴ In the University his passion for omniscience impelled him to enroll for so many and diverse courses that his professors protested. Later he actually tried eight

¹⁴ J. Sadger in *Grenzfragen des Nerven und Seelenlebens*. 1910, pp. 5-63.

and attempted to sample other callings. "He would have liked to be everything." In the space of fourteen years no less than nine women had engaged his fancy, although none had made a deep or lasting impression. He had also a veritable lust for traveling, and after every important event in his life resorted to this kind of fugue from reality to lose himself in new scenes. "There is nothing consistent in me save inconsistency." His demands on his friends, and also his ambitions, knew no bounds. He would "tear the crown from Goethe's brow." He felt he must storm all heights and do it now or never.

He, too, was bisexual in his instincts. He glorified purity and sobriety as over-compensation for his shortcomings in both these respects. Much as he did, he never could complete the great work he had long planned, and despair at his impotence to achieve his ambitions made him at last take flight to insanity as a refuge and finally to joint suicide with a woman. Late in life he lost the power to distinguish between fact and fancy, so fully had his writings become a surrogate for life. Wagner said that if life were as full as we wish it to be, there would be no need of art, and von Kleist's biographer seems to doubt whether to call his end a victory or a surrender. His wooing of death was not, like Segantini, a continuation and consummation of the thanatopsis mood of adolescence but was rather due to a growing endogenous lethargy and apathy. He lost his appetite for life, from which he had expected more than it has to give—even to the most favored—and thus at the critical age when men are prone to weigh themselves in the balance, he found incompleteness and inferiority both within and without and so threw himself into the arms of the Great Silencer. Everything conventional had long since palled upon him. "His early fixation upon an unattainable goal was broken down, and he pursued the unattainable until he fancied he found it in death." The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War seemed for a time to afford him an outlet for his pent-up desires without compelling him to resort to illness.

In his ground *motif* Maupassant¹⁵ belongs to the same category as Lenau and von Kleist. He inherited neurotic trends from both parents and died in 1893 at the age of forty-three, having experienced most of the episodes of life and during his twelve productive years written fourteen volumes and climbed to the very summit of the French Parnassus. His morbidity was partly congenital and partly metasyphilitic.

¹⁵ G. Vorberg: *Guy de Maupassant's Krankheit*. 1908, 27 pp.

Had he lived his simple life in his Normandy home instead of coming to Paris, he might have survived; but he fell a victim to narcotics, ether, hashish, morphine, cocaine, Bacchus, and Venus. Like so many great men afflicted with the same disease, his symptoms showed many marked departures from its ordinary course, and before its active stage, his divarications in the fields of various abnormal symptom-groups were many. His passion for the horrible is perhaps best illustrated in his shuddering "Horla."

Gogol's¹⁶ life (x 1852, *a. e.* 43) was full of contradictory completeness and incompleteness. He, too, desired not only to touch but to express life at every point, and his realism was in fact only self-expression. He lived through life as a fiction and tried to cast this fiction into the mould of actuality. He was a failure in nearly every department of life he tried, and was a man whose character was made up of samples of every type of human nature. In him the creative impulse was not a retreat from life but was an attempt to make a bridge between it and his soul. He was haunted by a feeling of inferiority, but this it was the passion of his life to overcome. When his aggressive feelings were strongest he produced most. He failed as actor, teacher, clerk, and succeeded as poet and novelist because thus he could best wreak his inmost self upon expression. He was finally obsessed by a religious mania, became a mystic, and sought salvation by fasting and self-denial. Fear of death was a life-long obsession, and he strove to conquer both love and death together by seeking and defying the latter. He decided to die by fasting and kneeling before the picture of the mother of God. "Groaning and crying out with his last strength, he had dragged himself to the symbol of the highest feminine completeness, and when he found the 'Glorious Virgin' of his dreams his dissolution came." In his last moment he seems to have felt that he had overcome both death and woman—but only by yielding to them—and believed himself to be a martyr. It was the difficulty he found in bridging the chasm between his solitary, child-like self, and the real world that made him a great creator of fiction, a practical failure, and a madman.

J. V. Scheffel¹⁷ exhibited a range of moods from humor and jollity to melancholia and showed an entire absence of eroticism in his poems, which was more or less compensatory.

¹⁶ Otto Kaus in *Schriften des Vereins freie psychoanalytische Forschung*. No. 2, 1912, 81 p.

¹⁷ P. J. Möbius: *Ueber Scheffel's Krankheit*. 1907, p. 40.

The bisexual instinct (he not only looked like a girl but sometimes disguised himself in woman's attire) was evoked by an earnest effort to see the world as woman did. He had an extraordinary variety of morbid attacks, hypochondria, delusions, headaches, morbid fear of death, anxiety, nightmares, weeping, etc. Schurmann even goes so far as to think that a cyclothymic diathesis or a tendency to periodic attacks of various psychic morbidities is characteristic of genius, which finds occasional relief in attacks of insanity, like Cowper, Rousseau, Tasso, Hölderlin, and many others, and ascribes this in part to a hunger for a life larger and fuller than normality or sobriety can afford. This, however, is forbidden fruit, for nature punishes the enjoyment of it—if not by premature death at least by premature satiety with life.

John Ruskin's lifeline had marked nodes, the chief of which may be characterized as follows. Up to the early forties he had lived and written under the dominant influence of his father, who held very conservative views of religion, but the foundations of the son's faith were shaken and the tenet "which had held the hopes and beliefs of his youth and early manhood had proved too narrow. He was stretching forth to a wider and, as he felt, a nobler conception of life and destiny but the transition was through much travail of soul."¹⁸ He wrote, "It is a difficult thing to live without hope of another world when one has been used to it for forty years. But by how much the more difficult, by so much it makes one braver and stronger." And, again, "It may be much nobler to hope for the advance of the human race only than for one's own immortality, much less selfish to look upon oneself merely as a leaf on a tree than as an independent spirit, but it is much less pleasant." Cook says that "he had been brought up as a Bible Christian in the strictest school of literal interpretation but he had also become deeply versed in some branches of natural science, and the truths of science seemed inconsistent with a literal belief in the Scriptures." He had been much influenced by Spurgeon, whom he knew well in private life, but made no secret of his adhesion to Colenso's heresies. No one understood the inmost causes of his muse as he grew melancholic. He was exhausted, dyspeptic, wanted to reconstruct society, had "the soul of a prophet consumed with wrath against a wayward and perverse generation," but also the heart of a lover of his fellow-men filled with pity for the miseries and follies of mankind. His mother recognized his tendency to misanthropy, and only at forty-two did he break

¹⁸ E. T. Cook: *Life of John Ruskin*. Lond., 1911, Vol. II, p. 19.

away from parental discipline. "A new epoch of life began for me in this wise, that my father and mother could travel with me no more, but Rose [La Touche, the young girl, with whom he was in love and who died when he was in the early fifties and left him forlorn] in heart was with me always, and all I did was for her sake." This was his first "exile." The clouds which had more than once lowered over his life settled in old age, and he died in 1900, at the age of eighty-one. During most of the last ten years, he presented one of the saddest of all the spectacles of old age, "dying from the top downward." He was apathetic, monosyllabic, could write little, and spoke less; and but for the kindly ministrations of Mrs. Severn and the thoughtfulness of Kate Greenaway almost nothing either in Brantwood or the great world without retained interest for him.

The middle-age crisis in Nietzsche's life began when he left Bayreuth in August, 1876, after the performance of *The Ring of the Niebelung*. He was then thirty-two years of age, and now it was that his disenchantment with Wagner, whom he had regarded as a superman and often called Jupiter, "one who might bring the type of man to a higher degree of perfection,"¹⁹ began. He had thought Wagner "near to the divine," but he now found much of his music dull and realized that in *Parsifal* he had violated his own atheism as a concession to the public, and so he "refused to recognize a genius who was not honest with himself." He abhorred Wagner's new "redemption philosophy," but for months and years could not bring himself to an open break with him and was for a long time plunged in the depths of gloom. He now became truly lonely and went through a complete inner revolution. He realized that he must henceforth stand alone and work out the problem of life by himself. His anxiety as to how the venerable Wagner would receive his *Human, All Too Human* was pathetic. When he found he could not publish it anonymously he revised and toned down many of his criticisms; and deep, indeed, was his grief when, despite the almost fawning letter which accompanied a copy of his book to Wagner, the latter lacked the greatness of soul to understand his sincerity, and broke with him forever. At the same time he was emancipating his thought from Schopenhauer, who had hitherto been his sovereign master in the philosophic field.

Now it was that he almost completely wrecked his life by living according to the precepts of Cornaro, and his letters

¹⁹ Frau Foerster-Nietzsche: *The Life of Nietzsche*.

show the intense struggle with which he finally resolved to find his own way through life and to abandon his soul to self-expression. He finally resigned his chair of classic literature at Bâle, and a little later sorted his manuscripts and commissioned his sister to burn half of them. This she refused to do and it was just these that were the basis of some of the best things he published later. After trying residence in many places and various cures, and experimenting with many regimens, he finally resolved to become his own doctor, and it was by his own efforts that he succeeded in prolonging the efficient period of his life. But he felt he had at last struck the right road in his *The Dawn of Day*, which marked the opening of his campaign against morality. From this time on, too, he had a deep, new, intense love of nature, and was inspired henceforth by the conviction that he must be the midwife of the superman in the world. This apostle of a "New Renaissance" was not unlike his Zarathustra, who retired to the mountains at thirty and at forty came down to the haunts of men with a new message for them.

The theme of Rostand's "Chanticleer" is the disillusion of that gorgeous barnyard fowl from the fond and at first secret conviction, which he later confessed to the pheasant hen, that it was his crowing that brought in the dawn and that if he failed in this function the world would lie in darkness. The tragedy of the play is the slow conviction that the sun could rise without him. In Nietzsche we see the exact reverse of this process. His delusions of greatness grew with years and eventually passed all bounds of sanity. He became jealous of Jesus and came to believe that he had brought the world a new dispensation, and that his work would sometime be recognized as the dawn of a new era.

Robert Raymond²⁰ thinks it is pleasant to lie at anchor a while in port before setting sail for the last long voyage to the unknown. The passage from late youth to middle age has many of the same traits as growing old. We suddenly realize, perhaps in a flash, that life is no longer all before us. When youth begins to die, it fights and struggles. The panic is not so much that we cannot do handsprings, but we have to compromise with our youthful hopes. We have been out of college perhaps twenty years. Napoleon lost Waterloo at 45; Dickens had written all his best at 40; and Pepys finished his diary at 37. We lose the sense of superfluous time and must hurry; we feel the futility of postponements, and accept the philosophy of the second best as not so bad; we become

²⁰ "On Growing Old." *Atlant.*, 1915, p. 803.

more tolerant toward others and perhaps toward ourselves. We must not be too serious or yearn too much for a lost youth. It is like the first anticipations of fall in the summer.

F. von Mueller of Munich²¹ thinks we can never tell when old age begins. Involution is closely connected with evolution from the start. The lymphatics, tonsils, and thymus begin to atrophy as soon as the development of the sex organs comes. Among English button workers it was found that young men did most; that they did 80% of the work they formerly did, between the ages of 40 and 45; 60%, in the fifty-fifth year; and 40% after sixty-five. The power of observation is so great in youth that 70% of all our acquisitions are made at this stage. Originality comes later. Age is more serious. There is less adaptation because habit is growing rigid. The emotional life stiffens, and the intellectual narrows. There are more doubts. There is a stronger-felt need of recognition from others which is very deeply experienced in many ways. The capacity for producing original ideas comes latest of all. It is generally thought that the highest physical development is before 30. Some investigators think that physical deterioration begins with the brain, but this is doubtful.

Bruce Birch²² thinks the wreckage of youth spectacular; that of old age less discernible because more subtle and internal. The old should come to the fullest possible maturity. Youth must be served. The church focuses on young men. The old age here chiefly regarded is from 45 on. Most lack intelligent encouragement to go on. They are thought too old to need advice but to only want comfort. Habits are supposed to be formed. The old are not thought to be heart-searchers.

The fact is, senescence has very new and great temptations, viz., to go on in the old way of habit and belief. The temptations of the old are largely of the spirit but sometimes also of the flesh and the devil. It is hard to keep up the struggle for personal righteousness and there are periods of storm and stress. The church has not done its duty here. Most think the most dangerous period is that of wild oats—between 16 and 26—but this writer says it is between 45 and 65 where there is the most wreckage.

1. There is a tendency to low ideals. Youth tends to lofty ideals and to realize them, but now hope often fails. With

²¹ See *Sci. Amer. Sup.*, Nov. 15, 1919.

²² "The Moral and Religious Psychology of Late Senescence." *Biblical World*, 1918, p. 75.

the abbreviation of life there is loss of initiative, perhaps sickness of hope deferred. Age thinks it has become all it can hope to be; so enthusiasm wanes and the *tedium vitae* makes us feel the game is not worth the candle, that we are not willing to pay the price of sacrifice and struggle to maintain high ideals. So we aim lower. The excelsior motive is lost. So there is often a degeneration of moral character. Cheap pleasures satisfy—perhaps even those of the table, for this is the easiest way of reviving some of the tendencies of former life.

2. Hence lowering and liberalizing of conduct creeds. The frontal lobes shrink as the period of endeavor wanes. The edge of desire is dulled and so is the power to distinguish right and wrong, true and false. "Twice a child, once a man." The powers of imagination, aggression, and resistant effort, flag, and we are content with the beaten path because the motor areas have decayed. There is ruttness, the brain is set for habitual reactions, there are fixed points of view, the apperceptive mass is allowed to interpret all new ideas, and these cannot change it. Thus it is hard to adjust to progress. There is less resistance, self-control, courage for great deeds and high purposes, to ask advice of and be influenced by younger men. Politicians often recognize this in putting forward respectable elderly, pliant candidates. One is often weak where he thinks himself strong because there is no fool like an old one. He may yield to selfishness, acquisitiveness, curiosity, secretiveness, envy, jealousy, avarice, and other primitive traits. There is too frequent moral collapse here.

3. There is a lessening of emotional intensity, or a stodginess. The imitative, religious, adventurous, belligerent, imaginative, initiative traits are developed early, and the younger a man is, the greater is the dominion of the emotions. But later poets turn to prose and others to more didactic activities. Scientists, philosophers, and statesmen are best when they are through this period. Disappointed men now become cynical, morose, petulant, or vicious as the intellect only rules. If the social or gregarious instinct fails, society may bore, friendships decline, and age may be lonely. Or, again, it may be a prey of many dispositional, emotional, and obsessive feelings which may become insane. The patient may live in a logic-tight compartment. The obsession may be a hobby or a system of connected ideas with a strong emotional tone (complex). These are tendencies arising from instinct. When the social and sane instincts lose in the conflict, interest in the present may decline to indifference, and the obsessions may

focus on real or fancied errors of the past—duty to a dead child, a business failure, etc. At any rate, there is a tendency to indulge temperament.

4. Failure in religious teaching. Versus “Be sure your sin will find you out” all the old realize that they have done much sin that is not found out which, if it were exposed, would bring suffering, disgrace, public execration, loss of vocation, property, friends. To fear only the consequences of evil is bad, and since they have escaped they feel a certain contempt of secular and moral law and take greater risks. The old man prefers to be respectable and righteous, but he does not care if his unrighteousness is known or suspected if it is not made too public. Thus the old dread exposure more than they do sin.

5. The church offers too little to the old but wants to see old age tap new reservoirs of energy, vigor, joy, and enthusiasm. The best it can offer is faith in Jesus. Many would say it offers a larger intellectual view.

It would be easy to multiply both cases and testimonies like the above. From such data I draw the inference that, leaving out of consideration here the initial prepubertal stage and the terminal one of the post-climacteric or old age proper, all the rest of life which lies between these is divided into two parts, adolescence and senescence, that the latter begins where the former ends, and that all that we have thought characteristic of middle life consists of only the phenomena which are connected with the turn of the tide. The reasons for this extension of the application of these terms will be set forth in detail in a book on senescence, now nearing completion, complementing my earlier study of *Adolescence*.