

Fitness at Fifty.

By A. E. Hopkins.

AGE MAY BE MEASURED in years of time but it does not depend on calendar measurement. The health of the body, the temperament and the mental attitude towards living decide whether one is old at 50 or young at a 100.

It is a true saying that some people never grow old whilst others are born old, and it would be a good mental exercise for all middle aged persons to substitute the word "young" for that of "old." For example when asked one's age the reply should be, so many years "young" and not so many years "old." The former is the positive approach towards age and has a beneficial effect on the mind.

The art of maintaining mental and physical fitness beyond middle age can be summed up in the one word "moderation," as far as physical condition reflects on the mental outlook of a person, but the healthful exercise of the mind in order to increase knowledge can proceed throughout life, without deleterious reactions on the physical make-up of the body.

In fact it is known that the mind improves with age although the sight and hearing deteriorate from a fairly early stage in life. To prove this point one has only to look at our present outstanding men in public life such as in politics, philosophy, education, professional groups, and many other branches, whose minds have gone on improving as the years pass, mastering the ever increasing intricacies of social and scientific development, until at advanced age they become recognised authorities in their respective spheres.

Not very many years ago it was believed that the mind lost its receptiveness for learning after the school age, but nowadays it is an accepted fact that man's most teachable age is up to fifty years and over. In our evening schools it is a common sight to see men and women of 60, 70 and even 80 taking up the study, for the first time, of such things as painting, writing, languages and so forth, and enjoying it too.

It may be that the ability to learn is formulated in the early years, and that it is in later life that purposive absorption of knowledge takes place. There are many instances of persons qualifying for professional status long after the school days are past.

It is however with the social and physical activities that moderation has to be exercised with care and understanding, for middle age cannot hope to excel in vigorous sports and games without paying the cost, but if the middle aged realise that to let go of all activities altogether leads to early decay or old age, as this condition is called, they will still participate in substitute activities, which do not require tremendous youthful output of energy in order to enjoy them. Dance by all means but choose the quieter dances and dance less; play games but do not try to compete with youth, and above all learn to be a good loser, so that the pleasure of dancing or playing games is in the ability to dance and play, and not solely in beating the opponent, winning medals, achieving records and so forth.

To madly endeavour to retain departing youth is ridiculous and absolutely ineffectual. It is energy wasted and yields nothing, but it does exact a payment which has to be paid out of the later years.

Whether the passing of youth leaves sadness or a happy condition of mind depends, to a very large extent, upon the methods adopted and the mental outlook towards fitness at 50.

To a normal person at this interesting age or even later, beauty in all its forms should still appeal to the best in the senses, and satisfaction should be derived from the successes of youth in well fought battles of skill and endeavour. The mental attitude at 50, properly developed, results in happiness in living, for at this age one ought to have learned that it is possible to "eat one's cake and still keep it"; to appreciate and understand the meaning of choice and selection; to avoid life's difficulties and to grasp and enjoy to the full all

that is beautiful in nature and people. Above all perhaps the ability to laugh and appreciate humour is a quality to be richly prized.

One of the finest things in the world today is to witness the wise zest for life of so many middle aged men and women who fear not the passing of youth or the approach of age.

Obviously, exercise is important for without movement we surely die. Eugen Sandow wrote an admirable book many years ago and entitled it "Life is Movement," and no truer title could have been selected for this work on exercise for the human body and its beneficial effects.

To drop exercise altogether is to invite with open arms the spectre of decrepit old age, but when the games and activities of youth begin to exert too great a toll on energy it is time to resort to wise substitution. The distance when walking can always be reduced. Games can be played with persons of one's own strength and stamina. Bowls, croquet, clock golf and such like can take the places of cricket and football. Fishing instead of rowing, bathing instead of swimming are other valuable substitutions, whilst gardening and indoor exercises can always be regulated to the strength of the individual, and can be carried on to the very last gasp.

The faithful regular carrying out of simple exercises in one's own room can only result in great benefit, for muscular fitness helps in enjoying life at all ages.

Moderation in food is also important and this is where experience gained from early indiscretions plays its part. It is wiser to eat less and enjoy more, only avoiding those things that are known to disagree. Late night meals and heavy breakfasts are not for those middle aged and over. The body needs to extract its required nourishment with less energy expended on eliminating waste, so more emphasis should be laid on the values of fruits, milk, vegetables and salads than on meats, heavy puddings and strong drinks.

At 50 and over a determined turning towards all those interests, habits and privileges, physical, mental and occupational, whose sensible, moderate, joyful and happy exercise will fill agreeably the days of later life, and build a sound basis for all the years ahead.

A closing thought. We pass this way but once and even 100 years is a short term of human life, so by making wisely sure of the years at 50 and over we increase the opportunity to render service to others, for life is valueless unless it spells service.

World Health Organisation Aid for Greek Earthquake Victims.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION has approved an estimated \$25,000 supply programme for the prevention of epidemic disease on the earthquake islands in the Ionian Sea. The supplies will include water purifiers, galvanised piping, rat poison and tetanus prophylactics. The programme was worked out in consultation with the Greek authorities by Dr. Duurt Rijkels, a staff member of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, who has returned to Geneva from a visit to the stricken area undertaken at the request of the Greek Government. In Greece, he was also in contact with representatives of other agencies, including UNICEF.

Dr. Rijkels gives the following picture of conditions on the islands: Excellent work is being done by the Greek Government in bringing relief to the earthquake victims. Food supplies, always an initial difficulty in any widespread disaster, are well organised and medical personnel of all categories is successfully dealing with the situation. The first-aid emergency phase is now over and the Government has sent six teams, consisting each of a doctor, four nurses and three sanitary engineers, to care for the wounded and to improve health conditions.

The number of victims is less than was originally feared.

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