

On the Pleasure of no Longer  
Being Very Young

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The present essay has been written by Chesterton. In this essay the essayist expresses his views on the advantages of growing young. The world seems to be growing younger and lovelier to a man growing young. Traditions, institutions, proverbs and maxims which seemed once lifeless, take on a new meaning. To a young man the world has little beauty and seems to be worn out. Proverbs which have become stale by repetition by a man growing old to contain an element of truth which he missed when he was young.

The questioning look that industrial and material prosperity now wears, never seems to impress a young man. But an elderly man realizes it. The maxims that fortune is fickle, that riches can't be kept, that power is fugitive, that pride goes before a fall, are quite meaningless to a young man. But after getting experience, they seem to be as true as life, and their validity can't be ignored by a person who knows the world. The examples of the fall of Wolsey from power, of the disaster of Napoleon at Moscow, and some others do not stir the heart of the young. They need to be brought home to an individual by personal experience which truly reveals the things.

The new world remains an enigma to the young. It is not the young, but the old who realize the new world. The young seem to have stepped on to a moving platform.

which they seem to be hardly conscious. The young see only the dim and shadowy background, but the old see the things relieved sharply against the background. For example, a young man would laugh at the idea of men regularly going to church, but the oldest inhabitant of the Parish knows that the church which was practically empty in the days of his childhood, is filling up again in his old age.

Chesterton is fond of paradoxes. It is in a series of paradoxes that he sets forth the advantages of growing old. He would have nothing to do with the rose coloured, sentimental picture that is drawn of old age. At the outset he states that he does not believe that old men ever grow wise. Perhaps there is no fool who is half so happy in his own fool's paradise. So the tables are turned upon the young: yet it may be noted that we have to assent to the intrinsic truths contained in Chesterton's paradoxes.

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