

## Stanley Hall Confronts Old Age

SENESCENCE. By G. Stanley Hall. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

PRESIDENT STANLEY HALL gallantly confronts old age and its mortuary thoughts with intense self-consciousness and unabated zest for life. In defiance of the atrophizing accuracies of carping Latinists, his motto is still "*Impavi progrediamur*," shouted with bravura.

On retiring from the presidency of Clark University, he undertook a thorough cleaning of house and desk, interestingly described in a paper reproduced from the *Atlantic Monthly*, and then sat down to peruse a "voracious literature" on senility and write a big book on "Senescence and Senectitude." As he dates incipient senescence from the fortieth year, this threatened to become a receptacle for everything, from cancer to Carnegie pensions, that did not find a place in "Adolescence." Like Goethe answering the printer's call for more copy for "Wilhelm Meister," he has emptied every drawer and pigeon-hole. There is little that cannot be brought in by such transitions as "we resume our historical notes with Luigi Cornaro" or "I also append the following quotations." And President Hall's endeavor apparently was to omit nothing that he had transcribed in his notebooks, or that his students and secretaries had collected of the observations of poets, moralists, satirists, physicians, scientists, and pseudo-scientists about our declining years.

A captious or absolute criticism could discover here the old foibles of incoherent omniscience, the old malapropian exuberance of pseudo-scientific verbiage, the still persistent sex-obsession, and the inevitable misprints, misquotations, and misapplications of

classical allusions and tags. These are perhaps somewhat toned down, like the Gorgian figures in Isocrates, by a slackened pulse, or it may be by what the author might style a critical phobia. Yet there is nothing even in adolescence better than the "monks of Mount Ethos" (*sic bis*), and the old men of Aristotle who "go according to the precept of bias." But why be absolute?

Much of the book is quite readable, and a clever journalist with more space than the column at my disposal could find suggestion and matter here for more than one entertaining review. Such a one might even fancy that these "voracious" collections exhaust the subject and include all of the best that has been thought and said from Juvenal to Arnold on "what it is to grow old," from Cicero to O. W. Holmes *de senectute*. But a wider survey would discover as good fish as any that have been caught in Dr. Hall's far-flung net. He has omitted, for example, the chorus of Euripides' "Heracles" on song in old age, which Wilamowitz takes as the theme of a characteristic dithyramb, and he has overlooked the beautiful sonnet "Enoch" which Sir Henry Taylor's autobiography quotes with interesting comment. His own conclusion that "death is the end of body and soul alike" gives Dr. Hall "a sense of profound satisfaction."

Yet the last words of his book are:

I hope to see my Pilot face to face

When I have crossed the bar.

In what Pickwickian sense does he expect the ingenuous reader to take them?

PAUL SHOREY