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Making the Best of Today

THESE ARE NOT DAYS in which the generality of humanity indulges in service to others. We blame the pace of life, the shortest of time, the demands of duty, and other things, for our neglect of the samaritan acts really natural to us, but suppressed.

Here is an opportunity for those advanced in years. Dr Hans Selye says wisely in his book The Stress of Life: "neither wealth, nor force, nor any other instrument of power can ever be more reliable in assuring our security and peace of mind than the knowledge of having inspired gratitude in a great many people."

No longer hurried and confused by the headlong rush of life, we are able to look around and distinguish the real from the artificial, the excellent from the customary. Now is the time to put into personal practice that you have learned about how to live, and to express in a continuing way your goodwill toward others. By putting into daily practice the basic principle of the Golden Rule you will find that you have not merely alleviated a present ill, but have transformed it.

This does not mean that one should go around the family or neighbours giving advice. Don't brag about what you did when you were young, or boast about what you would do today if you were not old.

If there is one quality more than another that marks maturity, it is the quality of awareness. You will, when you are on the lookout for it, sense the moment when your advice and counsel would be fitting and useful; you will be aware, too, of the times when the weight of your years' experience would be a strain on good relations.

To "kill time," said Abbe Ernest Dimnet, is the most sacrilegious phrase in modern languages. There are still fine, strange things to be found, and regardless of what is found the search itself is fun. Think up something you want, or want to know. If you are at a loose end for interests, do as a child without toys does: make some.

The wisest investment of time lies in creative activities. Hobbies can be boring, transient things if they do not involve imagination and doing. To design and build a doll house for a granddaughter out of an orange crate; to make a railway system for a grandson out of wire soldered on ties cut with a penknife; to write the story of your life as an inspiration to your children and their children; to prepare an anthology of the great thoughts that you have come upon; other activities such as church work, community service, coaching in drama or art, managing a team of boys or girls in a sport you know and like — all these hold out promise of full and happy years.