

**CICERO DE  
SENECTUTE  
(ON OLD AGE)**

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Cicero De Senectute (On Old Age) by Andrew P. Peabody

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**ANDREW P. PEABODY**

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**CICERO DE SENECTUTE**

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TRANSLATED

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES.

By **ANDREW P. PEABODY.**

BOSTON:  
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## SYNOPSIS.

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- §1. Introduction, and dedication.
2. Old age a part of the order of nature.
3. Reasons why old age is complained of.
4. The old age of Quintus Fabius Maximus.
5. Examples of men who continued their labors in philosophy and literature to a late old age. — The specific charges brought against old age.
6. It is alleged that old age incapacitates men from the management of affairs. The contrary shown to be true.
7. Memory and the mental faculties are not necessarily impaired by age ; but may be preserved in working order if kept in exercise. Proved by examples.
8. Old men need not be disagreeable to the young. Nor need they be unemployed and inert.
9. Failure of bodily strength in old age not to be regretted.
10. There is no need of full bodily strength, if there be an increase of wisdom.
11. Failure of strength and of mental vigor may be averted by a proper regimen of body and mind.
12. It is complained that old age renders one less susceptible of sensual pleasure ; but this is to be regarded as an advantage and a benefit.
13. Moderate and sober conviviality may be still enjoyed by those advanced in years. Cato's own example.



- § 14. Examples of old men who have continued to find delight in learning, literary labor, or public service.
15. The pleasures of agriculture.
16. Examples of honored and happy old age in rural life. Comforts belonging to life on a farm.
17. The horticulture of Cyrus the younger.
18. Honorable old age must be provided for by a virtuous youth.
19. Death not to be feared.
20. Death easier and less repugnant to nature in old age than in youth.
21. Reasons for believing the soul to be immortal.
22. The last words of Cyrus the elder, as reported by Xenophon.
23. Immortality anticipated with longing.

## INTRODUCTION.

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AFTER the death of Julius Caesar, and before the conflict with Antony, Cicero spent two years in retirement, principally at his Tusculan villa. It was the most fruitful season of his life, as regards philosophy. To this period (B. C. 45 or 44) the authorship of the *De Senectute* is commonly assigned. In his *De Divinatione*, in enumerating his philosophical works, he speaks of this treatise on Old Age as "lately thrown in among them,"<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> *Interjectus est etiam nuper.* The chief ground for doubt as to the time of its composition is that Cicero seems to speak of this book as "thrown in among" the six Books of the *De Republica*, written during his consulate; while he sometimes gives a very broad sense to *nuper*, as when he writes, *nuper, id est paucis ante seculis*. But between his mention of the *De Republica* and that of the *De Senectute* he names the *Consolatio*, which was written in B. C. 45, after the death of his daughter. *Interjectus*, as I suppose, refers, not to the date, but to the brevity of the treatise, and by virtue of the *etiam* applies equally to the *Consolatio*. "While I have written, earlier or later, the longer works that I have named, I have thrown in among them these smaller treatises."

as meriting a place in the list. In the *De Amicitia*, dedicated also to Atticus, he says: "In the *Cato Major*, the book on Old Age inscribed to you, I introduced the aged Cato as leading in the discussion, because no person seemed better fitted to speak on the subject than one who both had been an old man so long, and in old age had still maintained his pre-eminence. . . . In reading that book of mine, I am sometimes so moved that it seems to me as if, not I, but Cato were talking. . . . I then wrote about old age, as an old man to an old man."<sup>1</sup> Again, Laelius, who is the chief speaker in the *De Amicitia*, is introduced as saying, "Old age is not burdensome, as I remember hearing Cato say in a conversation with me and Scipio, the year before he died." Cicero repeatedly refers to this book in his Letters to Atticus. In the stress of apprehension about Antony's plans and movements he writes: "I ought to read very often the *Cato Major* which I sent to you; for old age is making me more bitter. Everything puts me out of temper." At a later time he writes, "By saying that *O Tite, si quid ego*,<sup>2</sup> delights you more and more, you increase my readiness to write." And again, "I rejoice that *O Tite*<sup>2</sup> is doing you good."

In his philosophical and ethical writings, Cicero lays no claim to originality; nor, indeed, did the

<sup>1</sup> Cicero and Atticus were not old men when the *De Republica* was written.

<sup>2</sup> The first words of the *De Senectute*.