

On the Feelings of Immortality in Youth

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— William Hazlitt

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Summary

"On the Feelings of immortality in Youth" has been written by William Hazlitt. Hazlitt is one of the greatest essayists of English literature. He is also considered one of the best critics in the history of the English language. As an essayist, he enjoys infallible reputation. His contribution to the English essay is noteworthy. The present essay was first published in the monthly Magazine, March, 1827 and can be found reproduced in Miscellaneous Essay.

In the beginning of the essay, Hazlitt declares how young men think that they will never die and they will go on enjoying and multiplying and ever-expanding hopes and prospects. This spirit of immortality amongst the youth suggests that to be young is to be immortal. In fact, this idea of interminable youthfulness debar them to perceive any division between young age and old age. Rather, old age, the next half of the life, remains a treasure-house of infinite hopes and happiness, as opposed to the sorrows of old age. He also talks about how there is a feeling

of "eternity" in everyone's youth that makes them compensate for anything they do. Youth live as if they their future is loaded with treasures. They do not pay attention on planning for the future. There is no limit to their wishes or hopes. The author states that the youth remains in a thin layer of innocence as they have not yet seen life and stay in the cradle of their desires. He also compares life to be a play in which the nature acts as a "step-mother". It holds them in her arms and later, allows them to fall, as if they were that maximum burden on her to support. As one starts to grow old, the meaning of time becomes very powerful. It seems as if nothing has changed whereas in reality people become examples of change. Life is not ample for getting solutions to all problems.

In short, this essay reveals that how youthfulness makes a man invincible. He believes that there is no death and that he just can not die. Death and old age, does not have a meaning for the young man. He is mesmerised by the bright glow of life and spends his time merry-making with gay abandon. The gradual approach of old age is ignored, until it is bit late, when he realises the value of time and actions.