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TRAINING, PRACTICE AND MENTAL LONGEVITY¹

By Professor WALTER R. MILES

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"EVERY body knows," wrote Cohausen in 1742, "how grateful and refreshing we discern the breath of cows to be, which is thence supposed, exceedingly wholesome; . . . There seems, therefore, to be nothing forced or absurd, in conceiving that the warm, active, and balsamic particles thrown off by the lungs of young people into the air, which they respire, may give it such a quality, as when sucked in again by a person in years, shall communicate an extraordinary force to the circulating humors in his body, and so quicken and enliven them, as to bestow a kind of reflective youthfulness, which may for many years keep off and delay those infirmities, to which people of the same age are generally subject. The more we consider this doctrine . . . the more we shall be satisfied of the truth of this conjecture, and the more

credible this invention of Hermippus will appear."² The indulgent smiles called forth by this hot-air paragraph of hope from a former generation give pause to anyone who undertakes a discourse on any phase of the subject of longevity. The perennial search for the *elixir vitae* stands as one of the seven extravagancies of the mind of man, and he who openly shows himself to be a prospector here or near here may expect to hear voices in concert quoting, "What fools these mortals be!"

Having answered to the description and having attended to these introductory formalities of the occasion may I then proceed to tell you what I intend to say. This paper will deal with normal longevity from a psychological viewpoint. It will not concern cen-

¹Address of the retiring vice-president and chairman of the section on psychology, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Pittsburgh, December 28, 1934.

²J. H. Cohausen, "Hermippus Redivivus: Or the Sage's Triumph Over Old Age and the Grave." Tr. into English by J. Campbell. Edited by E. Goldsmid. In three volumes. Privately printed, Edinburgh, 1885, Vol. 1, pp. 20 and 27.

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