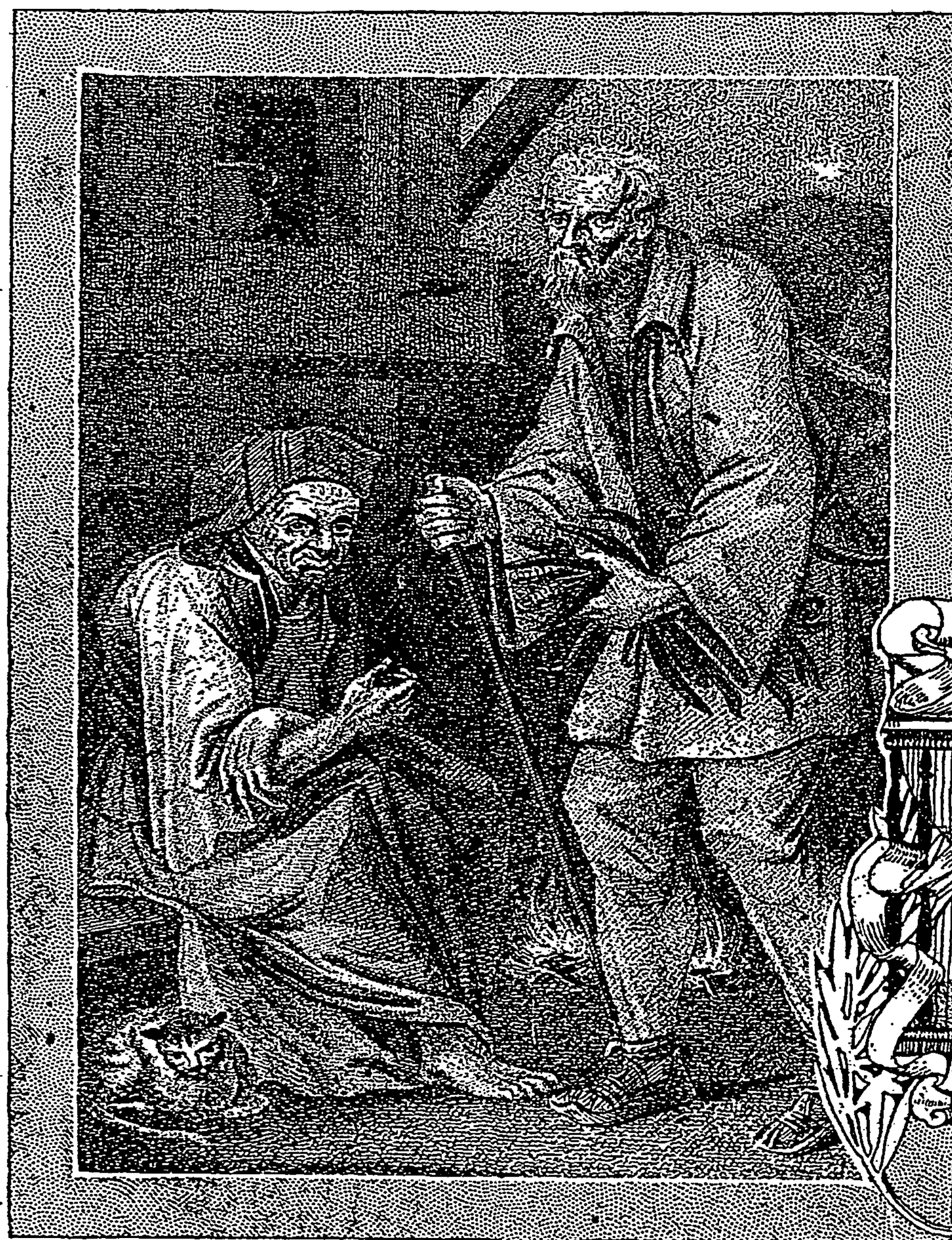
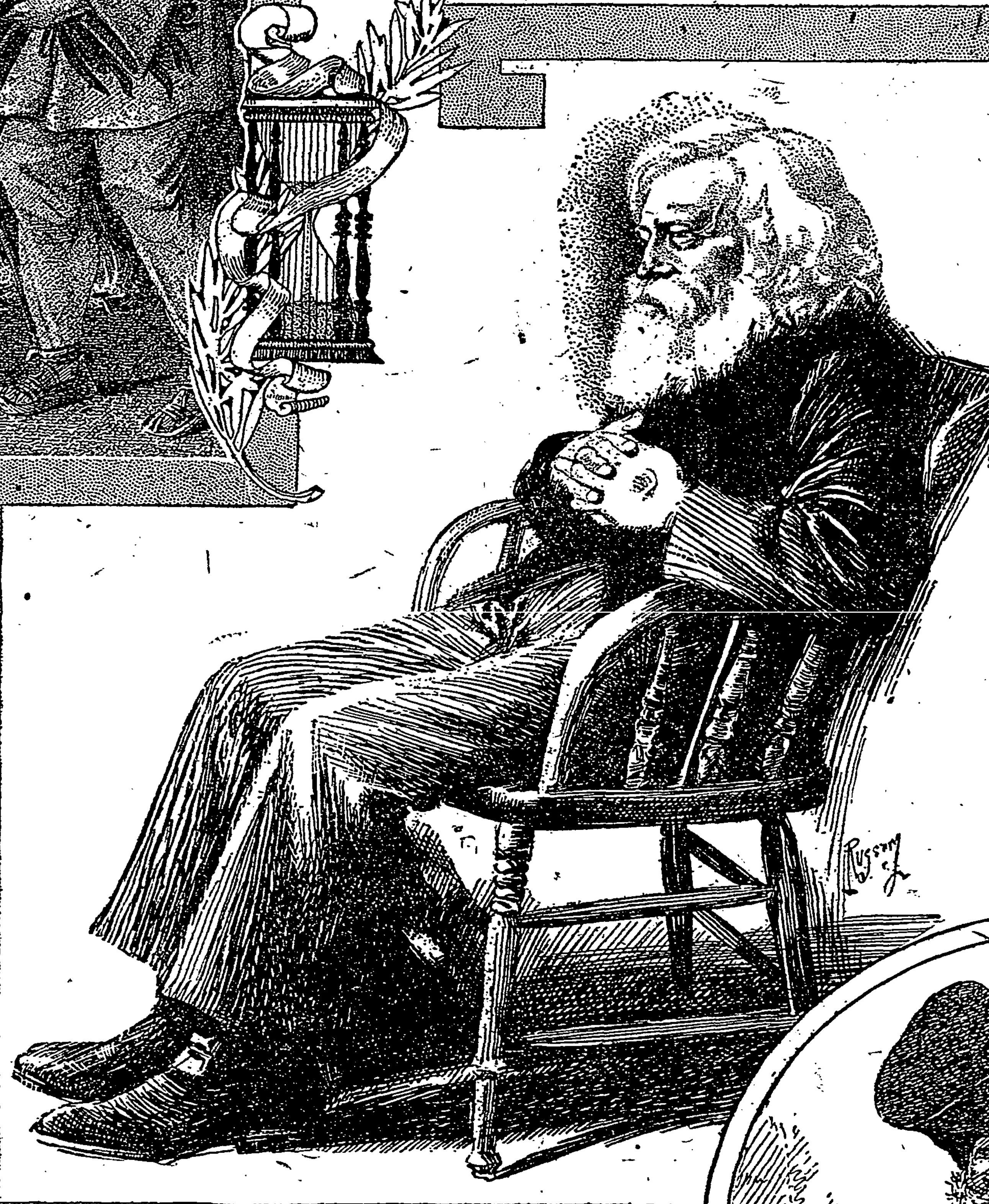


"NO CENTENARIAN LIVING," SAYS DR. WOODS HUTCHINSON

And Probably Only Three Ever Lived to be Over 100 Years of Age He Concludes After Studying the Question of Centenarianism.



John Rovin and His Wife, Hungarian Peasants. He Was Thought to be 172 Years Old and She 164. (From an Old Print.)



Noah Raby, Who Died Recently in New Jersey, Supposed to be About 130 Years Old.



Henry Jenkins, Who Died in Yorkshire, England, in 1670, at the Reported Age of 159 Years.

Nobody ever questioned Methuselah. He said he was 969 years old, and that was the end of it. People believed in the possibility of attaining great age. The belief persisted throughout the ages. Most persons still hold to it. Most persons still believe there are a few who reach the century mark, or even pass a little beyond it. It is a common thing to read in newspapers of persons who have celebrated their one hundred and fourth or one hundred and tenth birthday.

But such claims no longer go without question. Dr. Woods Hutchinson questions them. Prof. Starr of the University of Chicago questions them. Dr. Cressy L. Wilbur of the Census Bureau questions them.

Dr. Hutchinson says the centenarian is a myth. Prof. Starr says Methuselah did not have the truth in him. Dr. Wilbur doubts almost all centenarians in general, and challenges the statements of the late Noah Raby in particular. He says Raby, who died in a Jersey poorhouse a few years ago, never lived to be 131 years old or anything like it.

He has made a study of the Raby case. He has found it full of flaws. He has found that Raby did not serve in the navy as long ago as he said he did. Raby said he entered the navy when it was organized and served until 1809. The records show that he served on the Constitution in 1839. They do not show when he was discharged.

But on the basis of incomplete data Dr. Wilbur concedes that Raby at the time of his death might have been 92 years and 11 months old. Raby, he declares, exaggerated his age to the extent of 38 years.

Dr. Hutchinson has made an exhaustive study of centenarianism. He has examined every great claim in history. He has personally examined many claims reported in newspapers. He has tried to examine, by means of correspondence, many other claims reported in newspapers. He has reached these conclusions:

That history affords but three examples of persons who probably lived to be more than 100 years old.

That neither of these persons lived to be 110 years old.

That no centenarians are now alive.

That in recent years none has been alive.

If Dr. Hutchinson is right, almost all of the rest of the world is wrong. Germany, a year or two ago, with a population of 55,000,000, claimed 78 centenarians; France, 213; England, 146; Scotland, 46; Denmark, 2; Belgium, 5; Sweden, 10; Norway, 28; Spain, 410, while the Balkan States outdid the world with a claim of one centenarian to each 100 of population.

Dr. Hutchinson was asked about the particular case of Thomas Parr of Shropshire, England. Parr's case is historic. He was said to have died in London, in 1655, at the age of 152. In the beginning he was a farm hand. The Encyclopaedia Britannica says that when he was "above 120 years of age" he married a widow as his second wife, and lived with her twelve years. The lady is said to have testified to his uniform good health. Until he was 130 years old he did all of the usual farm work, and even thrashed.

When he was in his 152d year the King sent for him. Parr went to London. The King gave him the best he had. The best the King had was a little better than Parr was accustomed to on the farm. His digestion was upset. His heart began to flutter. His breath came short. He had hardly got home before he died.

"This visit," says the Britannica, "in all probability shortened his existence, which he otherwise might have preserved some years longer."

Dr. Hutchinson says he has examined every shred of evidence in the Parr case, and there is nothing whatever to prove that the old man reached even 100 years. Nowhere is there a scratch of a quill to prove the time of his birth. In fact, the whole case rests on a pamphlet entitled "An Olde, Olde, Olde, Very Olde-Man," which was printed a few years before Parr's death. Parr had become noted as a "very olde" man, and somebody evidently thought he could make some money by publishing the pamphlet. At any rate, that is Dr. Hutchinson's explanation, since the pamphlet contains nothing that even purports to prove Parr's age.

Dr. Hutchinson was asked about Louis Cornaro, the classic example of the health faddists. Cornaro claimed to have been born in 1484. He lived the gay life, and by the time he was 40 he was apparently starved in the face by death. Then he took himself in hand, changed his habits, ate sparingly, refused to be anything but cheerful, and began to improve in health. Also, he began to write treatises on how to keep well and live long. He became perfectly confident that long life was well within the power of all. Persons of good vitality and good constitution might, he said, easily live far beyond the century mark. But, writing at the age of 95, he said:

"Because I was born with a poor constitution, I fear I shall not live much beyond a hundred years."

Still he was confident that he would live to be 100, and predicted, as much. History says that in fact he lived to be 102.

In the Cornaro case, Dr. Hutchinson again disputes history. He does not dispute the date of Cornaro's birth. He does not dispute Cornaro's claim to the age of 95 when he wrote the article in which he predicted that he would live to be 100. But Dr. Hutchinson disputes the year of Cornaro's death. He calls attention to the fact that, so far as Cornaro's writings are concerned, he only predicted that he would live to be 100. Nothing exists or ever existed that was written by Cornaro after he was 100. The record stops with a prediction at 95. The world is left to take on faith the statement that Cornaro lived seven years longer. Dr. Hutchinson has no faith.

Because of utter lack of proof, the doctor also brushes aside the statements that John Rovin and his wife, Hungarian peasants, lived to be 172 and 164 years old, respectively; that Henry Jenkins lived

pany has paid a death claim to anybody more than 99 years old.

Census reports in America always show that the greatest number of those who claim to be centenarians are always found in those communities where ignorance is greatest.

According to the census reports, negroes and Indians are the ones who are most likely to live to be 100 or more. According to life insurance companies, negroes and Indians are less likely than white persons to live to be old.

According to life insurance companies, ignorance places a handicap upon life.

The mentioning of Metchnikoff suggested the Russian's acceptance of the theory that the normal span of human life is 150 years. According to this theory, any animal should live five times as long as it requires to complete its growth. To complete one's growth means to live until all the cartilage in his bones has turned to bone. At birth there are no bones—nothing but cartilage. Then hard centres of bone begin to form—one at each end of each bone, and one in the centre. These hard spots spread until they meet. The time of meeting is called the time when one completes his growth.

he didn't think anything of it. He said the reason he didn't think anything of it was because he began to study animals even before he began to study medicine. He had spent years in the zoos of Europe in an effort to learn what might be called the natural term of the lives of various animals. He could learn nothing. He came away believing that nobody else had ever learned anything.

Take an elephant, for instance. According to general belief, the elephant lives to be 300 years old. But think a moment. How did any one ever learn that any elephant lived to be so old? Was an elephant, born in captivity, ever kept alive 300 years? No. The longest that any elephant ever lived in captivity was sixty years. Elephants that are born in captivity do not, as a matter of fact, live long. Elephants are usually caught wild. No one ever brought from the jungle the date of a captive elephant's birth. The catcher, or whoever wants to, can only "estimate" that the captive is 250 years old. If the elephant survives thirty years of captivity it is, at its death, officially declared to be 280 years old.

It is the same way with turtles and eagles. Turtles are supposed to live to be 300 years old. Eagles are said to have no difficulty in rounding the century mark. But nobody ever sat beside a turtle and saw it live to be 300. Nor did anybody ever watch an eagle until it became 100.

All animal ages, said Dr. Hutchinson, are largely matters of guesswork. They can be nothing else, because wild animals cannot be observed while they are so to speak—and that at the expiration of their lives are cut short.

"Domestic animals," said Dr. Hutchinson, "can be observed from birth until death, but our demands for food prevent us from knowing much about how long they would live if they were not butchered. Cattle, hogs, and sheep are either killed for food or killed when there is no more profit in keeping them. Even horses are not permitted to live out their natural lives. When a horse is too old to work it is usually shot."

Dr. Hutchinson was asked about cats and dogs.

"Cats and dogs," he replied, "form the only exceptions to the rule regarding the arbitrary shortening of domestic animals' lives. Strangely enough, I found that cats and dogs, in one respect, are like human beings. They are like human beings in the sense that there is the greatest variation in the duration of their lives. So far as I was able to learn, there is no such thing as a normal span of life for a

Nor does Dr. Hutchinson know why a few human beings live into the eighties and the nineties, while the great majority are either dead or almost worn out before they reach 75. He has not much confidence in the claim of the centenarian that his great age is attributable to his temperate habits and abstemious life.

"It is very easy," he said, "for an old man to forget and to believe he has always lived as he is now living. When one reaches great age his appetite naturally falls off, and a little food will satisfy his hunger. If he is then asked how he happened to live to be so old he is quite likely to reply that he has always taken the best of care of himself."

"It seems probable to me that none of those who have lived to be very old ever took better care of himself than the average man takes. They have simply forgotten the things they used to do when they were young or in their prime. In fact, it has been proved in the cases of some extremely old persons that they drank to excess, smoked, and did about everything else that might have been expected to cut short their lives."

"What, then, is the recipe for old age?"

"I don't know that there is any recipe. Of course, it stands to reason that reasonable care of one's health must necessarily prolong the period during which health is good. It is also obviously true that disregard of the laws of health may cut short life. But it sometimes seems to me as if every human being is given at birth a certain amount of vitality—wound up for a certain number of years, so to speak—and that at the expiration of his time he dies."

Nobody will quarrel with Dr. Hutchinson on account of his disbelief in the claims of alleged centenarians. But he will have few followers in his attitude toward the desirability of living long. He believes that another of the great myths is the pleasure of being old. Cornaro said to him after he had passed 80; hardly a man or woman would not gladly live to be 100 if he could; yet Dr. Hutchinson says he believes there is no joy in extremely old age. Old age, in his opinion, at its best is only a matter of living without pleasure or pain, while at its worst it is little but pain.

As Dr. Hutchinson views life, man was put here to reproduce his kind, care for his offspring until they are able to care for themselves, do a certain amount of work for the race, and move on. He does not believe there is anything to be gained by lingering after one's work is done, and his falling strength has incapacitated him from enjoying himself.

According to the doctor, the best thing that can happen to the race is to increase the percentage of the population that survives what might be called the working period of life. If that is the best thing, we are getting it. It is doubtful if all that modern science has done has added a day to the lives of the old, but it has helped millions to get to 60. In doing so it has caused us to reverse our estimates of the relative vitality of men and women. It is only a few years ago that no life insurance company would issue a policy on the life of a woman. Then woman was given the right to carry insurance, under certain limited restrictions, provided her husband were also insured. Eventually the requirement about her husband was dropped, and finally all the restrictions were dropped. A woman, at any time of life, and under any conditions, can now get insurance on the same terms that she could if she were a man. All companies have not let down the bars against her, but some companies have.

Nor is this strange. The returns from the census of 1900 showed, as the returns from the last census will doubtless soon show, that most of the old people in this country are women. Of the 373,000 persons in this country who were 60 years old or more, there were 167,000 women and 176,000 men.

It is also interesting to note how population tends to distribute itself with relation to age. The South is the land of children. In the percentage of infantile population Indian Territory leads, with South Carolina, Mississippi, and Texas following in the order named. The District of Columbia is last.

Wyoming is the banner State of those who are between 20 and 30, with the District of Columbia second and Montana third. New York is ninth in this list, and Pennsylvania thirteenth.

All during middle life, the West has the call. Montana, Wyoming, Washington, Colorado, and California have the greatest percentages of those who are between 30 and 40; Nevada, California, Colorado, Washington, and Oregon the greatest percentages of those who are between 40 and 50. Nevada still leads in those who are between 50 and 60, but Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire come immediately afterward.

In old age, New England swings into line, with Maine at the head of those who are between 60 and 70. Vermont and New Hampshire come next, with New York thirteenth and Pennsylvania twenty-third. Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and Connecticut, lead in the order named in the decades between 70 and 80.

These figures, of course, show nothing about the salubrity of the climate, nor the hardness of the stock in the various States, but they do show how the activities of the various Commonwealths call for different kinds of human beings. In other words, the West is beckoning to the workers of the whole country, leaving the children in the South and the old people in New England.

But there is too little illiteracy in New England to make the crop of centenarians large. The negro States of the South show the greatest percentage of those who claim to have lived 100 years or more.

It places a handicap upon life by enforcing unhealthful occupations and unhealthful surroundings at home. Furthermore, ignorance prevents the application, in the event of illness, of measures that might prolong life. Yet in the Balkan States, where ignorance is the greatest, centenarians are said to be the most numerous.

Even the great Metchnikoff accepted the tale from the Balkans. Perhaps it was because Metchnikoff had a theory to support. His theory was that sour milk germs destroyed germs that destroyed life. The Balkan peoples were great consumers of sour goat's milk—or, rather, of goat's milk soured.

"Balkan centenarianism is more attributable to goat's milk," said Dr. Hutchinson. "Those people simply have the nerve to claim to be old. I don't believe there is a real centenarian in any of the Balkan States."

Insurance companies tell the same story. In all the history of life insurance in America only one policy holder has reached the age of 90 years. During the last 135 years no English insurance com-

pany has paid a death claim to anybody more than 99 years old.

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