

Can Zaro Agha Convince Scientists?

Pseudanthropology

He Will Have a Hard Time Proving His 156 Years

THE OLD Turk, Zaro Agha, with his birth certificate showing 156 years of age, who is now being proclaimed to credulous New York as the oldest human in the world, will have a hard time convincing scientific skeptics that he has lived so many years.

Old he is, without a doubt, but those who have looked into such claims in the past are laying their scientific wagers that he is not much more than a hundred or so.

In fact, the most extreme case of longevity that medical records show fully authenticated was not quite 111 years. That record was substantiated by the English investigator, Dr. T. E. Young, who in the early part of this century considered close to a million cases of supposed centenarians and found only 30 persons who from other outside evidence could be shown to have lived a hundred years or more. Of the thirty, 21 were women and 9 were men.

Medical statisticians hold to their idea that extreme old age is a rare phenomenon although in the million or more deaths annually in the United States at least several hundred death certificates show ages of over a hundred and occasional ones will show such startling records as 120 years.

When such cases are looked into it is often found that mistaken identity confers upon the supposed centenarian his remarkable record. Repeatedly instances like this are uncovered: John Jones was born and his baptism duly recorded, but he died at the age of 15 years and through an oversight his death was not registered. In the same year that he died another male child was born to the same parents and named John Jones, perhaps in commemoration of his deceased brother. The second John Jones was never baptised. When he reaches the age of 85 or 90 his appearance of extreme senility attracts attention and the baptismal records apparently show

that he is a hundred or over. The aged gentleman basks in his seemingly well authenticated record of extreme age.

America has had its claimants to age records. Uncle John Shell of Kentucky who was exhibited as "the oldest living human being" with a claimed age of 131 years, was pronounced after a careful investigation of his case to be "about one hundred years old, possibly a year younger or older."

Despite the fact that authenticated cases of human longevity to over a hundred years are few, man is nearly the longest lived of all mammals. The common idea that whales and elephants attain many more years than man is not credited in scientific circles. But some species of fish may live to over 260 years according to the best evidence and reptiles are reported to have lived 175 years. Birds may have a life span of a few years longer than man in some instances.

Science News-Letter, August 2, 1930

Nation's Health Good

DESPITE the coming of dog days with their attendant discomforts, the health of the people throughout the nation generally is unusually good, according to reports received by the U. S. Public Health Service. The only exception to the favorable reports, is a record of a slight increase in infantile paralysis in California. The last weekly report from that state showed 99 cases, which was an increase of ten cases over the week before. Public health officials pointed out, however, that that is a very small number for a state the size of California.

Reports to date do not show whether the recent extreme heat has affected health in general.

Public Health

Science News-Letter, August 2, 1930

The Answer Is

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Preservative from Milk

A SUCCESSFUL, non-poisonous food-preservative may be obtained from cow's milk as a result of recent investigations reported by Drs. F. S. Jones and H. S. Simms of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research at Princeton, N. J.

These scientists were able to isolate the natural agent in milk which prevents the growth of micro-organisms. It is found in the whey after the routine separation of the butter-fat and casein. It can be obtained in pure form in a powder which keeps for several months. One grain of this powder added to a gallon of the ordinary medium on which germs grow will prevent their growth, it is reported.

Biochemistry

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