Physiological and Pathological Ageing

by

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Edited by

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To the Right Hon. the Viscount NUFFIELD, G.B.E., C.H., F.R.S., D.C.L.
In appreciation of his constant and generous assistance to medical and in particular gerontological research.

Index

Preface
I. Physiological and Pathological Processes of Ageing . . . . . . 1
II. Causes of Ageing . . . . . . 5
III. Longevity . . . . . . 7
IV. Major Involution of Organs and Tissues with Ageing . . . . . . 38
V. Ageing of Cells . . . . . . 48
VI. Connective Tissue and Ageing . . . . . . 71
VII. Chemical Changes with Ageing . . . . . . 87
VIII. Metabolism and Ageing . . . . . . 160
Preface

NATHAN SHOCK has defined "Gerontology" (as distinct from "Geriatrics") as "the scientific study of the phenomena of ageing" and research directed to this end, carried out or supported by the National Institutes of Health in the U.S.A. alone is now worth annually nearly 13.5 million dollars. Relatively much less is spent by European countries but even so the total amount now spent per year throughout the world must be fairly considerable. However, it is only a minute fraction of what ought to be spent on a field of investigation which is of world-wide importance. Studies on gerontology can be expected to shed light on a tremendous range of diseases which cripple, invalid and kill from middle life onwards. The significance of research into ageing tissues has only become apparent in the last few years and the force which germinated this interest and forced its growth was Dr. VLADIMIR KORENCHEVSKY. Dr. KORENCHEVSKY was born (in 1880) and educated in Russia. He obtained his M.D. from Moscow University and was Professor of general and experimental pathology in the Imperial Military Medical Academy of Petrograd (now Leningrad). He emigrated to Great Britain in 1920 and took British nationality. From 1920 to 1945 he was senior research worker at the Lister Institute for
Preventive Medicine, working jointly for them and the Medical Research Council. During that period he was engaged in research on vitamins and endocrines, the results of which were published in 108 papers in journals in England and the United States.

In 1945 Dr. KORENCHEVSKY established the Oxford Gerontological Unit which was housed at first in the Department of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy and later in the University Laboratory of Physiology at Oxford. The Unit was established and maintained with the aid of funds generously donated by the financial father of Gerontology, the Right Honourable, the Viscount NUFFIELD OF NUFFIELD.

In 1952 Dr. KORENCHEISKY retired from the Directorship of the Unit which was transferred to St. Bartholomew's Hospital London, and he himself concentrated on researches into the scientific and medical literature related to the problem of physiological ageing. It is these researches which led to the preparation of the present volume.

It was probably one single incident which sparked Dr. KORENCHEVSKY's interest in Gerontology and this was an occasion in 1906 when, just after the Russo-Japanese war, he visited a Russian infirmary for old people in Moscow. The state of the inmates shocked him—he felt that so much of what he saw in these people was pathology and that it ought to be possible to age in a more gentle physiological way without the complications of disease. He subsequently dedicated himself to the study of this problem. He was associated for a time with some of the great historical figures of medical science: METCHNIKOV in Paris and PAVLOV in Petrograd, who both affected his outlook on the processes of ageing.

Of all the things Dr. KORENCHEVSKY has done, probably nothing is more important or significant than the interest which he germinated all over the world in the study of Gerontology. He founded in Britain the "Club for Ageing" which became the British Society for Research in Ageing, and even the editor of this book owes his interest in Gerontology to the fact that KORENCHEVSKY induced him to become secretary of the British Society and to carry on researches in this field. He stimulated the formation of Gerontological Societies and research in Gerontology in other parts of the world. The 1st International Congress of Gerontology was held as a result of his drive and initiative and he was voted Founder of the International Gerontological Association and a life member of the governing body. Dr. E. V. COWDRY himself a distinguished worker and thinker in the field of gerontology apart from his many
other distinctions, has said of Dr. KORENCHEISKY: "He became in truth the father of gerontology, not simply in Britain but in the whole world."

I regard it as a high honour to have had the privilege of preparing Dr. Korenchevsky's book for publication. It is the only book of its kind, it is encyclopaedic, it contains facts, it contains thought, it also contains the only summary of relevant Russian literature—it represents the philosophy of the author's approach to the study of the ageing processes. In editing it I have not altered the text at all except from the point of view of the English and then only with the object of making more clear the expression of the point Dr. KORENCHEVSKY was trying to make.

This is his book and it is offered to workers all over the world as his monument and his final contribution to the study of senescence and the factors which drive us all inexorably to the shores of the river Styx and force us to make the final journey across it.

Emory University, Atlanta, February 9, 1961 GEOFFREY H.BOURNE