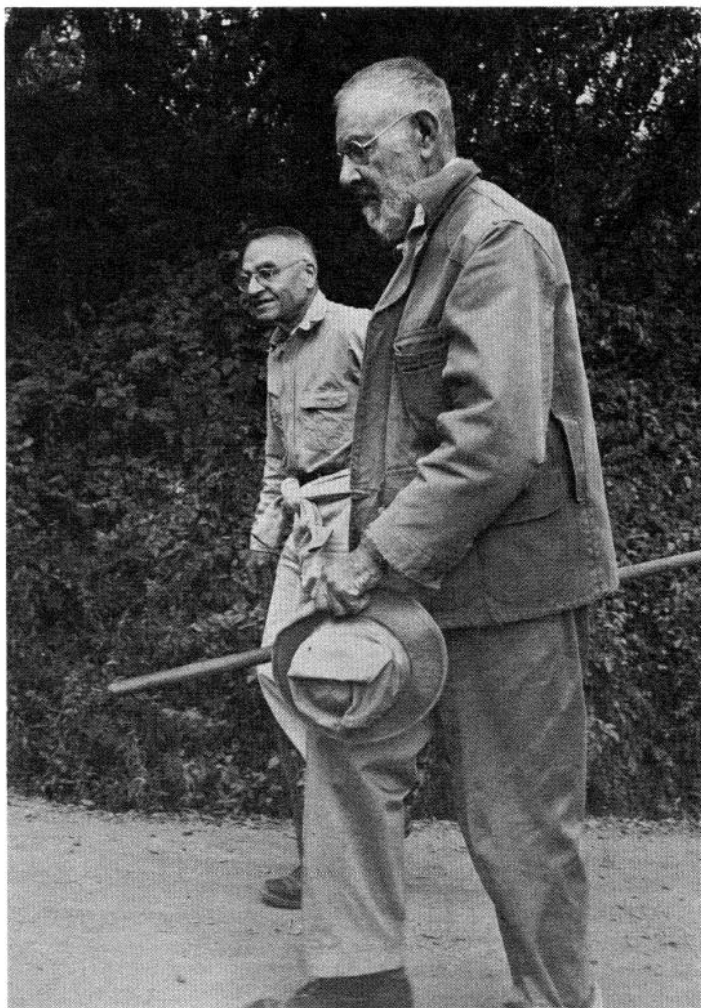


NEWS FROM PERCY DAWSON

It was Dr. Dill who suggested that I send him a photo of my hiking pal and me, and that I write something to go with it. So I am going to answer some possible questions which my picture and my name might be expected to call forth.



Doubtless it will be asked how I came to ride the cycle ergometer at the age of ninety. This is the story.

As a boy I played lacrosse and cricket and made frequent excursions for collecting insects and fossils. In 1889 I matriculated at McGill. I had been handicapped from childhood by respiratory troubles during the winter months, and my attacks became so severe that I withdrew from McGill, went south and entered Hopkins. While there I played (point and counterpoint) for four years on the lacrosse team. For the latter my training was an all year process which I continued with more or less strictness all the rest of my life. The result was that, for a person with a sedentary occupation, I could do remarkable feats of endurance, nothing Olympic but things out of the ordinary in hiking over the mountains and plains.

In addition to these hygienic habits, I for many years rode strenuously a cycle ergometer in my laboratory. With this apparatus I made researches and I also used it in teaching - with every four students I rode once and then one of them rode once, and the four wrote up the two sets of results.

About fifteen years ago I had found hiking inconvenient and had given it up, although I still continued rope-skipping, deep knee bends and dumbbells. About twelve years ago at a Harvard dinner in Palo Alto, I ran across a retired geologist and mine promoter, who is a few years younger than I. In spite of his advantage in age and strength, he was willing to humble himself to my speed in hiking, and so we became an inseparable pair. We walk all year once a week on the mountain roads. At first it was eight miles, later only six - three up and three down. The cycle ride at Stanford was a magnification of one of these walks.

The second question is not professional but a matter of human interest to those who have known me personally. Why did I leave an associate professorship at the Johns Hopkins Medical School to become a graduate student at the Harvard Divinity School?

I was a promising young physiologist in 1904, but between 1902 and 1909 I gradually became more and more interested in more general problems of social welfare and spent more and more time and thought on social settlements, recreation centers, city governments, trade unions and so forth. I had not known the World before, and it came to me as a shock that, while Science is so splendid, Society is so awful! I thought to myself, "Science has been the growing point of our culture in the Nineteenth Century, but in the Twentieth Century it is Society that is to be straightened out and cleaned up or we shall all be lost!" Then I thought that if I left physiology for welfare work I would have to choose between some secular social service organization and the church. I thought that my intellectual and cultural equipment would be better suited to the church, and moreover, I knew pastors who had done fine work for social improvement. For a while matters drifted, then suddenly Dr. Osler asked: "Would you accept a professorship at McGill?" . . . I went to Harvard, and later from there to a church in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In 1913 I joined the physiological staff at the University of Wisconsin. I was an instructor at \$1200 a year, but I was in splendid company. I found that the teaching of physiology to medics was not so progressive as at Hopkins, and was dissatisfied. But by a series of welcome opportunities, I arrived at a practically independent position, still teaching physiology but with only students of Physical Education to care for. I was at home in this atmosphere, for I had always regarded Physical Education as a most important branch of Preventive Medicine. Gradually I became as interested in the problem of teaching as in those of physiology, and with that Alexander Meikeljohn appeared on the scene to establish the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin. Oh, how I longed to be in on this new pedagogical adventure! Then quite unexpectedly Meikeljohn offered me a position on his staff. I hesitated, then said, "I have an experimental college of my own which I cannot neglect but I shall accept a half-time job." Long after this he told me, "I wanted you. I heard you quote from Harold Joachim's 'Nature of Truth' and said to myself, 'That's the sort of scientist I want.'"

I do not think that any more of my biography is called for on this occasion, so I shall end by telling what I am doing now. I am studying my own life and writing an autobiography. This is for me a difficult task, for I know enough of the canons of historical criticism and of psychology to make me very cautious, skeptical and critical of my memory and material, which is abundant. Also I need to be very insensitive for the purpose of debunking of myself.

A Note from D. B. Dill

Observations of Percy Dawson's performance on the bicycle ergometer last summer extended the laboratory record of his work tolerance to 49 years; his first paper published in the "American Journal of Physiology", Vol. 50, recorded measurements begun in 1914. It was my pleasure on July 27 to help Karl Wasserman of the Dept. of Medicine, Stanford University School of Medicine, make quite a complete record of Dawson's responses to a 30-minute ride in which he reached an oxygen consumption of 1.5 liters per minute. The results are being prepared for publication.

A word about his hiking pal, Augustus Locke. He was born in North Adams, Mass., 1883 and holds four Harvard degrees: B. A., 1904, S. B., 1905, E. M., 1909, and Sc. D., 1913. For his record in geology see Who's Who in America.