

LONGEVITY OF BRAIN WORKERS.

Extracts from an Essa By GEO. M. BEARD, A.M., M.D., of New York.

(From the Health Reformer.)

Thomas Hughes, in his life of "Alfred the Great," makes a statement that "the world's hardest workers and noblest benefactors have rarely been long-lived."

That any intelligent writer of the present day, and especially a writer who, like Mr. Hughes, is a thoughtful student of mental hygiene, should make a statement so absolutely untrue, shows how hard it is to kill an old superstition.

Between 1864 and 1866, while preparing a thesis for graduation, I obtained statistics on the general subject of the relation of occupation to health and longevity that convinced me of the error of the accepted teachings in regard to the effect of mental labor. The views I then advocated, and which I enforced by statistical evidence, were:—

1. That the brain working classes—clergymen, lawyers, physicians, merchants, scientists and men of letters—lived very much longer than the muscle-working classes.

2. That those who followed occupations that called both muscle and brain into exercise, were longer-lived than those who lived in occupations that were purely manual.

3. That the greatest and hardest brain-workers of history have lived longer on the average than brain-workers of ordinary ability and industry.

4. That clergymen were longer-lived than any other great class of brain workers.

5. That longevity increased very greatly with the advance of civilization; and that this increase was too marked to be explained merely by improved sanitary knowledge.

6. That although nervous diseases increased with the increase of culture, and although the unequal and excessive excitements and anxieties attendant on mental occupations of a high civilization, were so far both prejudicial to health and longevity, yet these incidental evils were more than counter-balanced by the fact that fatal inflammatory diseases have diminished in frequency and violence in proportion as nervous diseases have increased; and also that brain-work is, *per se*, healthful and conducive to longevity.

I have ascertained the longevity of five hundred of the greatest men in history. The list I prepared includes a large proportion of the most eminent names in all the departments of thought and activity.

It would be difficult to find more than 2 or 3 hundred illus-