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Well Begun Is Half Done

"Aller Anfang ist schwer." So say the Germans. As we put it: beginnings are hardest. Well begun is half done. It's the first step that counts. All these are understatements. Begun at all is quarter done. The first step counts more than the next score. I would go even further. In many cases, a task cannot be begun until it has first been finished. Is this a paradox? Not at all! Consider a variety of brilliant acts ranging from a blow by Gene Tunney up to a national unemployment relief program.

Before and behind a knock-out blow by an intelligent pugilist lie years of observation, analysis and practice. Tunney, for instance, used to take motion pictures of rivals and analyze every movement in a slow motion picture projector. Records of the emotional behavior of the rivals would be gathered quietly and subjected to careful research. All by way of preparing for a final act which might last only a few minutes!

Before and behind the winning rushes and swings of Helen Wills and the deft drives and putting of Bobby Jones an incredibly vast

mass of studies, tests, and minute experiments can be found. More often than not, the act seen by casual onlookers is nothing more than the flash of a great gun; the mere instant of detonation in which a projectile is launched, well aimed, well loaded, well timed, against a target.

Most young people and all natural born dubs mistake the visible beginning from the actual. They fancy they can learn golf by walking out and swinging away at the ball. In school they stupidly try to cram for examinations, sometimes fool their teachers, and go on to higher subjects in which they fail miserably.

Once you start doing something, you weaken the impulse to do something else, at least for a while. Nerves through which currents flow seem to offer less resistance than nerves that are resting; so the currents from competing centers drain off into the active channels more readily. This is the foundation of all human effort, planning and success. It is the first universal and indispensable way of tapping inner energies.

The mere act of undertaking a project, no matter how simple, accomplishes much more than blocking rival programs for a time. It weakens the latter by shunting their currents into the field of active forces. Usually an impulse thus absorbed dies out, while the behavior pattern which absorbs it gains in what physiologists call permeability. Currents flow into it and along its courses more freely, while the abandoned courses—somewhat like forest

paths which men have ceased to tread—grow up, thicken, and become less and less viable. Ever more energy must be consumed in crashing through them; hence the human conduct to which they lead grows less and less likely, as the years pass.

So you see that man makes the most of his energies by using them; for in and through action alone can either design or power develop.

The first commandment of the intellect is: "Stop, look and listen." The first commandment of the energies is: "Keep moving!"

Says that eminent surgeon, Dr. Charles H. Mayo: "We find all around us old people who have been dead for years and don't know it. They do not think any more. Their minds have died, although their bodies live on. Life today is too fast a pace. The mind gives out years before the body."

I agree with the assertion as to fact but not with its interpretation. The cause of these mindless lives is not the speed of modern life. Far from it! Usually the trouble roots in lack of mind training. Minds do not give out, as a rule, except as a result of rust and neglect. Nobody ever used his brain too hard. The brain is energized by vigorous exercise. The more it is used, the better it grows and the longer it endures.