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Our Aim

This book has one clear aim, which is as bold as it is simple. It seeks to fill the widest, deepest void in American home training, in formal schoolroom education, and in moral technique. Its endeavor is to guide people, young and old, strong and weak, through the mazes of that as yet undiscovered Art from whose further bourne no traveller has returned with notes and tales of full enlightenment. This is, as you know, the Art of making the most of our energies. It is the Art of getting the most for the least. It is the Art of storing and spending what we take in from food, drink, air, and sunlight in such manner that we get what we want when and where we want it with the slightest possible wastage of nerve, muscle and blood.

No people on earth know much about this Art. Perhaps we Americans know less than some others, too. At any rate, more human energy goes to waste in our land than in any other. Every year, more suicides! Every year, more murders! Every year, more minds break down and must be packed off to asylums. Every year, more people with frazzled nerves seek

escape in narcotics, the consumption of which by Americans far exceeds that of any European country and equals some parts of Asia, on a *per capita* basis. Every year, more people above fifty years of age die of degenerative diseases, such as heart failure, cancer, nephritis, and bursting blood vessels. Every year, more neurotics, more neurasthenics, more chronic worriers!

Now, all these collapses are, at bottom, nothing more than profound defects in energizing—if we exclude the rare and obvious cases of pathological insanities like dementia præcox. Somewhere a stream of electrons went off on a tangent. Somewhere an insulation on a nerve tract wore thin or burned out. Somewhere a tiny amount of calcium taken in the food failed to pick up the requisite number of ions. Somewhere the transmission lines crossed or grounded. Today every scientist working in the fields of physiology, physiological chemistry, and medicine knows this and is seeking more precise methods of discerning and measuring energy streams of exceeding smallness. Not until they have succeeded with all streams will all the foundations of the great Art be laid.

Meanwhile, like all other domains of twilight, this field is the happy hunting ground of quacks, cultists, religious fakirs, and sincere but blundering amateurs. To drive out all of these is quite impossible today, for nobody possesses adequate ammunition in the form of

easily demonstrable facts. How far, for instance, can one's energy flow be controlled by what we call, most foggily, "the will"? The honest psychologist and physiologist must confess that no answer is at hand. At this point the quack whoops gleefully: "I told you so!"—and then proceeds to make all sorts of wild assertions about "tapping immense reservoirs of energy" by simple meditation, prayer, or the blank contemplation of his toes.

I have no interest in criticizing hypotheses nor in assailing cults. There is a more profitable task at hand. Let us gather all facts that have been well established. Let us shun guesses and wishes. Let us then organize everything definite about human energy so as to exhibit its practical bearings. To do this, we must seek for years through the files of scientific journals and must inquire of specialists in all lines of research touching the intake and output of energy. That done, we next turn to analyze all the commoner aims and labors of mankind. Here we inspect the energy requirements and the conditions of work. Job analysis, in short! Thus we move onward to the final and hardest enterprise, the relating of particular human energies to particular kinds of work and achievement.

Some day—perhaps a hundred years hence—somebody will make a complete survey along these lines and draw up a set of one or two thousand well-founded rules for storing, tapping, and economizing energy in all forms of

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work. Today the best we can do is to take the first two or three steps toward that far, dim goal. These steps are not uncertain. They are not taken in the dark. They do not wander but move in a straight line. They tread no bog of metaphysic, no marsh of mysticism. Each least fact on which they are based has been verified over and over again in laboratories or under other suitable test conditions. Each may be found in some scientific journal, monograph or textbook. Matters of conjecture are always so annotated, but you will find very few in these pages. Our method tends to exclude them. For we reduce the elementals of the energizing technique to its simplest form as well as to its surest. To this end, the book includes two aspects. First, it sums up, in shortest possible phrase, the proved facts. And secondly, each section offers the practical rules.

We deliberately ignore certain important aspects of human nature; let no critic waste his ink condemning us for this, as the omission makes possible the whole treatment. We look upon man as the most amazing transformer of energy visible in our part of the starry universe. His abilities here transcend all others. So too does his lack of skill surpass his other shortcomings. He has never yet learned how to use more than one-seventh of his brain. He squanders half of all the potential with which he is born. Yet not out of any inner necessity! For it grows plainer every year that most waste of

energy arises from pure ignorance and faulty training.

Our schools might double the efficiency of our population and reduce to a vanishing point the unhappiness caused by lost motion, defeated plans, the feeling of inferiority that sprouts in the muck of bungling performance. This has not yet been attempted, though, because the ancient, musty, stupid notion of schooling and culture still rules—the notion that a man is educated when and only when he has amassed a million facts about language, grammar, history, rulers, novels, poems, geography, and so-called economics. The curse of the intellectual rests heavily upon the common man. In school he does not learn how to feed himself, how to work on a job, how to avoid exhaustion, how to walk, run, breathe, rest, play—in a word, how to do anything worth doing. He commits much to memory—never thereafter to use it. He reads much—but with dulled mind because the content has no bearing on the most important thing in all the world, the use of his own energies. From birth onward most of his time has been spent in doing something. Most of his thoughts turn around the prospective doing of something. Most of his reveries are memories of things done well or ill. How can we help him to make the most of life? Only by helping him do things. And how help him do things? First of all, by training him in all of the energizing arts.

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