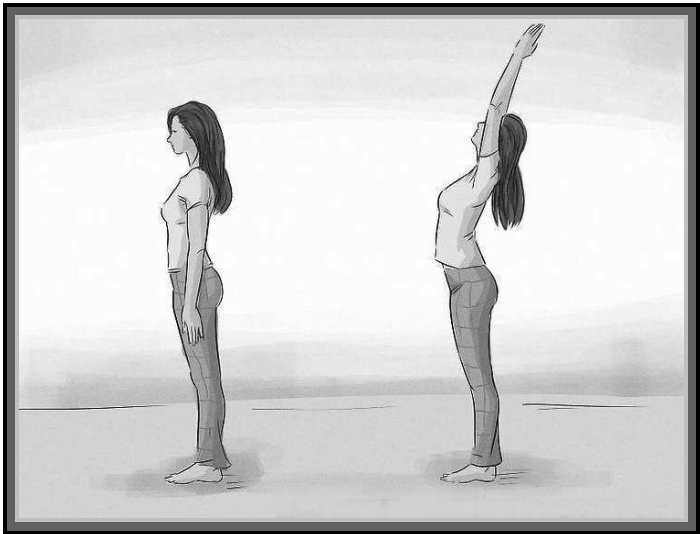


DAILY TRAINING

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E. F. Benson

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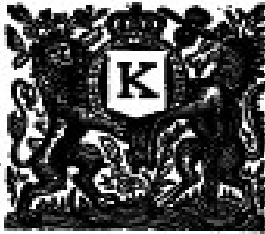
BY

E. F. BENSON

and

EUSTACE H. MILES.

NEW YORK



P R E F A C E.

The following pages contain certain rules and suggestions concerning health, and certain simple and sensible ways in which it may, we hope, be acquired and maintained at a very small expense of time and self-denial, by a large number of people who are naturally accustomed to feel not very well. The book is founded on notes made by its two authors who, though they lead for the most part very different lives, are agreed on certain broad principles of health herein set forth. One of them, for instance, eats largely of flesh-foods every day, the other has scarcely touched meat for years. But both are accustomed to feel extremely well and to undertake considerable exertion either of mind or body without experiencing any fatigue. One of them takes regular exercise, that is to say he plays an out-door game on most days of his life, while the other who abstains from flesh-foods has little practice of the sort. He will take no out-of-door exercise for several days, work very hard, and find himself perfectly fit for some severe physical test at the end. But they are both agreed that if the one abandoned flesh-foods (which he does not propose to do) he would cease to require regular exercise, and that if the other took flesh-foods (which he does not propose to do) he would not only be very ill, but would also require regular exercise. One again is seldom seen without some appliance of tobacco in his mouth, because he finds it agreeable and after an experiment of abstinence from it found that it did not make any difference, as far as he could make out, in his general health. The other never smokes at all. One again takes a cold bath in the morning, the other a hot one followed by cold sponging.

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But both are absolutely in accord on far more main points than those on which their practice, at any rate, differs, and they have found it perfectly easy to write this book together without wrangling, on which account they wish to express a pious hope that the very fact that they differ in so many things may have saved them from dogmatism. For it has helped them to realize that even when they are agreed on any point it would be a sheer stupidity to hint that they were therefore right, and in consequence they only put forward the points on which they are agreed as suggestions, hoping that others after trial may also agree with them. For universal laws on an empirical matter like health are rare, and the constitutions of men are various. One man's meat, in fact, is literally another man's poison. But in the main the two authors are agreed. They believe that the majority of mankind habitually eat too much and habitually take too much stimulating food and drink. They believe also that most people who do so do not take enough exercise, and that either an increase of exercise or a decrease of stimulant is needed. They believe that the best sorts of exercise are not those of slow pushing movements such as are made in the use of dumb-bells, but full brisk extended movements, with much use of the breathing apparatus and the large muscle areas of the body. Similarly they are in accord as regards present systems of training which tend to treat an entire crew or team as if they were identical specimens, not as widely different specimens; in every day life also they hold that because a certain mode of diet and work suits A, it will not necessarily suit B and C, though B and C might do worse than try it. They also regard the ordinary acceptance of the word "Training" as far too narrow, and hold that to acquire a high fitness of the body is a duty which should be within the reach of everybody, since a mind housed in a fit body is far more capable of good and sustained work than when its shell is imperfect. For this end they advocate the start-

ing of city athletic clubs like those in certain American towns, being fully convinced that these clubs, with a reasonable attention to matters of diet, would secure for the ordinary city-worker a far higher measure of health than he is at present accustomed to enjoy.

Finally, they believe that air, light and work (and here they do not mind appearing dogmatic) are three prime remedies in the pharmacy of God. And they feel sure that sensuality is bad for everybody.

September, 1902.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Among the many notable discoveries made by the Anglo-Saxon race during the nineteenth century there is none more curious, none perhaps which will turn out to have been more concerned with the well-being of the race itself, than that which we may broadly call the discovery of Athletics. In itself this discovery was natural enough, since the love of sport, the pitting of the wit of man against animals, or against his fellows, has always been strongly inherent among us; but after thirty years of the new *régime* we are apt to under-estimate the extraordinary difference between the average middle-class Englishman of to-day, in the matter of athletics, and the Englishman of the late sixties. For to put it generally, games have been, if not invented, at any rate nationalized since then; a large class of professional or semi-professional players has come into existence, and an innumerable company of amateurs who play games for their own sake, and for the sake of the increased measure of health which most men find that they thereby enjoy. That this movement at present is in the exuberance of its riotous juvenility, which coming years will tame and quiet, is probable, but it is also probable that with this modification will come a more scientific method of playing games, which will convert the mere animal pleasure of using muscles and lungs

into a system which, by their fit and reasonable use, ensures for their users not only a greatly increased power in mere strength and agility, but a greatly increased power of mental quickness and moral strength. The discipline, the quick obedience, the endurance which were found to be necessary for the games in themselves, will be consciously used in other ways and with objects vastly more important than mere athletic excellence. In fact, the standing luck of the Anglo-Saxons is here again typified: that which they began simply for purposes of amusement, Nature is converting and will further convert into an element, not only of physical, but of mental and moral pre-eminence.

Indeed, it was time that some new strain of growth, as it were, was imported. For decades upon decades the country life of England had been gradually drained out of the country altogether by colonization and emigration, and by centralization into its towns; and the inevitable health which waits upon those who live mainly in the open air, whose diet is simple and wholesome foods, was being undermined by close quarters, insufficient oxygen, and more than sufficient stimulants, while those of the upper classes who still lived much in the country hunted six days out of the seven, and drank seven nights out of the same number. For the good old Englishman type, "one of the rare old sort," as it is the fashion to call it, cannot in the light of to-day be fairly thought to be a very efficient or wholesome specimen. In fact, instead of admiring the life which certain not very critical observers have told us "made them what they were," we ought rather to admire the wonderful constitution nature had given them, which did not sooner break up under the extraordinarily unhealthy *régime* of riding off every day some of the excessive port wine consumed the evening before. No doubt those works of fiction which admiringly record their feats make such a class to appear to us larger and more

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wide-spread than it really was; it is merely the admiration which we deprecate.

But by this wise provision of nature, simultaneously with the crowding into towns (a feature, by the way, not of decadent but of increasing national energy, and inevitable to successful competition), came this new feature, the rise of athleticism, and the desire and necessity for the health which athleticism both demands and, on the other hand, brings with it. It is requisite, in order to excel at any game which demands fleetness of foot, quickness of movement, accuracy of eye, to live, broadly speaking, in a sober and rational manner. Drunken meteors have reeled and will reel again over the athletic heavens, men who are built in such iron mould that excess appears not to interfere with their excellence, but on the one hand their brilliance is but short-lived, and on the other they are in themselves exceptional; for we may say that the average scratch player at golf, for instance, will certainly not remain on that desirable mark for six months if he drinks a bottle of port every night, and empties his box of cigarettes in two days. Thus athleticism, on the whole, encourages among its million votaries a more sensible and moderate way of life than they would, but for it, have enjoyed, and by it they now, and their children in the future, will inevitably be the fitter citizens. The green fields of England are depopulated it is true, and a thicker and ever-spreading pall of smoke rises above the clanking manufacturing towns and fog-ridden skies under which the cities hum like swarming hives; but how on Saturday afternoons are the fields populated again, and how the sand-pits crumble under the illiterate strokes of delving stockbrokers, to whom at the moment the little half-hidden ball is of more importance than the miles and millions of the Rand or the salvation of their souls!

Nor is this movement confined to those who have the money and the occasional leisure to play games. When before in the history of the nation has there been such a phenomenon as the weekly crowds at Cup ties, or the rapt lines of spectators at county cricket matches, watching with the intensest interest the games they never play, and knowing the athletic history of heroes they have never spoken to? That the pleasure and excitement of betting enter into their enthusiasm is, of course, undeniable, but we do not for a moment believe that this accounts for all of it. There is something else as well, and that something is the admiration and envy of the fitness of physical excellence. Or when before was seen so curious a sight as the ordinary bookstall groaning under magazines, the sole aim and purpose of which is to teach their readers how to obtain physical strength? The "genial broad-shouldered Englishman" of an earlier day was content to be broad-shouldered; nowadays every one wants to know how the broad shoulders are to be acquired. But the "genial broad-shouldered Englishman" of an earlier day was subsequently content to recline himself on a curtained feather-bed in a most microbeous room, with windows shut; now we tear down our curtains, fling open our windows, and plunge ourselves (without knowing why, it is true) into freezing baths before we begin the work of the day.

To say that athletics are entirely responsible for the healthier way of life pursued by the average Englishman of to-day as compared to the average Englishman of forty years ago, would be of course an assertion utterly beyond the mark. On the other hand, it is quite certainly within the mark to say that athletics have appreciably contributed to it, inasmuch as they both demand, as mentioned before, a sobriety and moderation in life as an essential to continued success, and themselves directly contribute to health as well as demanding the conditions that are

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likely to lead to it. At the same time the science of athletics is at present in its infancy, both whether we consider them as an end in themselves (a very small affair), or as a means to an end (an immensely large affair). Even the literature of the subject, that with which the bookstalls teem, seems to be full of fallacies, to be dealt with hereafter, and to a large extent to be based on one immense fallacy—namely, that the possession of enormous muscles, and the ability thereby to lift immense weights, is in itself an object worth the attention of a reasonable man. And when one adds to this that the actual acquirement of such power is in itself not always a very safe process, possibly leading to strain and involving misuse of the muscles themselves, it is not too much to say that if this, namely, the acquiring of huge muscles and the mere power they give, at the sacrifice in many cases of quickness, and in some at the risk of positive injury, were all, such practice would be Athleticism gone crazy. On the other hand, these periodicals would probably retort by saying, “What is the use of being able merely to hit a golf ball two hundred yards, make a totally untakeable stroke at racquets, hit over the pavilion at Lord’s, or put in a hot shot at Association?” To this we readily answer, “There is no use in it at all *in itself*.” But what is useful is to be possessed of the quickness, not only of muscle and eye, which is necessary to such a performance, but the quickness of seeing an opportunity, and the having the body in such perfect poise, in such perfect obedience to the will, that as soon as the opportunity occurs it instantly and correctly takes advantage of it. The acquisition of mere muscular force cannot produce this, and the professional strong man who could lift a wiry golf player from the ground with one hand will, unless he is something more than a professional strong man, be easily outdriven by the other. This borders on the vital question—namely, What is the use of athletics? And the answer is that *they are a help towards training*, by which is meant not the

cultivation of a particular set of muscles in order to attain excellence at a particular game, still less the cultivation of slow moving muscles of ponderous size adapted only for the moving of heavy bodies, but the fitness of the entire body to execute the orders of the will rapidly and correctly, the health necessary and incidental to this, the endurance and strength which will result from it.

Nor is this fitness, which we desire to see the birthright of the entire race, at all confined to the body only, for to have the body in subjection in this manner necessarily contributes to the mental and moral health of a man. That his mind and morals may be extremely healthy, though he does not know a cricket-bat from a golf-club, goes without saying; but that athletics, from their engrossing nature to (we believe) the average person, from the healthy fatigue which they produce, from their insistence that a man should abstain from excess of food and drink and other habits more injurious, contribute to the health of mind and morals, is, we believe, beyond question. Training, in other words, in the bigger sense in which we wish to apply the term, has for its object not only fitness for any or for every athletic exercise, but fitness for all work mental as well as bodily. Yet it is nearly as much a mistake to devote all one's time to keeping perfectly well, as it is to disregard health altogether. We believe, in fact, that certain rules of life, certain habits and certain daily exercises produce the state of body which we denote by the phrase *being in Training*, and that this adapts its owner, in so far as he is adaptable, for any work he has to do. Not that there is any one fixed mode of life, any one diet, or any one exercise which will suit everybody, but there are certain general lines of health, broad paths which should be approximately followed, or at any rate given a trial. For in these matters the personal equation must be taken into consideration,

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and the diet and exercise that are beneficial to the heavily-built man of fourteen stone are not only not necessarily beneficial to a light-weight, but may be positively injurious, though, of course, it is perfectly true that frankly unwholesome diet or continuance of unhealthy habits would be injurious both for the one and the other. On this point ordinary systems of training, even when in such competent hands as those who have charge of the University crews, seem to us capable of being bettered. The entire crew, broadly speaking, are treated as if they were eight identical specimens of one machine, as if what is the best for one must necessarily be the best for all. This assumption is not only not proved; it is on the face of it highly improbable.

But it is infinitely more important that a city full of folk living, by the exigencies of their work, under far from favourable conditions, should be in decent health, than that a boatful of strong young men, living in the best conditions, should be at the tip-top of excellence of which they are capable on a given morning; and in the consideration of the question of training, what we say is submitted to the attention not only of those who have some definite athletic trial in front of them, though it is hoped that even these may find something of profit herein, but of those who have to lead a sedentary life, which does not naturally suit them, and find that their health, and through their health their work, suffers. No doubt in such cases there must be compromise to a certain degree; for some persons unfavourable hours of work, or ill-ventilated rooms are practically (at present anyhow) unavoidable, but even here there will be found to be possible not only certain rules which will mitigate the ill-results that would naturally follow, but certain corrective measures which will, to some extent, prevent the ill-results following at all.