

HOW TO LIVE  
ON  
TWENTY-  
FOUR  
HOURS A DAY  
ARNOLD BENNETT

bored; that is to say, he is not enjoying himself.  
But remember, at the start, those ninety mortal minutes thrice a week must be the most important minutes in the ten thousand and eighty. They must be sacred, quite as sacred as a dramatic rehearsal or a tennis match. Instead of saying, "Sorry I can't see you, old chap, but I have to run off to the tennis club," you must say, "...but I have to work." This, I admit, is intensely difficult to say. Tennis is so much more urgent than the immortal soul.

## VII

### Remember Human Nature

I have incidentally mentioned the vast expanse of forty-four hours between leaving business at 2 p.m. on Saturday and returning to business at 10 a.m. on Monday. And here I must touch on the point whether the week should consist of six days or of seven. For many years—in fact, until I was approaching forty—my own week consisted of seven days. I was constantly being informed by other advisers that a more sensible, more genuine, more living, could be got out of six days than out of seven.

And it is certainly true that now, with one day in seven in which I follow no programme and make no effort save what the caprice of the moment dictates, I appreciate intensely the moral value of a weekly rest. Nevertheless, had I my life to arrange over again, I would do again as I have done. Only those who have lived at the full stretch seven days a week for a long time can appreciate the full beauty of a regular recurring idleness. Moreover,







## VIII

# Controlling the Mind

One can say: "One can't help one's thoughts," but this is not the point. The control of the thinking machine is perfectly possible. And since nothing whatever happens to us outside our own brain, since nothing hurts us or gives us pleasure except within the brain, the supreme importance of being able to control what goes on in that mysterious brain is patent. This idea is one of the oldest platitudes, but it is a platitude whose profound truth and urgency most people live and die without realising. People complain of the lack of power to concentrate, not writing that they may acquire the power, if they choose.

And without the power to concentrate—that is to say, without the power to dictate to the brain its task and to ensure obedience—true life is impossible. Mind control is the first element of a full existence.

Hence, it seems to me, the first business of the day should be to put the mind through its paces. You look after your body, inside and out; you run

appear to be the inexperienced. And still another danger is the danger of developing a policy of risk, of being gradually more and more obsessed by what one has to do next. In this way one may come to exist as in a prison, and one's life may come to be one's own. One may take the dog out for a walk at eight o'clock, and meditate the whole time on the fact that one must begin to read at a quarter to nine, and that one must not be late.

And the occasional deliberate breaking of one's programme will not help to mend matters. The evil springs not from persisting without elasticity in attempting too much, but from originally filling one's programme with too much, from filling one's programme till it runs over. The only cure is to reconstruct the programme, and to attempt less.

But the appetite for knowledge grows by what it feeds on, and there are men who come to like a constant breathless hurry of endeavour. Of them

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And still another danger is the danger of developing a policy of rush, of being gradually more

In this way one may come to exist as in a prison and more obsessed by what one has to do next than one's life may cease to be one's own. One may take the dog out for a walk at eight o'clock, and muddle the whole time on the fact that one must begin to read at a quarter to nine, and that one must not be late.

And be occasional deliberate breaking of one's programme will not help to mend matters. There is evil springs not from persisting without elasticity in what one has attempted, but from originally attempting too much, from filling one's programme till it runs over. The only cure is to reconstitute the programme, and to attempt less.

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# IV

# Tennis and the Immortal Soul

You get into the morning train with your newspaper, and you calmly and majestically give yourself up to your newspaper. You do not hurry. You know you have at least half an hour of security in front of you. As your glance lingers idly at the front advertisements of shipping and songs at the outer pages, your air is the air of a leisured man, wealthy in time, of a man from some planet where there are a hundred and twenty-four hours a day instead of twenty-four. I am an impassioned reader of newspapers. I read five English and two French dailies, and the news-agents alone know how many weeklies, regularly. I am obliged to mention this personal fact lest I should be accused of a prejudice against newspapers when I say that I object to the reading of newspapers in the morning train. Newspapers are produced with rapidity, to be read with rapidity. There is no place in my daily programme for newspapers. I read them as I may in spare moments. But I do read them. The idea of



## Preface to This Edition

This preface, though placed at the beginning, as a preface must be, should be read at the end of the book.

[illegible]

With the various ways of slaking I shall deal later.  
Here I merely point out to those who have no  
natural sympathy with literature that literature is  
not the only well.

(which, by the way, I have not discovered) that has led me to the minute practical examination of daily time-expenditure.

not to love literature. It is not a sign of immaturity. The mandarins of literature will order out to instant execution the unfortunate individual who does not comprehend, say, the influence of Wordsworth on Tennyson. But that is only their impudence. Where would they be, I wonder, if they requested to explain the influences that went to make Tchaikovsky's "Pathetic Symphony"?

There are enormous fields of knowledge quite outside literature which will yield magnificent results to cultivators. For example (since I have just mentioned the most popular piece of high-class music in England to-day), I am reminded that the Promenade Concerts begin in August. You go to them. You smoke your cigar or cigarette (and I

regret to say that you strike your matches during the soft bars of the "Lohengrin" overture), and you enjoy the music. But you say you cannot play the piano or the fiddle, or even the banjo; that you know nothing of music.

What does that matter? That you have a genuine taste for music is proved by the fact that, in order to fill his hall with you and your peers, the conductor is obliged to provide programmes from which bad music is almost entirely excluded (a change from the old Covent Garden days).

Now surely your inability to perform "The Maiden's Prayer" on a piano need not prevent

full of awful foreign customs. But, having reached maturity, one ought surely to be ashamed of being a stranger in a strange land!

The study of cause and effect, while it lessens the painfulness of life, adds to life's picturesqueness. The man to whom evolution is but a name looks at the sea as a paradise, monotonous spectacles at the beach, and the sea as a wilderness. The third-class man witnesses in August for three sittings a play which is a study of the sea, and he is bored. The third-class reformer, the man who is imbued with the idea of development, of continuous cause and effect, perceives in the sea an element which in the day-before-yesterday of geology was vapour; which yesterday was boiling, and which to-morrow will inevitably be ice.

He perceives that a liquid is merely something on its way to be solid, and he is penetrated by a sense of the tremendous, changeful picturesqueness of life. Nothing will afford a more durable satisfaction than the constantly cultivated appreciation of this. It is the end of all science.

Can and effect are to be found everywhere. Rents went up in Shepherd's Bush. It was painful and shocking that rents should go up in Shepherd's Bush. But to a certain point we are all scientists of cause and effect, and there was not a clerk lunching at a Lyons Restaurant who did not scientifically put two and two together and see in the (once) Two-penny Tube the cause of





hates art and literature, and I have had peak with it. I now come to the case of the person, however common, who does "like reading."

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the steak, and that even if he alone was to blame, you should be eating it. Good for getting things done! You merely lost your dinner, looked food in the eyes of sensible men, and poured the water, while predicting no effect whatever on the steak.

The result of this consultation with reason (for which she makes no change) will be that when once more your steak is over-cooked you will treat the waiter as a fellow-creature, remain quiet calm in a kindly spirit, and politely insist on having a fresh steak. The gain will be obvious and solid.

In the formation or modification of principles, and the practice of conduct, much help can be derived from printed books (issued at experience each and upwards). I mentioned in my last chapter Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. Certain even more widely known works will occur at once to the memory. I may also mention Pascal, La Bruyere, and Emerson. For myself, you do not catch me travelling without my Marcus Aurelius. Yes, books are valuable. But no reading of books will take the place of a daily (or, rather, honest) examination of your conduct, and of the progress of your mind to do of a steady looking at one's self in the face (discovering though the sight may be).

When shall this important business be accomplished? The solitude of the evening journey home appears to me to be suitable for it. A reflect-

question whether a woman can exist in a lonely country on £5 a week. I have seen an essay, "How to live on eight shillings a week." But I have never seen an essay, "How to live on twenty-four hours a day." Yet it has been said that time is money. That proverb understates the case. Time is a great deal more than money. If you have time you can obtain money—usually. But though you have the wealth of a cloak-room attendant at the Carlton Hotel, you cannot buy yourself a minute more time than I have, or the cat by the fire has.

Philosophers have explained space. They have not explained time. It is the inexplicable raw material of everything. With it, all is possible; without it, nothing. The supply of time is truly a daily miracle, an affair genuinely astonishing when one examines it. You wake up in the morning, and lo! your pulse is magnificently fitted with twenty-four hours of the unmanufactured tissue of the universe of your life! It is yours. It is the most precious of possessions. A highly singular commodity; slow to be created, and slow to be used, as singular as the commodity itself!

For remark! No one can take it from you. It is unstable. And no one receives either more or less than you give it.

Talk about an ideal democracy! In the realm of time there is no aristocracy of wealth, and no aristocracy of intellect.

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differentiates me from the cat by the fire, "What?" "I have seen the cat in a mirror for the battle. Assume that I have carefully weighed and comprehended your ponderous remarks: how do I begin?" Dear sir, you simply begin. There is no magic method of beginning. If a man standing on the edge of a swimming-bath and wanting to jump into the water should ask you, "How do I begin to jump?" you would merely reply, "Just jump. Take hold of your nerves, and jump."

As I have previously said, the chief beauty about the constant supply of time is that you cannot waste it in advance. The next year, the next day, the next hour are lying ready for you, as perfect, as unspoiled, as if you had never wasted or misapplied a single moment in all your career. Which fact is very gratifying and reassuring. You can turn over a new leaf every hour if you choose. Therefore no object is served in waiting till next week, or even until to-morrow. You may fancy that the water will be warmer next week. It won't. It will be colder. Before you begin, let me murmur a few words of warning in your private ear.

Let me principally warn you against your own ardour. Ardour in well-doing is a mischievous and a treacherous thing. It cries out loudly for employment; you can't satisfy it at first; it wants more

is, or even even less, but it is just as it is. I am tired, and I have lived a bit then never to have lived at all. The real tragedy is the tragedy of the man who is braced to effort neither in the office nor out of it, and to this man this book is primarily addressed. "But," says the other and more fortunate man, "although my ordinary programme is bigger than his, I want to exceed my programme too! I am living a bit; I want to live more. But I really can't do another day's work on the top of my official day."

The fact is, I, the author, ought to have foreseen that I should appeal most strongly to those who already had an interest in existence. It is always the man who has tasted life who demands more of it. And it is always the man who never gets out of bed who is the most difficult to rouse. Well, you of the minority, let us assume that the intensity of your daily money-getting will not allow you to carry out quite all the suggestions in this book. So, then, the suggestions of the book are the fall-back. I admit that you may not be able to use the time spent on the journey home at night; but the suggestion for the journey to the office in the morning is as practicable for you as for anybody. And that weekly interval of forty hours from Saturday to Monday, is yours as much as

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existence subsistent to one-third for which admittedly he has been richly furnished, and how he began to live fully and completely? He cannot.

If my typical man wishes to live fully and completely he must, in his mind, arrange a day within a day. And this inner day, a Chinese box in a larger Chinese box, must begin at 6 p.m. and end at 10 a.m. It is a day of sixteen hours; and during all these sixteen hours he has nothing whatever to do but cultivate his body and his soul and his fellow men. During these sixteen hours he is free; he is not a wage-earner; he is not preoccupied with monetary cares; he is just as good as a man with a private income. This must be his attitude. And his attitude is all important. His success in life (much more important than the amount of estate upon what his executors will have to pay estate duty) depends on it.

What? You say that full energy given to those sixteen hours will lessen the value of the business effort? Not so. On the contrary, it will assuredly increase the value of the business effort. The chief trouble of the typical man is that he is not a free man, but a slave of continuous hard activity; they do not rest, except in sleep.

I shall now examine the typical man's current

Forget the goal; think only of the surrounding country; and after a period, perhaps when you at least expect it, you will suddenly find yourself in a lovely town on a hill.

Never mind. Forget the goal; think only of the surrounding country; and after a period, perhaps when you at least expect it, you will suddenly find yourself in a lovely town on a hill.

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and concentrate on something useful. I suggest—it is only a suggestion—a little chapter of Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus.

Do not, I beg, shy at their names. For myself, I know nothing more 'actual', more bursting with plain common-sense, applicable to the daily life of plain persons like you and me (who hate airs, pose, and nonsense) than Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus. Read a chapter—and so short they are, the chapters—in the evening and concentrate on it the next morning. You will see.

Yes, my friend, it is useless for you to try to disguise the fact. I can hear your brain like a telephone at my ear. You are saying to yourself: "This fellow was doing pretty well up to his seventh chapter. He had begun to interest me handsomely. But what he says about thinking in trains, and concentration, and so on, is not for me. It may be well enough for some folks, but it isn't in my line."

It is for you, I passionately repeat: it is for you. Indeed, you are the very man I am aiming at.

How away the suggestion, and you throw away the book. It is not a suggestion, it is an offer to you. It is not a suggestion, it is the suggestion of the most sensible, practical, hard-headed men who have walked the earth. I only give it to you at second-hand. Try it. Get your mind in hand. And see how the process cures half the evils





