

The April

25 Cents

# American

Magazine



## Bumps!

By Albert Payson Torburn

# The American Magazine

April, 1926

MERLE CROWELL, *Editor*  
JAMES C. DERIEUX, *Managing Editor*

Vol. CI

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE CROWELL PUBLISHING COMPANY AT SPRINGFIELD, OHIO, U. S. A.

John E. Miller, *Vice President*  
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EXECUTIVE and EDITORIAL OFFICES, 295 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK  
55c a Copy, \$2.50 per Year, in the United States and Canada. Foreign subscriptions, \$3.75 per Year. All Rights Reserved.

Subscribers are notified that change of address must reach us five weeks in advance of the next day of issue.

Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, Springfield, Ohio, under the act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry as second-class matter at Albany, N. Y., Harrisburg, Pa., San Francisco, Cal., Los Angeles, Cal., Seattle, Wash., Portland, Ore., Omaha, Neb., St. Paul, Minn., Milwaukee, Wis., Galveston, Ill., and Des Moines, Iowa. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office Department, Canada.  
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# Joy-Killers

By William S. Sadler, M. D.

Editor's Note: This article was prepared in collaboration with Dr. Lena K. Sadler, the wife of the author, and herself a prominent physician.

**I**N MY article last month on the six fundamentals of happiness, I gave first place to good health. Consequently, in the present discussion of "joy-killers"—the things that are most likely to spoil a happiness you already possess—I shall have to put ill health at the head of the list. But again handling of the theme will be most cursory.

In this age of modern sanitation and preventive medicine the excuse for ill health has been largely swept away. Of course, there are diseases still pretty much beyond the control of medical science; but most of these can be detected in an early or curable stage, if one is examined at reasonably regular intervals by a competent diagnostician.

Accidents, of course, will overtake us now and then, in spite of our most painstaking precautions. But by taking our minor ailments at the beginning, by immediately investigating the causes of headaches, backaches, colds, sore throats, foot trouble, and so on, we can usually prevent major illnesses.

If you want to take the joy out of life with both thoroughness and rapidity, just go ahead and neglect the simple hygienic rules of health. I guarantee ill health to be one of the best joy-killers I know.

**HURRY:** Life has become for Americans a restless, feverish race from the cradle to the grave. Children are hurried through their morning toilet and breakfast in order to get to school on time. The overcrowded curriculum, from the early days of the grade schools to the last year of college, compel the student to hurry, rush, crowd, and cram. Business says, "Speed up; more production; hurry, hurry, hustle, bustle." It is small wonder that this hurly-burly rush is turning us into a nervous, harassed, dyspeptic, highly-strung nation.

Now, it is absolutely impossible to keep driving a little faster and yet a little faster, without paying the price—and the price is usually the loss of both health and happiness.

I was talking not long ago with a man who was literally breaking himself down by this constant rushing around in circles. I told him he must cut out some things;

but he said, "I can't, Doctor; the day isn't long enough to do the things I now have on hand, and I've a number more I must take on."

I had this young chap keep for me a week's record of his expenditure of time. When he appeared with the record we talked it over. As the result of two hours' study we decided to cut out exactly one half of what he was doing, careful examination having revealed that much of his hurry and worry were about things that had no significance or permanent value; that were not connected with his livelihood, and that had no cultural worth.

Moreover, he was worrying about many

pression on his face changed from that of a scowling, hunted creature to that of a man of cheerfulness and beaming good will.

Thousands of people, both men and women, could prevent nervous breakdowns and add greatly to their efficiency if they would take a rest in the middle of the day, especially those who have low blood pressure or who have contracted the hurry habit. Moreover, those who are over-weight or who are overeating would do well to take this noon rest instead of a noon lunch.

This hurly-burly rush and drive of the American people is nothing less than a disease, and unless we undertake individually to rid ourselves of it, it means the loss of health and happiness.

Start in to-day and take stock of yourself! Reorganize your work. Throw off the nonessential. Pledge yourself to learn relaxation, and practice it. Provide for the culture of your mind and soul, as well as for the health of your physical body. Get acquainted with your family. Visit your friends. Take an interest in your community. In short, *take time to live.*

## WORRY, CHRONIC

**FEAR:** One of the surest ways of destroying human happiness is to allow one's mind to become possessed of chronic fear of some sort, a special phobia, or a definite dread. Anxiety, doubts, misgivings, and pessimism are certain and sure joy-killers. Fear is an emotion which is associated with the instinct of flight. In the case of animals and among primitive peoples, it undoubtedly has served a valuable purpose; but in the case of modern civilized man, fear, no longer serving its original purpose of protecting and preserving the species, is easily prostituted in its function, so that it

becomes attached to all sorts of experiences and feelings, and thus indirectly plays the rôle of a tremendous mischief-maker.

Most of our fear is fictitious. We exaggerate our difficulties and multiply our worries.

I once knew a woman who was as healthy and happy a specimen of humanity as one could hope to find. Many winters ago, a severe and unusually fatal epidemic of scarlet fever prevailed. This woman was seized with the dread that her three children would contract the disease and die. As a (Continued on page 103)

## How Your "In-Laws" May Give You Indigestion

**I**RECENTLY saw a woman cured of stomach trouble by simply changing her disposition," says Doctor Sadler. "She had for years been nursing a grudge against her sister-in-law, and this deep-seated grudge undoubtedly had been upsetting her nerves, and also her digestion.

"When she was convinced that the hate she was harboring really was foolish, and that it was causing her mental, physical, and spiritual distress, she agreed to do her best toward bringing about a reunion. The sister-in-law was more than willing to meet her half way. I do not know how much good this reconciliation did the other woman, but I do know that it cured my patient.

"Relatives are blamed for a lot of trouble. For all I know, you may lay some of your unhappiness at their doors. If so, I suggest that you study the point of the story I have just told. Possibly your relatives are guilty; or possibly you yourself are causing all the trouble by keeping a grudge against them. Anyway, if you are carrying hate in your heart, it is a foolish, a vicious, burden, and the sooner you chuck it out the sooner will you recover your happiness. No matter who is to blame for a falling-out, you alone are to blame if you nurse a grudge permanently."

things that didn't concern him at all. Some of them were connected with higher officials of the firm, some with the public authorities, while a few of the most serious worries could be of no possible concern except to the Almighty Himself.

Now, you can imagine that this fellow backslid repeatedly. He had fallen into such a *hurry habit* that he wanted to do these things even after he had promised me to cease foolish activities. But by the end of six months he was able to keep his trolley on the wire pretty constantly. He began to increase in flesh, and the ex-

## Joy-Killers

(Continued from page 20)

matter of record; not one of her children was afflicted with the prevailing epidemic; but as a result of the extraordinary fear which had come to possess her, her health was undermined, and she rapidly fell victim to a succession of fears. Within a year she was in the throes of a nervous breakdown, and for seven years she led the life of a semi-invalid, her brain all the while swarming with fears about the health, welfare, and safety of herself and her family. Before her reconstruction was finally completed, under medical guidance, she had suffered every imaginable fear, not excluding the three major dreads of suicide, insanity, and death.

Some time ago I met a man who had been moderately successful in life, and who heretofore had been fairly happy and enjoyed good health. One evening at a party he felt that he had been slighted by a recent acquaintance, and he began to brood and worry over this real or fancied slight. It required only three months to turn this hitherto normal individual into a morose and cringing person, an almost helpless victim of an inferiority complex. He rapidly came to a place where he believed that his past life was a failure, and that the future was hopeless.

Luckily, reconstruction was begun before his inferiority complex had become long accustomed to dominating the rest of his mind; and now, in less than three months, we can see an improvement. Undoubtedly he is going to come out all right; but what a terrible thing this chap brought upon himself through worry over an imagined snub!

Then there are the small anxieties and worries with which we clutter up our mind. We worry about how we impress people; we worry about our children and what modern influences are doing to them; we get all worked up over our domestic affairs.

Now, worry never yet solved a single problem—all it does is to fill the mind with fear and foreboding, and undermine our general health. Action is the foe of fear and its close comrades—worry, anxiety, and doubt. So, call the bluff of all these torments, get them out into the open and meet them face to face. Instead of giants, you'll find you have been dreading pygmies.

**DEBT—EXTRAVAGANCE:** Without a doubt, people who manage to live within their incomes, and who put something aside, stand a better chance of happiness than the people who are constantly harassed by debts and payments overdue.

Of course I know there are all kinds of debts, and that individuals react differently to financial obligations. Some men are in debt legitimately and for a good purpose; they are able to pay the interest on their obligations and are gradually reducing the principal. There is no cause to worry about such debts. My concern is with waste, extravagance, and ill-judged expansion, which drive many men and women to the doctor's office.

**SELFISHNESS—EXALTED EGO:** If you are enjoying happiness, if you are having a splendid time with yourself and the world, and you want to start down on a swift and sure toboggan to unhappiness and sorrow, just make up your mind that you are tired of living for the benefit of others, turn a selfish back on the rest of the world, and begin to "listen in" on your own feelings and emotions.

Not long ago I was talking with one of these unfortunate and unhappy individuals, a woman who had little thought for anyone but herself.

"You know, Doctor," she said, "I am very sensitive. I just can't help letting things get on my nerves."

"Yes," I replied; "I've noticed that you are very selfish."

"I didn't say 'selfish,'" she snapped back, "I said 'sensitive.'"

"I know you said sensitive," I rejoined; "but I said *selfish*, and I meant it."

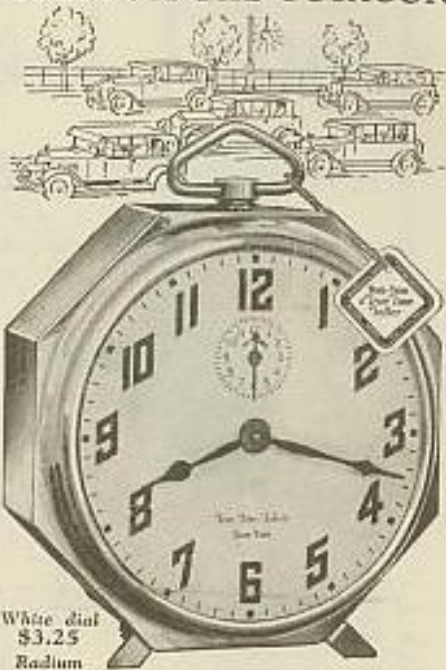
She left my office in high dudgeon, and I figured that I had lost a patient through plain speaking. But in two weeks she was back. She told me that my remark had shocked her to the realization of how self-absorbed and self-centered she had become, and she asked me to help her escape from the blight of selfishness.

Between us we made out a definite list of things she is going to take up in an effort to relegate self to the background. For instance, she is going to stop talking about herself and her troubles in the family circle. She is going to make certain that at least half the time she joins the rest of the family in what they want to do to have a good time; and she will no longer try to make every occasion revolve around her own likes and dislikes.

Let me tell you about the redemption of another self-centered person. It was twenty years ago that I first knew the woman. At that time she was a veritable ministering angel in her neighborhood and a wonderful inspiration to the young people of the community. But she grew old prematurely; that is, she quit playing, and began to take life seriously. Then her husband suddenly accumulated a large amount of money, and she became aristocratic, snobbish, and stuck up. Presently she got sick. In fact, she had a series of afflictions, some of which were quite severe. Well, to make a long story short, when she was about forty years of age she had become very sour and sordid.

I had, in general, a fair knowledge of this woman's life up to the time she came under my immediate supervision. She was only mildly interested in getting well; and expressed the opinion that she would never be happy again. A careful study of her case revealed nothing that would militate against her being healthy and happy, and so finally she was induced, after considerable pressure had been brought to bear by her husband, to begin the fight to regain her former unselfish disposition. She began by taking more interest in her home. She supervised the housework and did the purchasing. In this way, little by little, she restored her former activities. We got her to make

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Age	Weight	Height	Age	Weight	Height
1 yr.	20 lbs.	29 in.	1 yr.	19.8 lbs.	28.7 in.
1½ yrs.	22.8 lbs.	30 in.	1½ yrs.	22 lbs.	29.7 in.
2 yrs.	26.5 lbs.	31.5 in.	2 yrs.	25.5 lbs.	32.5 in.
3 yrs.	31.5 lbs.	35 in.	3 yrs.	30 lbs.	35 in.
4 yrs.	35 lbs.	38 in.	4 yrs.	34 lbs.	38 in.
5 yrs.	41.2 lbs.	41.7 in.	5 yrs.	39.8 lbs.	41.4 in.
6 yrs.	45.1 lbs.	44.1 in.	6 yrs.	43.8 lbs.	43.6 in.

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regular calls on her neighbors and to have receiving hours one day each week. She went back into club and church activities. She began to accompany her husband on his out-of-town business journeys.

It was a wonderful thing to watch the return of this woman's happiness. It proved that even when you have lost interest in life you can get it back, provided you cease to do the things that rob you of it, and begin to do the things that are essential to happiness.

**SUSPICION — INTOLERANCE:**  
There is an old saying to the effect that when poverty flies in at the window love walks out of the door.

Now, I don't believe that, because I know for a fact that poverty and love can live together, that they are compatible; but I have never yet seen suspicion and joy walking hand in hand. They simply cannot travel together under any circumstances. If you wish to prove my words just start in to suspect your best friends one by one, and see how many you have left in a few months.

Suspicion is an evil genius.

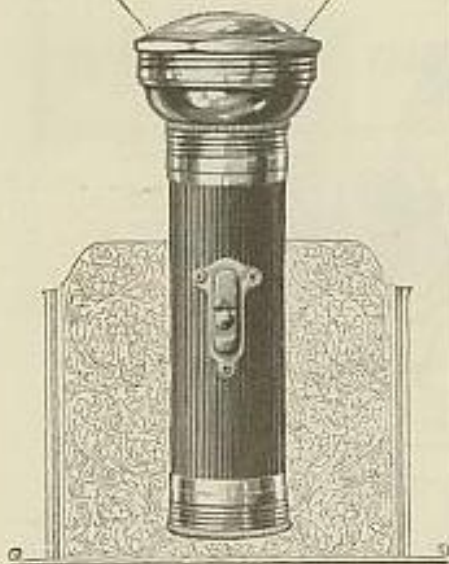
Not long ago I ran across a very sad case: For more than twenty years a certain couple had lived together happily, when a very dear friend of the wife came along one day with a bit of gossip—just a little something which seemed at the time to be only amusing. But, later on, the wife began to turn this thing over in her mind, and in less than a year the happiness of the home was wrecked. Two broken-hearted souls and three homeless children were left in the wake of this emotional cyclone.

This good but misguided woman has since come to recognize that the whole thing was a figment of her own imagination, that there existed no real ground for her distrust and suspicion. But it is too late now. The mischief has been done, and probably never can be undone.

I think I should tell you how I helped a very suspicious man not long ago. He was not only suspicious, but intolerant and unkind. He had mistaken rudeness for frankness and frequently indulged in it, much to the hurt and embarrassment of his friends and loved ones. I turned the searchlight on this man, and step by step ferreted out more things to arouse suspicion and more faults to criticize in himself than he could possibly find in the other members of his family. At the risk of offending him, I hammered him hard with these things, rubbed them in, drove them home, and finally made him admit that his wife, if she had a mind to, had more reason for being jealous of him than he had of her. And the admission really helped him.

**IDLENESS—LONELINESS:** Idleness is a sure-fire joy-killer. A reasonable amount of leisure is a wonderful happiness promoter, but idleness and indolence are fatal to joyful living. Idle people seldom seem to take the pains, they rarely have the patience, to sow the seeds of real happiness; rather they plunge headlong in the quest of thrills, and consume their time in the pursuit of transient and disappointing pleasures which can be purchased with wealth, while they miss the deeper experience of a true and happy life of real satisfaction and achievement.

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One of the happiest married women I ever knew raised a family of four children. Her husband was a man of only moderate means, and so she was kept thoroughly busy as a home-maker.

But the children grew up, and three of them married and the fourth went West on a business venture. Unfortunately, her husband's business prosperity so increased that he literally surrounded her with servants. She had never been interested in outside interests, and her loneliness soon turned out to be downright idleness. She had nothing to do, and presently, as is always the case with this sort of thing, she began to ail, and soon she was seeking the advice and counsel of a physician.

You know, when you have nothing else to do, especially if you are of an introspective or neurotic nature, you can always think about *yourself*. And you don't have to think very long about your vital organs before you begin to have enough unpleasant sensations and bad feelings to initiate you into the ancient and honorable order of chronic ailers, whiners, and complainers.

But let's get back to the woman who had nothing to do. She was strongly advised to take up some useful, worthwhile work, or to adopt some children. She decided that, as she had raised one family, she would let the younger women care for the orphans. But she did take over one of the many business enterprises her husband owned or controlled. She took full charge of it, and only in major matters did she ever consult her husband. She quickly showed herself fully capable of directing this enterprise, and she has made a great success of it. This woman is once more the buoyant, joyful, cheerful being of former years, and her experience serves as a solemn warning that idleness is invariably a joy-killer.

I could go on at great length citing cases and telling stories of how idleness invariably kills joy and destroys happiness. If you are happy, and want to continue to enjoy life, keep busy. If fortune smiles on you, slacken your pace, but *don't stop altogether*, for idleness is too often the breeding ground of many sorrows.

**ANGER—PUGNACITY:** Anger is another sure-fire joy-killer. If you are quick-tempered and vitriolic, determine to make yourself reasonable and agreeable. Quick tempers can be mastered and overcome. Set before yourself the goal of self-control, and strive until you attain it. Anger not only destroys mental happiness but also it upsets the digestion, disturbs the circulation, unbalances the nerves, and unfaulingly results in ill health and sorrow.

One of the happiest and most wholesome individuals I ever knew became associated a few years ago with a person who frequently provoked him to outbursts of violent anger. A year of this sort of thing resulted in the development of a really pugnacious disposition, which changed this agreeable, mild-mannered individual into a disagreeable, blustering man. This unfortunate association not only greatly interfered with his success in life, but, what is still worse, it has all but destroyed his happiness and joy of living.

We have every reason to believe that sudden anger and violent rage have such an effect upon the ductless glands and

circulating fluids of the body as to result in the formation of veritable poisons. It is a well-known fact that anger and rage serve immediately to raise the blood pressure, and it often happens that an individual already suffering from high blood pressure bursts a blood vessel and suffers an attack of apoplexy as a result of a violent outburst of anger.

The dockets of our divorce courts are congested with the cases of men and women who are seeking separation, just because at some time one or the other of them lost control, grew angry, and indulged in an outburst of temper.

**HATE—REVENGE:** Another sure and quick way to destroy happiness is to develop a real and abiding hate. If you want to kill joy, start out on a determined program of revenge.

I once knew a couple of brothers who worked together in a most wonderful fashion, each helping the other, and each of them greatly multiplying the usefulness of the other. But one started to nurse a pet peeve, imagining that his brother was not treating him right. He began by entertaining a grudge. This grew into a settled hate, and eventually he devoted his life, his energy, his fortune, in wreaking vengeance on his brother. And, of course, such an attitude did not promote much love and affection on the part of the other brother. This situation kept up for about a dozen years, and extended into every form of litigation, combat, and hostility.

I am not familiar with all of the details and merits of the case. There are probably two sides to the controversy. But I know that the man who entertained the hate, the brother who instituted all of the proceedings for revenge, suffered from a severe nervous breakdown; his health was wrecked and his happiness shattered. He certainly wreaked vengeance on his brother, but he brought the curse of ill health and unhappiness upon himself.

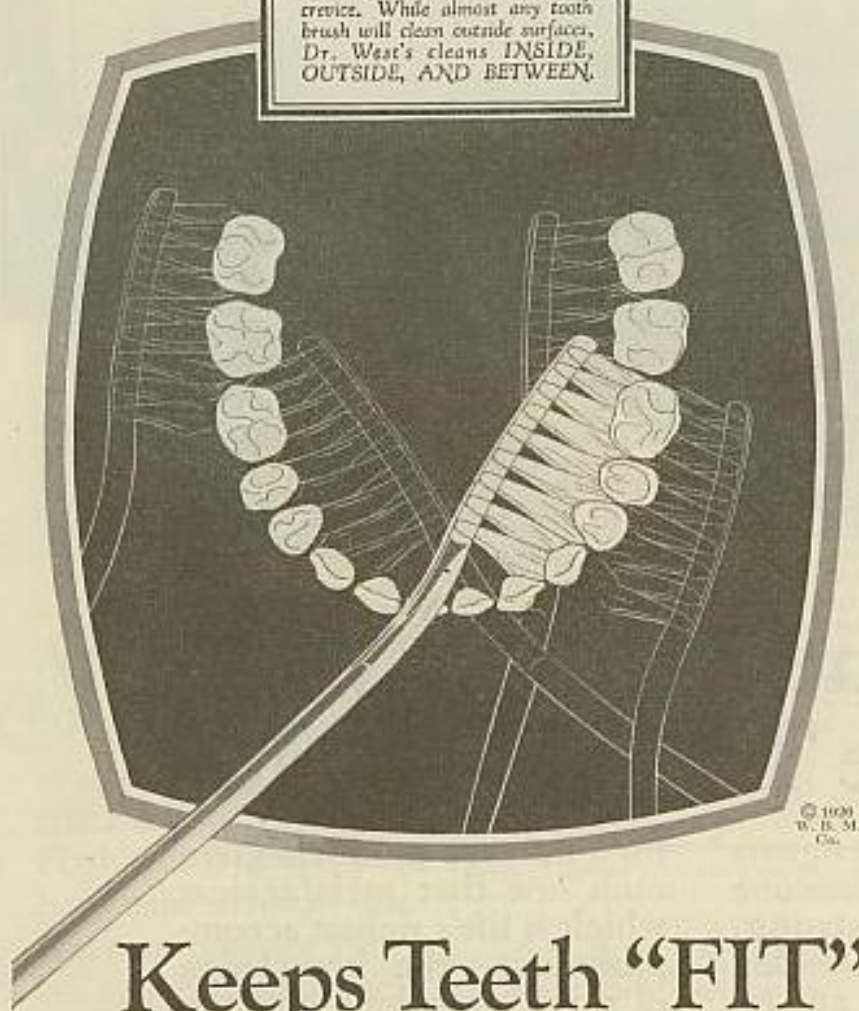
**CONSCIENCE—EMOTIONAL CONFLICTS:** Before we close the discussion of joy-killers we must pay our respects to that busy little machine which we call conscience. Now, conscience is a wonderful thing, a faculty quite indispensable to modern civilization; but we must not overlook the fact that many people are made sick, and still more are made unhappy, because of the misunderstanding of this thing we call conscience.

Conscience is looked upon by many persons as being the "voice of God," whereas it is essentially our inherited and acquired standard of right and wrong. Man as we find him on earth to-day seems to be possessed of a dual nature, and conscience tries to sit on the seat of judgment between the instincts and longings of our primitive animal nature and the aspirations and sentiments of our more recently acquired spiritual natures.

Only the other day I talked with a young man whose life is overshadowed by despair, because he has allowed conscience insistently to harass him for a certain trifling thing he inadvertently did several years ago. He has come to believe that this act has ruined his chance of success in life and probably debarrd him from the

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opportunity to secure life everlasting in the world beyond. For seven years this young man has suffered the torments of the damned, and it is going to be some time before he gets straightened out and enjoys the blessings of a well-ordered mind and adequate control of his thoughts and emotions.

Much of our psychic conflict and emotional turmoil has come to us as a legacy of the Puritanism of our forefathers, the Puritans regarding all pleasure as sin, and mirth as a crime. Even to-day the very fact that you like a thing is to some folks sufficient evidence that the thing is wicked.

Our forefathers taught us that we should not expect to be happy here below, but that we should be content to wait for the next world to enjoy real happiness. The present generation prefers to enjoy happiness now, while at the same time it hopes for happiness in the next world.

**T**HERE are on my hands at the present time a dozen good people who have nothing the matter with them except that they are suffering from the results of worry, fear, and misapprehension that have been bred by an over-conscientious temperament.

We should remember that conscience is a state of mind that tells us *always to do right*; but its function is not to tell us what is right. We have to find that out by common sense and judgment as well as by actual experience. It was conscience that led the pious Hindu mother to throw her helpless babe into the jaws of the crocodile. Conscience has led, in times of darkness and ignorance, to many fanatical beliefs, and horrible persecutions. And I can assure you that conscience also leads to suffering, sickness, and disease.

At the present time I have a patient who is making a religion of hygiene, and at the same time making everyone around her very uncomfortable. I believe in keeping the laws of health; but I think it is perfectly ridiculous to create standards and rules of living so that it becomes a sin to remain out of bed a minute after ten o'clock at night, or that it is a crime not to wake up exactly at five-forty-five in the morning. Likewise, it is a great mistake to take such matters as diet too seriously.

I had a very dear friend, now dead, who was a victim of over-conscientiousness. I am sorry to confess that nobody was ever able to help him. He literally worked himself to death. If he had been scurrying around just to make money, I think we could have reasoned with him; but he had the burdens of the world on his shoulders. It is terribly hard to help people when you are dealing with this thing which they call conscience, especially when they have come to the place where they apply the "acid test" to every little act of their lives, and worry all the time over the past, present, and future.

**I**N "Evans Climbed Out of His Pit on a Set of Wooden Blocks," you will read next month one of those amazing American stories of grit and will power that show clearly there is as much opportunity to make good in these days of keen competition as in the old, leisurely, uncrowded days.