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Magazine

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July

**PETER  
B.  
KYNE**

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**How Big Men  
Think and  
Act**

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**MARK TWAIN  
as  
HELEN KELLER  
Knew Him**

+

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# The American Magazine

Vol. cviii Contents for July 1929 No. 1

**NEW** is a great word! It means for you and me something hitherto unknown, or unrealized, or unused, or unattempted by us. It means something fresh, regenerating, awakening, advancing. Maybe it refers to spiritual conditions, to mental equipment, to improved circumstances of life and work, or to an opening up of abilities.

Great news for you and me isn't necessarily remarkable happenings in the world at large, but rather happenings in ourselves, or in our little personal world of family and fellow workers.

Great news for you and me may be something that makes us see possibilities more clearly and suggests how they may be seized for our personal advancement. It may mean how we can get for ourselves or our family more comforts of living or more satisfaction of mind, more lift of spirit, more happiness within and without.

The simple, sincere policy of THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE is to give such true human experiences, such wise counsel out of the mouths of practical men and women, such adventures of mind and soul as will be new to you because they are fresh and sound and intimate.

Our remarkable growth has been based on faith in human nature. It is based on our belief in the universal desire of man to improve himself and to be more—to have more and to enjoy life more.

This is just a hint of the appeal that has made THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE the most widely read monthly publication of its price in the whole world.—THE EDITOR.

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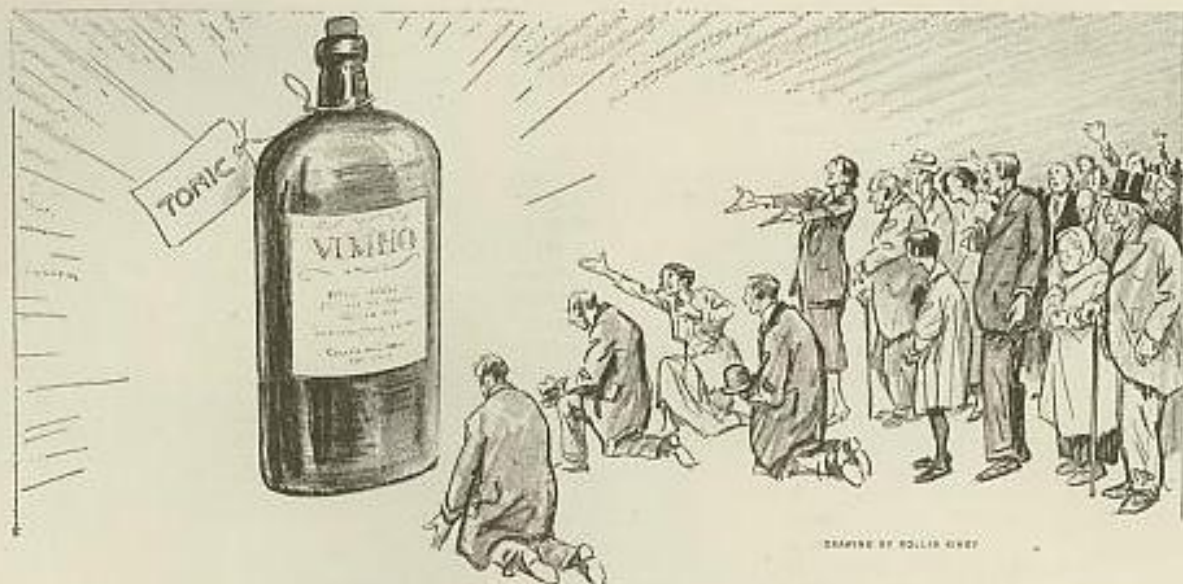
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## Don't Fool with Tonics— They may Fool You

By

WILLIAM S. SADLER,  
M. D.

**S**CENE on any city street:  
One man meets another.  
"Looking kind of seedy, old man!"  
"Yep; I'm not feeling any too good."

"Been working too hard?"

"Guess so. I'm off my feed, don't sleep well, and generally feel 'all in.'"

"Too bad, why don't you go to a doctor and get a tonic, or hop over to the drug-store and get a bottle of Pep-u-up-at-once. Jones said he took a bottle and after a few doses felt like a new man."

And so on, far into the year, the story runs. "Feeling all in?" A few magic pellets or a few doses of tonic will pep you up again!

Bosh! Getting rid of the "all-in" feeling isn't so easy as that.

You simply cannot abuse your body—overwork it, under-exercise it, wrongly feed it, get it all nervously exhausted—and expect it to respond to a panacea out of a bottle or a box.

No. You have to get right down to brass tacks and live by the rules of health.

Not that I wish to go on record as being against all tonics. That would be foolish. Tonics have their place in the field of medicine, but it is a field that should be controlled by reputable physicians, and not entered lightly by the laity.

As a matter of fact, I do occasionally prescribe tonics for my patients, even when I know they will not benefit from them to any extent physically. I do it for a psychological reason.

If a patient is suffering from that "all-in" feeling, he is likely to be in a pretty discouraged frame of mind. The mere act of taking something which he *thinks* is going to do him good helps his mental attitude. And thought is often a mighty efficacious medicine. Then, too, there are

**P**EOPLE, when they are feeling a bit run down, are all too ready, as Doctor Sadler points out, to try to get a "lift" out of a patent medicine bottle or pill box. Instead of flying to these panaceas for all ills, which are usually of little or no medicinal value, these persons could improve their general health merely by calling plain horse sense to their aid. After reading this article, sit down and figure out the why and wherefore of your "all-in" feeling, what you have been doing that you shouldn't, or vice versa; and in the light of the information given you, discover your own tonic at no cost to your pocket-book.

The Editor.

certain simple tonics which stimulate the appetite; thus the run-down patient is persuaded to eat more, he is better nourished, builds up strength, and is more easily made to see reason.

However, I am glad to say that nine times out of ten I am able to look a patient in the eye and tell him just what a tonic will do and what it won't do. Then I ask him whether he wants to take one, or whether he is willing to fight this run-down feeling along basic lines. If he is a sensible chap, he's willing to build up basically and will follow out my health rules to the letter.

Just here, before I go any farther, I

want to say that alcohol, from a scientific standpoint, is classified as a narcotic, not a stimulant, although it has an *immediate* stimulating effect. But this is always followed by a depressant reaction—a "morning after."

Most of the people who crave stimulation are suffering from low blood pressure, or nervous exhaustion, or both, for these conditions frequently go together.

Now, these folks are not going to be cured by tonics. They may, on the other hand, be temporarily cheered up and encouraged over an unusual period of stress or depression by some good, old-fashioned stand-by like the iron, quinine, and strychnine tonic. But what they need, and must have, is a gradual building up of the body and nerves by strict attention to rest, diet, exercise, and work. Yes, *work*. For work seldom kills, and taken in the proper doses, it is an excellent tonic in itself.

**B**UT we are up against a somewhat different proposition when we have low blood pressure *not* associated with nervous exhaustion.

These low-blood-pressure folks are often helped by the moderate use of those true stimulants, tea and coffee. The caffeine of coffee and the thein of tea exert a real stimulating effect upon the brain cells and other nerve tissue.

An interesting thing about coffee is the fact that it seems to have a minimum tendency to establish "habit tolerance." When it is used moderately, one is able to get the same effects out of the same dose from month to month and from year to year. With the majority of the other stimulants and drugs, the body becomes habituated to the dose and it has to be gradually increased.

Nevertheless, while many persons use



tea and coffee in moderation (note I say *moderation*) throughout a lifetime, and do so without apparent harm, we see others who are made so nervous and whose digestion is so upset from their habitual use that we have to proscribe them.

Some individuals, whose blood pressure is down around 100 or below, but who are in good health in every other way, constantly yawn and can hardly keep awake all the afternoon. Very often a cup of ordinary strong tea, taken about one or two o'clock, will put an end to their yawning. Milk or cream should always be added to the tea. This doesn't weaken the stimulating effect of the tannin, but it does tend to prevent the possible deleterious effect of the tannin on the walls of the stomach.

Of course, I am aware that the use of tea and coffee represents themes on which there is a great difference of opinion, medical and otherwise. It is hard to find an intelligent and scientific discussion of the use of these stimulants, because of the fact that the personal equation enters into them. My own attitude is that we should make a special effort to see that children and young persons do not drink tea and coffee habitually; these beverages should not be used until the growth of the nervous system is fully attained. But the vast majority of adults, I think, have sufficient health margin to enable them to use tea and coffee in moderation.

I want it clearly understood that I am *not* addressing this advice to undernourished, highly nervous, irritable individuals with disturbed digestions. It is not possible to nourish nerves by stimulating them, nor to restore digestion by the aid of tonics.

People who are all a-quiver after drinking tea or coffee should have sense enough to leave it alone. There is a decided individual reaction to the use of these stimulants, a reaction not fully explained in the textbooks, and each person must work this reaction out for himself or herself. As a matter of fact, this whole health problem is one that has to be worked out thoughtfully and individually. It is impossible to formulate rules of general application. Only the broad principles of hygiene are universally applicable.

**ANYWAY**, why bother to buy tonics and stimulants when Nature will provide you with all you need free of charge, asking in return only common sense and self-control.

Take the simple matter of a noon-hour rest. All run-down, debilitated individuals, and those who are highly strung and chronically nervous, should make a point of resting and relaxing for one solid hour around noontime. I also advise all persons over fifty years of age to indulge in such a midday rest.

However, of all Nature's tonics, none can take the place of fresh air and sunshine. The only natural tonic that can compare with fresh air and sunshine in any way is the morning cold bath or shower, with its invigorating effect.

But—and here comes a word of precaution—if you are a bit anemic or run-down, take the cold bath in a warm room, and be careful to see that you don't perspire after it. If, two or three hours after your cold bath, you are dizzy, have a headache, or have chilly sensations up and

down your spine, you have stayed too long in the bath or you haven't sufficient reserve energy to react to it. Try taking a bath in moderately warm water for a few minutes, finishing up with a very rapid cold shower.

**WHEN** we come to consider foods, sugar is probably our greatest tonic. An ounce of sugar contains 127.5 calories, and this energy is almost immediately available when the sugar is eaten.

If you happen to be tired out, or have some great exertion to make, take a little sugar. A few ounces of sweet chocolate bar are a wonderful pick-me-up on a tramp. Of course, like all other good things, taken in excess, sugar becomes dangerous. Here is where your common sense comes in.

A short while back I mentioned that work is a tonic. Let me tell you of a case in point.

Not long ago an unmarried woman in the early twenties came into the office with an empty bottle, saying that she had recently returned from the South and that a doctor down there had given her a tonic, as she was feeling all run down. She wanted another tonic equally good. She was persuaded to undergo an examination to determine whether she really needed a tonic. She didn't. It was a case of an idle, indolent, self-centered woman, living an unhygienic and inactive life on money from an estate. When told that there was no need for a tonic, that what she needed was a saner, normal life, the young woman consented to earn her own living for a year, not touching a penny of the income from the estate. After four months she was an entirely different being.

Let me try to make clear the difference between a medicinal tonic and a natural one. Ordinarily, when we give a medicine to produce certain reactions on the part of the body, we must, as time passes, give increasingly larger doses in order to obtain these reactions. This is the result of what I have already referred to as "habit tolerance." The body, in some way, comes to be able to tolerate increasing amounts of drugs and narcotics. This is well illustrated by the large amount of morphine which drug addicts can take, as well as by the large quantities of arsenic which the Austrian arsenic eaters are able to consume every day.

Now, if we can secure tonic effects from the use of cold baths and exercise, it develops that the same amount of Nature's tonic, or in some cases, even a less amount, will produce a given result and continue to produce it indefinitely. Take, for instance, strychnine as a stimulant for the muscles. It is a tonic and a very valuable medicine in certain emergency crises. We should hardly know how to practice medicine without it. But if we should depend upon strychnine to bring about a cure in the fatigue of neurasthenia, we should have to give increasingly large doses, until they became dangerously large.

In contrast with this, we find that the gymnasium work required to produce the same invigorating results will remain about the same, or even less as the muscles grow stronger. It is therefore evident that the best tonic for the muscular system is not strychnine but commonplace physical exercise.

Let me emphasize again that medicinal

tonics should never be taken unless they are prescribed by a physician and that they should be taken only as long as the physician advises.

Someone may here interrupt and ask me about the good old stand-bys of our parents' days—sulphur and molasses, sarsaparilla, and sassafras tea, which were administered to the family around spring-time. These tonics were all harmless, to say the least. And if the folks who took them believed in them—well, I've already spoken a good word for the power of thought as a medicine.

It is hard to get the public mind educated to the point where it will realize that it cannot get strength out of a bottle nor energy from a pill. Strength comes from nourishing food. Water drinking and correct breathing are also connected with this program of nourishment.

You cannot fatten or strengthen a tired-out horse by vigorously applying the whip. You must rest and feed him if you would build him up. While we recognize this fact, we also appreciate the value of having a whip handy in case the animal should take a sudden notion to stand still on a railroad track when a fast express is approaching. In such circumstances, the whip would be a life-saver. But just because a whip, a stimulant, is a life-saver in an emergency, don't take it as a steady diet; don't depend on it to take the place of nourishment and rest.

Some folks come to me thinking they need a tonic or stimulant, when really they need a sedative; they need complete relaxation and rest. They are all run down because they have been so long all wound up. These folks have to be taught how to relax, how to overcome habitual tension. Many of these nervous people are extravagant in the expenditure of their vital energy.

A middle-aged woman begged me for a tonic to pick her up. I soon saw that it was just the thing she should not have. Instead, she was given a sedative for ten days, put to bed, and then started out on a fattening diet. After resting six weeks, and gaining twenty-five pounds in weight, I heard no more from her about wanting a pick-me-up.

**IF YOU** who are reading this article feel that you need a tonic, or a bracer of some sort, don't resort to a medicinal tonic until you have tried some natural means of physical or nervous stimulation or relaxation. Get fresh air and sunlight, have regular hours of rest, eat the food which you find best agrees with you, and live a sane, healthy life. Take tonic baths. If you are nervous, a mild vibration to the spine, in the form of spinal manipulation or massage, is very valuable. But if you do go in for therapeutic treatments, see that the treatments are not too long. I have found that many masseurs and others who practice physical therapy tire nervous people out by treating them for too long a period at a time.

And keep this fact in mind: A tonic or stimulant may fool you into feeling better for the time being, but it is in no way adding to your energy reserve. You have to manufacture your own energy by not trying to dodge the rules of health. Remember, a tonic may fool you, but you cannot fool life.

(The End)