

National Temperance Study Course For Sunday Schools 1935

Study III—(Junior)

FIT FOR THE RACE

By Edith Lang and Mary I. Ritchie
"How about letting me go along with you?" Shorty Graham looked up at his big brother, Jack, as he spoke. "I could carry your bag, or do something like that."

"If Dr. Sennet finds I am fit, I won't need any one to carry my bag, and if he finds I'm not, then I'll throw the bag away and come home for good. My sweater and shorts and running shoes are in the bag, and if he finds I'm no good, I won't need them, see?"

"Yes, I see, but just because he might find you weren't fit to enter the relay race need mean that you can't run a little bit sometimes, and you'll need the things anyway."

"If I can't run my hardest and fastest, I'm not going to run at all, so that's that. But you can come along if you like. Though why any one should want to hang around and see a doctor pummel a fellow about to find if he has any kinds or weak spots, is more than I can tell. I thought this was the day you and Ken Andrews were going to start on that kennel for Rusty?"

"It was, but it can wait. When are you going?"

"Right away, the sooner the better, so get your cap and come on. Dr. Sennet said three o'clock, and there may be a line up, so we'd better get along."

Getting along meant walking so fast that Shorty had some trouble to keep up with his brother's long strides, but not for worlds would he have said so. Why, as they hurried along the shady streets he felt almost as if he were in a race—a race, perhaps, with Jack, but what he would be doing when he was older. He couldn't see why they hadn't put on a race for eleven-year-olds even if it was a High School field day. He could run as fast as most of them, not as fast as Jack, of course, but then Jack was one of the best athletes in the school, he and Phil Morris. He wondered—

"But they had reached the doctor's door, and he had no time to wonder about anything else."

"Coming in with me?" asked Jack, "or are you going to stay out here with Ted Sennet? I see him on the tennis court."

"Why, I'm going in with you, if the doctor'll let me. Do you think he will?"

"No law against it, I guess. Nothing very secret about going through a physical examination. But I think you'd rather have a snappy game of tennis on a day like this."

"No siree," said Shorty, dodging in through the office door behind the tall young athlete. "I maybe want to be examined myself some day, so I'd like to know how he does it."

In a few minutes he was discovering just how the doctor did it. A thorough examination it was, a smile and a nod of pleasure was the doctor's way of saying how satisfied with the fitness of the young runner.

"Never went over a better specimen," he laughed when he had finished. "Sound in wind and limb and fit as a fiddle. Wish they were all like you, though I suppose it would be rather a bad job for the doctors if they were. Some of the chaps I have examined today will be coming to me to be patched up for all sorts of ailments before they are many years older and most of them aren't going to be long in the running game."

"Why?" asked Shorty, not able to keep back the question any longer. "Aren't they strong enough?"

"Strong, in some ways, perhaps. The Lord intended them to be strong and well, most of them, but they don't know enough to stay that way. Most of them think they know all about athletics, but they don't yet realize that without a sound heart, the best pair of legs in the world and the keenest pair of eyes, aren't going to be much use to them. The legs and eyes and arms and the other working parts are just parts of the machine. The

engine that keeps the parts running is out of sight, but it is there all the same, and it makes a mighty lot of difference how it is fed. I can tell you. Tobacco and alcohol, even small quantities of either of them, are not the sort of food—or fuel, if you like to call it—that such a delicate and such a hard-working machine needs, but can't tell some of these young chaps so. Do you smoke?" he asked suddenly, looking into Jack's face.

"Course not," answered Shorty, before Jack could make a reply. "He's catcher for the Harley Seniors, as well as being a runner, and he just couldn't."

"Many of them just couldn't, if they knew it, but they just do, was the doctor's first remark, then, turning, more to the smaller boy than to Jack, he asked, "Like to see what this engine really looks like?"

"Oh, could I? A real heart, do you mean?"

"Well, not a real one in real working order, but I've a chart here that will give you a pretty good idea of it. Step in here and we'll have a look at it."

"And in we stepped," explained Shorty when telling it to Jimmy Mitchell next morning. "In we stepped and there was the chart showing just what a fellow's heart looked like. I wish you could have seen it."

"First the doctor showed us a drawing of the whole body, so that we could see just where the heart is, and then he showed us the heart itself—a picture of it, I mean—and told us that it was just a big muscle, really, and works much the same as other muscles, expanding and contracting—contracting that means growing bigger or smaller as it pumps the blood in and out. He said it was just like a rubber ball, full of water; you know how you squeeze the water all out, then, if you put it under water you can let it go a bit and fill it up again. Something like a fountain pen syringe, I thought, though Dr. Sennet did not explain it just that way. He said, too, that this big muscle, that worked like a rubber ball full of water, was divided into four parts. Into two of these spaces the blood is being pumped from your veins, and then from the other two it is pumped back into the arteries again."

"What for?" asked Jimmy, feeling the spot where he thought his own heart should be, to see if he could discover any such pumping machine."

"Mr. Andrews told us all about that in class not long ago. He said, and so did the doctor, that it was pumped out into your arteries so that it would run all through even the very finest of them to carry food—nourishment, I think he called it, to all parts of the body. That's what keeps it working, and if it isn't in good working order, why then you're not fit. Just like a machine is worked by the engine, see? If the machine is out of order, isn't it fed the right sort of gas or—whatever runs it, and isn't oiled and given a rest when it should be, it won't run the machine right."

"But you don't feed a heart, or oil it either," argued Jimmy. "You don't! Well, I just wish you had heard Dr. Sennet talking about that. We just do feed it. The blood that is pumped in feeds it, and if the wrong sort of fuel gets in the blood stream, well, the engine's going to know it and isn't going to do its work, that's all."

"But blood's blood, isn't it? What's the difference?"

"All the difference in the world. It has to be good 'ood, and if a fellow smokes or drinks—yes, even if he eats the wrong things—the blood is going to be filled with the wrong things, and then the harm is done. Alcohol and tobacco poison the blood stream—yes, really poison it—like any other poison would. It makes the cells grow first cloudy and then put off little bits—particles, he called it—of fat and the big muscle that should be working the very best with nice clean pure blood, gets clogged, or gets so busy trying to throw off the poison that

it doesn't do its best work. It gets weaker and weaker in its pumping out and taking in the blood, and doesn't work the machine as it should. It gets like an elastic that is stretched too often and too far, and isn't elastic any more. So, if it isn't pumping itself dry each time, it gets too full of blood, and it is stretched too far the doctor says."

"I know," said Jimmy, beginning to understand at last. "That's what put Jerry Robinson out of business just when every one thought he was going to be the champion runner of the country."

"It begins even farther back than I told you. It first paralyzes the brain, makes it go slower, you know, and makes the nerves weak, so that they can't help work the heart muscles as they should, and besides making a fellow talk and act silly, as alcohol does, it does all this harm that you can't see, and don't know about till you're going to do something big and fine, then your heart goes back on you, and there you are. But nothing is going to happen to our Jack. Nothing wrong with his heart muscles, nor his leg muscles, either."

And nothing did, that is nothing that his young brother could be proud of. And he was proud, the proudest boy in all Harley when, at the end of the Field Day events, his brother, Jack, was carried home on the shoulders of four strong boys and put in a chair. He was carried away behind them, carrying the bag that held the champion's "other clothes."

Questions

1. What is the effect of alcohol on the heart? (Value 8.)
2. Why does alcohol affect the heart in this way? Give two reasons. (Value 10.)

Study II—(Senior)

Except for an important detail, the regular National Hockey League game between the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Canadians of Montreal held nothing of extraordinary interest for the fourteen thousand fans who had gathered in the Maple Leaf Gardens. It was not surprising to see the world's foremost devotees of the goddess of speed agility and precision, darting up and down the ice like wild geese, nor to hear the cheers of the crowd breaking out in crescendoes of encouragement or in murmurs of disappointment. But it was extraordinary that the thrills of the evening should be produced by two of the oldest players on the ice, King Clancy, of the Maple Leafs and Howie Morenz, of the Canadians. It was extraordinary that two men who had held the limelight in professional hockey for over fifteen years and could still outskate an outplay the newcomers to the league.

The life of a professional hockey player is not easy. It is, of course, thrilling to be among the best in the game, count one's salary in thousands of dollars, to score before great crowds, to be acclaimed by newspapers, and to visit many interesting cities in perfect health. The never-less a strenuous life, and only those who have learned the secret of clean living can stand the terrific pace that is set from the fall of the first puck to the sounding of the last bell. King Clancy and Howie Morenz have learned that secret—good food, fresh air, plenty of sleep healthy elimination, and one other thing: to have nothing to do with intoxicating beverages.

"The first downfall of the athlete is liquor," said King Clancy to a gathering of boys at Barrie, Ontario.

"If a boy wants to be at the top in hockey, he must have good food, clean air, plenty of sleep, and over fifteen years to prove that he was right."

Becoming an Athlete

The successful athlete, whether in hockey, baseball, tennis, basketball or rugby, whether man or woman, has four great possessions. They are: strength, endurance, speed, accuracy.

To become proficient in any branch of sport a boy or girl must have these qualities in varying degrees. In some sports, accuracy will count more than speed. In others, endurance more than strength. All, however, are required, and a study of them may help the aspiring athlete in his desire to be strong, swift, accurate and able to endure.

1. Strength. The main strength of the body lies in the large muscles of thighs, back and shoulders. These are the muscles used in mountain climbing or in heavy manual labor.

During the building of the Great Northern Railway there was a celebrated group of navies who did more work in a day than any other gang on the line, and always left off work and hour or an hour and a half earlier than other men. Every workman in this powerful group was a total abstainer.

A group of expert mountaineers were given "quite small doses" of alcohol. The length of time now took to climb the mountain was so much greater than a beginner could easily equal their record. Alcohol had transformed these expert mountaineers into

novices.

The boxer, wrestler, hockey and rugby player require great strength in the large body muscles. Milk, butter, eggs bread are the muscle-building foods, and not alcohol.

2. Endurance. The ability of the body to endure great physical fatigue over a long period depends on more than the strength of the large muscles of the body. It depends upon the functioning of the bodily organs, particularly those which eliminate the body wastes. As every one knows, the exercise of the muscles necessarily produces waste which has to be eliminated through the skin, bowels, kidneys and lungs. When the body is cluttered with waste, we are fatigued. The larger the amount of waste, the greater fatigue until the waste can become so great that complete exhaustion results. The greater the ability of the body to eliminate waste, the greater will be its endurance.

Many years ago there was a war in South Africa. A little town called Ladysmith was besieged. Food was getting less and less every day, men were growing weaker, the enemy was pressing closer and closer in, and a relief column was marching up in the heat in all endeavour to save the little town and the distressed garrison. The column was doing forced marches every day, and the strain was tremendous. Many of the men could not keep up and dropped out, and had to be left behind. A great doctor who accompanied them, Sir Frederick Treves, said, "In that enormous column of thirty thousand men the first who dropped out were not the tall men, or the short men—the big men, or the little men—they were the drinkers, and they dropped out as clearly as if they had been labelled with a big 'D' on their backs. They had put their trust in alcohol, and in a real test of endurance they lost. Why? Because alcohol had numbed the kidneys, hardened the wall of the capillaries of the lungs and the skin so that the body wastes could not escape but cluttered the human system, lessening its ability to withstand fatigue. Alcohol and endurance are enemies."

Games are won and lost in the final period. Champions are made and the last stretch is the ability to wear out his opponent that may give a boxer his crown. Endurance is the ability to fight on to the last sound of the gong, and it is the indispensable possession of the successful athlete. That was why D. Scarrow, New Zealand's champion wrestler, said:

"Strong drink can overcome the best wrestlers. I never touch alcohol. Life is a long struggle, a sort of perpetual wrestling match. If you want to be fit for that struggle and to come out champions, leave alcohol alone."

3. Speed. Mere muscular strength is not enough to give the athlete power. He must have poise, balance, and perfect co-ordination of every muscle in the body. In this the nerves are important, for along these are carried the signals ordering the contraction or relaxation of muscles in perfect unison. The signals must be accurate and swift, and since alcohol numbs the nerves and so slows up the signals it invariably means that the co-ordination is imperfect, and the speed that wins world championships is impossible. This is one reason why coaches and trainers require the athletes under their care to abstain absolutely from all intoxicating beverages.

4. Accuracy. This is the quality that scores. The degree of accuracy depends on the degree in which eye, nerve and muscle can be co-ordinated. Any poison which disturbs this coordination will impair the accuracy and the precision of the muscles. Such a poison is alcohol, and tests rifle shooting showed a falling off in accuracy of almost thirty per cent when small doses of alcohol were introduced into the body.

It appears that the more delicate and complicated the adjustment required the greater will be the effect of alcohol. This conclusion was borne out in experiments with trained typists. Within the first two hours after taking small doses, there was found to be a decrease in the amount of work done by them owing to the narcotic effect of alcohol. Muscular movements were found to be slower, and the mind was less alert. In other words, these typists had become less efficient. Poor as their work was, they themselves believed they had done very well, for their senses had been dulled. Lord D'Abernon, of the British Medical Research Council, says that, "Alcohol gives the drinker the false impression of having done his work with unusual speed and success, whereas impartial examination shows that both accuracy and regularity are not up to the standard."

It is because alcohol dulls the senses, making the athlete less conscious of fatigue and the passage of time, that many delude themselves into believing that alcohol has increased their efficiency. Yet those who use alcohol to increase their efficiency soon discover their error or are quickly eliminated by other

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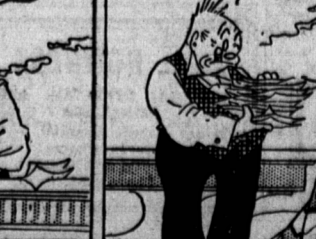
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