

HEALTH IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT STRENGTH

By Lionel Strongfort

[The author of this article is a world-famous authority on all subjects relating to Physical Exercise and Training. His name is a household word and few, indeed, are they who have not heard of Lionel Strongfort. By his own special system of physical training he succeeded in developing himself until he became the strongest man the world has ever known; he performed feats of strength surpassing in magnitude anything previously dreamed of; challenged and defeated every strong man who appeared against him, and his name will be handed down to future generations as the Most Perfect Athlete and physical marvel of any age. Such a glorious career ought to be an incentive to every man to improve his health and strength, and so obtain the success that is assured to those who put heart and soul into their efforts in Physical Culture training. The Strongfort Course of training can be thoroughly recommended as likely to be of the greatest assistance to everyone interested in studying physical culture and seeking improved health and increased strength.]

Popular misconceptions upon the subjects of health and strength are many and curious. But perhaps one of the most curious of these is the delusion that health is possible without strength. It is true that in its best sense physical culture means more than mere muscle building, but it is also true that strength is an absolute essential in securing and maintaining any degree of health which is worthy of the name. Health and strength are indissolubly related.

Yet there are many who still fail to realize the interdependence of these two priceless possessions. They assume that one may have the best of health even though he has no appreciable muscular strength. Particularly is this true of many who are themselves conspicuously lacking in physical development, and who are therefore inclined to look upon strength as something vulgar, common and coarse. One would think that we might have passed the day at which physical vigor would be regarded in such a light, but we still frequently hear some undeveloped and emaciated, or perhaps fat and lazy, individual declare that what he desires is not a set of great "ugly" muscles, but just health! Indeed! And it occasionally happens also that some weakling, verily, "a rag, a bone, and a hank of hair," gives us every assurance that he is in perfect health, inasmuch as he is out of bed, able to dress himself, feed himself, and walk around a bit.

But it is truly impossible for one to enjoy any such thing as real health unless he represents a high standard of physical vigor. And this means that he must be muscularly sound and strong.

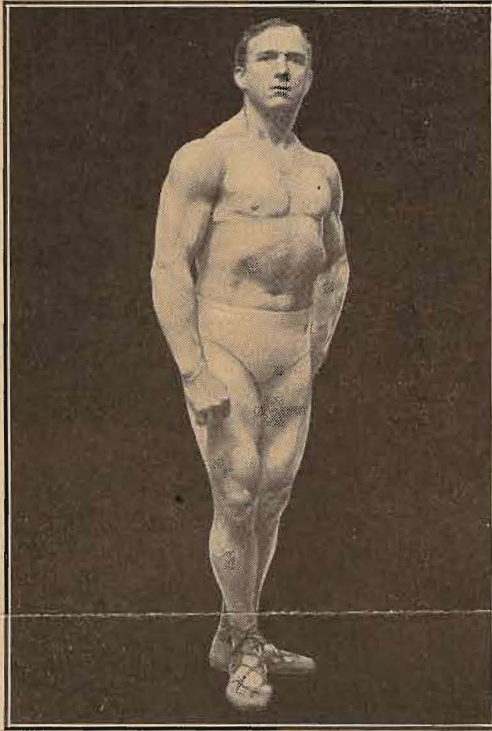
Occasionally some one will tell you, with a grand air of scientific authority, that he does not care very much for "bulging" muscles, but that what he wants

rather is nervous strength, nervous energy, and a capacity for work, physical or mental. Of course, this all sounds very good, and when you say in reply, "Well, yes, that's right," your friend is more than ever convinced that muscles are not of much use after all.

Now, it is true that the development of muscular tissue can be forced to such an extent as to be detrimental to one's health, just as anything else can be overdone. In some cases the effort to acquire tremendous strength is carried beyond the natural limit at which the constitution of the individual may respond to the demands made upon it. The ambitious one may acquire muscles which are abnormally large for a man of his frame, temperament and natural endowments, but it may be at the sacrifice of vitality. It may even shorten his life. But the fact that this may be the case in occasional instances is no evidence at all that a normal and natural degree of vigorous strength is not only desirable, but even a positive necessity if one wishes the best of

health and success in life. The fact that a glutton may injure himself by overeating does not indicate that proper eating is bad for him, or that he would be better off without any food at all. And it is the same with the matter of exercise and the possession of strength.

The importance of the muscular system and its activity as a factor in promoting health becomes apparent immediately when we learn that in a normal and healthy condition muscle makes up nearly one-half of the total bulk of the human body, or almost three times as much as any other tissue. The greater part of our food is consumed in the muscles, and two-thirds of our vital heat is produced by them.



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For good health, therefore, the bulk of muscular tissue should constitute at least forty-three per cent. of that of the entire body, and it is important, furthermore, that this tissue should be in the very best condition. All this is impossible without active exercise.

The vigorous use of the muscular system each day is essential to a good circulation, and for this reason the vital and functional organs likewise depend upon such activity. Without the tonic effect of regular exercise the digestive, depurating and other functional organs lose tone and vigor, the blood becomes more or less stagnant and impoverished, and even the most ordinary health becomes impossible. In the human body, as throughout all nature, activity is the law of life, whereas stagnation means decay and death. How absurd, therefore, the notion that physical frailty may be consistent with good health.

It is true that we desire more than "mere muscle," but if only we have enough muscle to be considered perfect from a physical standpoint, and then continue to use that muscle properly every day, we will have more than mere muscle; we will have health and energy, and we will know the true joy of being alive. It is true that we desire strong nerves, but after all the condition of the nervous system depends upon the general health of the body as a whole, upon the circulation, whether active or sluggish, and upon the nourishing and upbuilding quality of the blood. And these depend very, very largely upon the muscular system and its activity. Mental energy and nervous energy are alike impossible in any considerable degree except as the body is vigorous and able to send to the brain the stuff from which thoughts are made. The nerve tissue is built up by nutritive elements brought by the blood, the same as any other tissue, and the better the circulation, assimilation and the general health, the better the nerves. That is why out-of-door life, simple, wholesome food, rational exercise, and other conditions conducive to improved general health, offer the only combination that will enable a neurasthenic to recover his lost nervous vigor.

Even the brain depends upon the muscular system to an extent that we ordinarily overlook, and it is perhaps just as well to call attention to this fact at a time when we hear so much talk about the power of the mind over the body. It would undoubtedly be far more to the advantage of the public and its health, if a little more attention were given to the influence of the body over the mind, for the two are interdependent and affect each other mutually. As a matter of fact, the development of the brain, and especially its early development, is dependent upon the action of the muscle. It has been said that the brain is merely a clearing house to carry out the business of muscle. The early education of the child's mind proceeds entirely through his use of his muscles, and any child that suffers from some form of paralysis in infancy, or is otherwise restricted in the use of its muscles, is at the same time similarly restricted in its mental development. Every muscle or group of muscles is represented by a corresponding area of brain, which attends to the business of said muscle or group of muscles, and which is developed by the use of such muscle or muscles. Let a certain group of muscles be destroyed, and the corresponding area of brain cortex will waste and atrophy at once. On the other hand, a good way to develop and educate the brain is to thoroughly train all of the muscles of the body. The result will be a clear, normal and practical head. The system of manual training which has been introduced into many of our public schools is a recognition of this fact, that the mind can be educated by training the body. And the suggestion that physical culture must be at the expense of mental culture is too absurd for notice.

In view of this, any sort of contempt for muscle seems very foolish. Muscle is not an unimportant or low-grade tissue. As a piece of machinery, and a means of expressing energy with the very least cost of fuel consumption, there is nothing in the world like the muscular system of a healthy, living animal. The strength that may be exerted by a mere ten pounds of well trained muscle is simply marvelous when one stops to consider it. What we call miracles could be no more wonderful, even if they could happen. And it may be said furthermore that muscles are not ugly. No creation of Nature, which is so efficient, is ever ugly. On the contrary, muscles are beautiful, and all the beauty that a man or woman can ever possess is due almost entirely to the

character and shapeliness of his or her muscular system. It is true that a one-sided and abnormal development may not be beautiful, but that is because of its abnormality, its lack of symmetry. Muscles in repose are smooth in contour, and have a softness that is yet modified with sufficient firmness to maintain a pleasing and beautiful outline. In action, the contracted, gripping thews and sinews are likewise beautiful with the intense, rugged beauty of action. Mere soft fat is never comely, being shapeless and utterly without character, like a sagging bag of meal. Beauty of figure is possible only when the muscular system is so developed as to give form and character to its lines, in which case a very little fatty tissue will serve to give that healthy smoothness of contour which we observe in the most beautiful figures. Beauty goes hand in hand with the greatest efficiency.

We should remember that man is first of all an animal, and whatever else he may wish to be, he should at least be a splendid specimen of vigorous animal life. And this means that he must be strong. What would you think of the health of a horse or dog that was not alive with active, energetic muscle? Note the energy, the quick, joyous life of the untiring bull-terrier, as he dashes off to bring back the stick you have thrown. Note the beauty, the grace, the precision and the lightning speed of the cat, as it plays about on the top of a thin-edged fence. And then note the stiff, poky action of the average man, or the mincing gait and feeble movements of many women. A human being is, or should be, a higher form of development than any other animal. He is inherently a more perfect animal. He should be stronger, more beautiful, more graceful, more capable of action, more untiring than any of the others. And as a matter of fact, a man may be all this if he lives up to his possibilities. A man, for his weight, may be stronger than any other animal. He may outrun a horse in a long distance. And in respect to beauty and grace, there is no creature that can compare with him at his best—or with her, for when we say man in this sense, we mean the human, both male and female. And if one is not strong, enduring, active, graceful and beautiful, then he is a physical failure.

There is no such fault to be found with the child in early life if his parents give him a chance. The child is beautiful, active, graceful, strong and tireless, just as is his frisky friend, the playful puppy. And it is well for the child. Normal activity is never a strain upon the body, or upon the heart, for even a mighty muscular effort does not overtax the heart if the body has been trained to such a point as to perform such efforts readily. There is nothing more unnatural in vigorous muscular exertion under such conditions than there is for the horse to run, or for a big bear to pull his heavy bulk up the trunk of a tree. There is a tremendous amount of energy consumed when an elephant runs, or even when the huge beast raises his head and trunk, but this does not strain his heart nor shorten his life. Indeed, a great deal of such effort is necessary for the elephant's health. And so it is with us. There is really a far greater drain upon the vitality of a weakling in making some very slight effort, which may yet be beyond his feeble powers, than there is upon that of a strong and well-trained man in performing some mighty feat of strength.

The child, as we have said, is incessantly active, when not asleep, and if he remains active throughout his life, he will be strong and well up to a ripe old age. But if he thinks he can allow himself to degenerate into a frail and weak condition, and still retain health, then he is sadly, badly mistaken. It is true that exercise is not the only condition of perfect health, but let us not on that account assume that it need not be considered. It is not sufficient that we eat carefully, bathe regularly and enjoy pure air. We should be STRONG, with the normal strength of virile manhood, or with the vigor of robust womanhood.

It should therefore be recognized by everybody that physical culture forms a most important part of the education and training of both man and woman from childhood to full adult age; and its principles of hygiene and exercise should be observed through life. Of course if you are to get the greatest success from your efforts you must have expert help in your training, and this can only be secured from one who has proven in his own person the superiority of his teachings.