

OUTING

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There Is No Limit To Human Endurance

The Story of a Phrase in an Officers' Training Camp and How a United States Major Makes It Magnetic



Checking up the scores after target practice.

*"Was it mental or physical inability that brought my low score?"
It certainly wasn't cigarettes.*

CATCH-WORD psychology is a curious thing. Instance, the polyglot words engrafted upon each and every language by some particularly telling phrase from another. Run through our own slang, each phrase of which has at one time or another caused purists to throw their hands upward in disgust and horror and their eyebrows in the same direction with all the appearance of unalterable refusal to accept. Yet those same words insinuate themselves somehow into the dictionaries of the following generation and into the common and useful and picturesque conversation of later years.



Mental stability is as hard while waiting as during the actual shooting

The Sam Browne belt was the de-facto symbol of authority in the armies of the Entente Powers.



In a sense, perhaps, it is of the same school as mob psychology, and still it is different. It is deeper, more permanent and

lasting. We love the spectacular, the picturesque. That seems to be an unforgettable and inescapable part of human nature as constituted. Catch-word charm may grow out of the feelings created or given inspiration through a good meal, or a pleasant memory from mere recreation. It may come from the deepest intellectual deliberation, or from a soul which sees deeper than others and suffers from an unusually poignant appreciation of wrong in human institutions or actions. Remember "Bully," if you will, or think of the phrase, "Make the world safe for Democracy." Each came from a great man in a high

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position, under diametrically opposed conditions, yet each struck the popular chord felt by us all at the appropriate time, but so far



Long practice is necessary for proper grenade throwing

had been unexpressed and unexpressible by the rest of us. Think back far enough to recall any considerable number of mobs and mob actions. All evanescent, were they not? It is the spirit of the action, not the action itself which lends permanence. There was no mob connection with such undying words as

“Give me Liberty or give me Death,” “Don’t give up the ship,” and “England expects . . .” Those are the perfect words of individuals specially blessed with the ability to express as well as to do.

In all the melée of facts, experiences, opinions, what not, encountered by our thousands of young men in Officers’ Training Camps this summer, one phrase appears to have been found more lasting than any one other. “*There’s No Limit to Human Endurance*,” is a watchword of Major Koehler, long-time dean of those who have charge of physical training for young men. At West Point he has labored for years, the results of which may be seen in any man who has served his apprenticeship there. Wherever a Training Camp was fortunate enough to have this kindly, firm, determined Major for a while, there was a mental refrain in each young man’s life making him feel that no task could be too great for his own accomplishment.

Talk with these young men if you will. Ask them about it. Many will tell you that the greatest inspiration and experience in the grim training for the war jobs ahead of them came from Major Koehler.

“He insinuates his personality into the man that makes his precept your law. You feel unconquerable, unreasonably able.”



Major Koehler

In such a thing as mere setting-up exercises, ordinarily the bane of even

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With a machine gun in ambush two men learn to do the work that Grant assigned to a company

enthusiastic athletes' lives,

this superman inserts a feeling which makes tired men come to new life. Not merely does he tell them that essentially *There is No Limit to Human Endurance*, but it appears in his very bearing and work. It stands out in every lineament of

his face, in every slightest motion he makes. Best of all, and most wonderful, is the fact that this feeling does not silently pass away with the shower bath which follows such strenuous labor. It is mental almost more than physical, and therein, perhaps, lies the secret of his power. The spell he weaves over men comes from a passing-on of his will power, his great sincerity in his task; it is almost magic. He is super-man yet human. His physique and the things he makes it perform for him draw inevitably the admiration of those less able. He is not satisfied with that; upon that as a basis, he builds a telepathic relationship with his men in which he is the master and they his puppets. Not satisfied yet, he makes them more than automatons. Passive imitation is not enough.

I have been in and about two of the Camps while this man was there. The one name most frequently upon the lips of the future Officers was his. Many men, since graduated into Commissions from those camps, have talked of him for the sake of this story. All agree. I have yet to find a dissenting voice. Somehow, almost as a mesmerizer, with permanence added to the brilliance of the moment, he has engrafted this idea upon all:

THERE IS NO LIMIT TO HUMAN ENDURANCE.



Cooking and cleaning up are not omitted

At one of the camps was a National Guard Battery of young college men doing police duty. Little did they see of Major Koehler, yet KOEHLER was the man of the hour during his short stay—and still. How did he do it? They hardly saw him. They



Reveille is always too early on misty mornings

were not Officers nor training to become such. I am sure that they merely stood before him for a few minutes of exercise. Yet he had enforced upon them in that short time, the great fact that man is as good as he knows himself to be.

Major Koehler is no publicity seeker. He does not stream in headlines. He will probably not relish these few words about him. In the ordinary usage, he does not deal in the mass, yet the number of those who face him makes no difference. His mental and nervous force overcomes the handicap and he establishes the personal, spiritual connection with each



Efficient and quick is essential

mentality before him. He finds somehow the tinder lying potential and inactive there, and touches it off.

It is a great service, this. We all have our heroes, great or small. They smooth our paths for us through inspiration. But take a glance at Plattsburg as one of several camps where one great experience of three months made new men of thousands. Many now in the Service in cantonments with this one thing ringing out its challenge to countless other thousands through the grim, weary months we face; others,—only the War Department knows who and how many— in, or on the way to France, also chanting over and over to themselves:

**THERE IS NO LIMIT
TO HUMAN
ENDURANCE**

To few men is vouchsafed the privilege of so touching men and knowing that the seed he planted is bearing constant and increasing fruit.

In Plattsburg take an individual; because you and I are especially interested, Lieutenant William Henry Wright, formerly upon the Staff of this magazine. Athletic by nature, he has followed sports in practice and in comment for years. Keenly an-

alytical, receptive, typically of New England; he knew full well what he was about when he volunteered. Especially interested in athletics, he was scornful of fads and fancies. Quiet, reticent, thoughtful, he went to Plattsburg because he saw a need. And how did he come back? Well, he could tell better than another. He intended to tell it here, but a needful, war-hurried Government ordered him into service where he is unable to tell the story just now.

Lieutenant Wright told OUTING most about the limit of human endurance—that there isn't any. He went to Plattsburg with that belief rather well grounded and developed within himself—unusually so. He came back with a new light in his eyes, a firmer ring in his voice, a deeper spirit of unconquerableness in his breast. Much of that came from self-schooling, some from the general experience in camp; most of it from Major Koehler, who, as a man, was but a passing figure among instructors.

A doctrine truer, perhaps, of the race than of an individual is this that the limit of human endurance is never quite reached. Yet here is how it worked in some instances. Upon the occasion of an early inspection,



Football dummy work is but play compared to bayonets

men were kept at attention for thirty minutes. Tense in an unused position, never daring to relax because of eagle eyes looking for just such weakening, man after man fell out of the ranks. Not in the usually understood sense, but literally. As they fainted and fell, they were removed to a prone position just behind the ranks and left to come-to as they would. Seeing others fall on either side, feeling rather than seeing, (for eyes must be kept straight ahead), meant a mental relaxation fatal to many others. Those who remained standing,—and they were many— were those who had learned Major Koehler's doctrine, who ruled their physiques with minds of iron. They were those who had

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learned to create a reserve of mental force making true the phrase:

**THERE IS NO
LIMIT TO HUMAN
ENDURANCE.**

L o a d e d heavier than ever before, these men were sent mile upon mile at a pace which seemed sure to kill; it didn't. Muscles, unaccustomed to toil of that sort for lengthy periods, revolted, with the expected reaction upon the mind. It seemed that legs would not carry another step; **but they did.** Other muscles, higher up, ached with a pain never felt before, revolted and continued in revolt until soothed by the mind into submission and further labor. There were, to be sure, the purely routine methods of reducing fatigue; songs, tunes whistled, mere conversation with the plodding automaton in the next file. But greatest of all these was the will to overcome obstacles, the feeling that, at the worst, the limit had not yet come.

Later, set at the gruesome task of learning to wield a bayonet properly—properly to assure death, that is—there was not only physical but mental revulsion. The seriousness of the proposition had been explained beforehand by Officers who seemed heartless in presentation. Then they found wood placed within the dummies to take the place of bones resisting the bayonet thrust. A repulsive enough job at best. On top of that, place the sort of long, gruelling practice which makes every muscle cry out in agony at the unused strain. Drive them "Over the Top," time and again till the body reels, the brain almost ceases to function, and the whole being revolts at the idea of again imagining the feel of flesh taking the bayonet till harder tissues stop it or turn it aside. Only such a phrase as that assuring endless en-

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durance, running its recurring course in the mind will suffice here. There were many elements combining to make these boys drive themselves back when there was lacking the stimulus of certain death upon failure, but, we are assured by them that Major Koehler's teaching had much to do with it.

Throughout the training it was the same. At rifle practice when the weight of the gun seemed to increase by tenfold, and the glittering sun made the targets unsteady; at grenade practice where small sets of muscles were forced to withstand repeated effort; digging trenches in blistering sun when no life or death depended upon it, only the fiction that such was the case. At any or all these tasks, these boys worked in the new and powerful inspiration that none could be too hard for accomplishing.

Think of going through life with that added to the usual joys vouchsafed to a mortal! Could one wish more? And here's a man who is a man, putting this spirit into our young men. Such reward as he may receive will never be enough. A very considerable part of the new unconquerability of Uncle Sam's fighting forces may be traced back to this, that thousands have learned as Gospel, chief sustainer and motive force of their lines in times of stress, the maxim of Major Koehler, soldier and maker of soldiers:

THERE IS NO LIMIT TO HUMAN ENDURANCE.