

The OLYMPIAN

Why were the Greeks the true, original athletes? Because the Greeks were the inventors of the golden mean. They did not neglect the body for the mind. In our age, we have neglected the body for the machine.

What we have to do is to rediscover the body, stop poisoning it with false stimulants, stop filling it with noxious substances, stop treating it only as a means of self indulgent pleasure. A plant needs water, and a body needs exercise. If you deprive a plant of water it dies. If you do not exercise a body, it corrupts, and the mind corrupts with it. Look at the people who rule our world and tell us what to do. What a travesty of logic. These people who have no bodies, only heads. And many athletes have no heads, but only bodies.

A champion is a man who has trained his body and his mind, who has learned to conquer pain and to use pain for his own purposes. A great athlete is at peace with himself. He envies nobody. Wars are caused by people who have not fulfilled the self; I have fought in two, and I know. Look - just here above the navel; that was Flinders. And here, look, on the right shoulder. That was Murmansk. But I bore them no ill will, because I knew I would survive. You can kill the body, but you cannot kill the spirit. There are no limits to what the body can do when the spirit is strong.

Twenty years ago, they said a four minute mile was impossible. I told them; we shall live to see it run in three minutes and forty seconds, and they laughed. But what has happened? The four minute mile is now a commonplace thing. Athletes run it every week. Even school boys run it. We shall see a 3.40 mile, and a 9 second 100 meters

and a 9 foot high jump, and a twenty foot pole vault. Once these things have been conceived as possible, they are achieved. And that is why athletics are important, why records are important. Because they demonstrate the scope of human possibility, which is unlimited. The inconceivable is conceived, and then it is accomplished.

Matter is arbitrary. It is your will against mine, your spirit against mine. Everything depends on the will.

I have been in India and seen a fakir stab himself with knives, plunge knives into his body, and pull them out without a mark. I have seen them walk on fire. If these men desired, they could lift weight which would make the strongest man in an Olympiad look weak. A man like Vlasov of Russia would look puny, although he was three times their size. So that is why I say to you, train. Look after your body. Temper it with pain. And your body will amaze you, you will do things that you thought impossible. That is why running matters. That is why Olympiads matter. Not for gold medals, those little worthless disks, but for their inner meaning, what they stand for. The Olympic flame is sacred because it is the flame of human aspiration.

You and I can't live on medals, we know that medals are nothing, but a nation lives on medals. A nation lives on heroes. It lives on the example a hero sets to its youth, whether he's an athlete or a general, an athlete is greater than a general because a great athlete represents life, whereas a general represents death. A victorious general evokes hatred as well as love, but a great athlete is an inspiration to the world.