

Skill in Work and Play. By T. H. Pear, M.A., B. Sc., E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, 1924, pp. 104. (15.)

It is a happy day for industry when a book like this appears. Here is a psychologist who has investigated painstakingly and without prejudice findings both in psychology and in management and has evaluated both in the light of his own experience in studying skill.

In this small book Professor Pear has presented a summary of what seems to be the extent of our knowledge concerning skill. The vocabulary is English, not American. The examples are many of them from English industry, but American findings have not been neglected, and American pioneers have been appreciated in a way that is not usual in this country.

Chapter I, "The Description of Muscular Experience," gives an excellent picture of the difficulties that occur when one attempts to acquire skill—technical enough to be convincing, not too technical to be understood by the lay reader.

Chapter II, "Acquiring Skill," refers to James's classic exposition of habit and emphasizes the contrast between learning in a hit or miss fashion, or by the drifting method, and the planned learning process. It is especially good in its clear and precise definitions, though the whole book is to be commended for its explicit use of terms.

Chapter III, "The Experimental Investigation of Learning," contrasts analytic and economic investigations. Here the author evaluates the work both of Taylor and Gilbreth and criticizes the methods used by them from the standpoint of the psychologist in a fair and uncontroversial manner, but not showing a full appreciation of industrial conditions. It is seldom possible to introduce changes in surroundings, equipment, and tools or in method one element at a time, as he suggests. Neither is it practicable to change the method without changing the incentive, financial as well as non-financial. It must not be forgotten that laboratory investigations outside industry have equally serious limitations from the industrial standpoint, in that they are not made under certain pressures of industry—the demand of the employer for greater production and of the worker for more pay, if changes are made.

Motion study, as compared with typical investigations in a psychological laboratory, need fear no criticism as to the units, methods and devices used in making its measurements. It has two sides, research and transference of skill. As a vehicle of scientific method it has little to fear if compared with psychological practise, and it accepts in industry the engineering standards that the psychologist working in industry is apt to disregard. As a teaching practise, it suffers at times from its use of the engineering vocabulary. It also suffers at times from an early misinterpretation of its phrase "The One Best Way" which was taken to indicate the belief that a method is to be used which pays no attention to individual differences, instead of meaning a norm from which the method of the individual is to be calculated.

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Professor Pear speaks with commendation of such "innovations" as have been made by English investigators like Dr. C. S. Myers and Mr. Eric Farmer. The former has been one of the most consistent advocates and warmest exponent of motion study and a close study of his criticisms seems to prove that they rest on a misunderstanding of the theory and technic. The findings of the latter are open to criticisms from the engineering standpoint, though highly to be commended from the standpoint of interest in the work.

There has been no neglect among the engineers, as Professor Pear seems to think, of rhythm or of ease with which work can be done, but the relative importance of individual rhythm and of accepted musical rhythm is as yet unsettled, and fatigue percentages are best calculated after the standard method has been derived and not during the motion study research process.

Professor Pear's careful, unbiased criticism deserves this detailed reply, which in no wise undervalues the quantity and quality of British interest and cooperation in motion study, and especially in fatigue study which is its first step.

Chapter IV, "Training in Muscular Performances," restates and clarifies in terse simple language the recognized dicta of successful teaching. The What to teach, How to teach, etc., under the categorical headings found so successful in such management devices as the standing order, gain much from this presentation, given with the authority of the psychologist and the persuasiveness of the teacher. The illustrative example, skating, adds a new sport to those that have been motion studied.

Chapter V, "The Relation Between Training and Education," brings the prolonged quarrel on the relative value of general and specific training up to date. Professor Pear supports those who believe that only like elements transfer, heartens the advocates of the blig study, and adds an appreciation of the whole mental attitude, of ideals and of psychology of the total situation that is indicative of the newer cooperation between management and education that must supplement the cooperation between psychology and management.

Chapter VI, "Training of the Intermediate Ranks in Industry," the last and most inspirational chapter, ends with a plea for training the teachers that must be heartedly endorsed by all engaged in teaching industry in this country, as well as abroad.

This book is sane, progressive, fair, stimulating. It is not only a statement of the history and present state of skill study, but an indicator of trends and lines along which progress should come.

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Books Received

Manager's Manual. Life Insurance Sales Research Bureau, Hartford, Conn., 1925, pp. 382.

This *Manager's Manual*, prepared for the use of insurance agencies, covers such subjects as recruiting, selecting and training agents, agency contests, quotas and standard tasks.

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BULLETIN OF THE

TAYLOR SOCIETY

AN INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY TO PROMOTE THE SCIENCE AND THE ART OF ADMINISTRATION AND OF MANAGEMENT

Labor's Ideals Concerning Management

By WILLIAM GREEN
President, The American Federation of Labor

A NOTEWORTHY address emphasizing the desirability and possibility of union-management cooperation in the development of better management.—Page 241.

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