

TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN BEST SELLERS



ARNOLD BENNETT

# HOW TO LIVE ON TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY

## 如何度过一天的24小时

[英] 阿诺德·贝内特 著



世界图书出版公司

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YZLI 0890089198

世界图书出版公司

上海·西安·北京·广州

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

如何度过一天的 24 小时: 英文/ (英) 阿诺德·贝内特著. —上海: 上海世界图书出版公司, 2010.9

ISBN 978-7-5100-2474-0

I. ①如… II. ①阿… III. ①英语—语言读物 ②时间—管理—通俗读物—英文 IV. ①H319.4 ②C935-49

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2010)第 157036 号

## 如何度过一天的 24 小时

[英]阿诺德·贝内特 著

上海世界图书出版公司 出版发行

上海市广中路 88 号

邮政编码 200083

北京华宝装订有限公司印刷

如发现印刷质量问题, 请与印刷厂联系

(质检科电话: 010-84897777)

各地新华书店经销

开本: 850×1168 1/32 印张: 5.75 字数: 110 000

2010 年 9 月第 1 版 2010 年 9 月第 1 次印刷

ISBN978-7-5100-2474-0/H·1046

定价: 12.80 元

<http://www.wpcsh.com.cn>

<http://www.wpcsh.com>

旅·京·北·安·西·新·土

## 序

从 1895 年美国《书商》杂志开启“按销量排序的图书目录”，美国的“畅销书”至今已有百年发展史，其间荣登年度榜的图书达上千册。阅读这些畅销书，可以学习各时代美国最畅销图书中的语言，了解当时的阅读旨趣，领略当时的社会习俗和乡土人情，何乐而不为？

不过，阅读畅销书也需精选。畅销书只是显现读者的阅读旨趣，并不区分它的高下，读者真实的阅读旨趣是雅俗共存的；登上畅销书排行榜的并不总经得起时间的冲刷，许多名噪一时的畅销书早已销声匿迹，尘封在历史的沟壑中。

然而畅销书中自然也有大量经典得以长久流传。我们今天重读美国百年畅销图书，有着以往不曾有的优势。一是，时间的冲刷保证了今日重读之畅销书的经典。能留存至今的多是能够让人细细品读出些许感悟的，而不仅是出于猎奇心理、名人效应。二是，时空的距离感让我们能更好地反思畅销书中所折射出的社会现象。多了一分思考的冷峻，少了一分身处当局的迷惑，我们能以一个旁观者的角色更加清醒地审视。

鉴于以上宗旨，本系列所选的畅销书都历经淘洗，至今光彩斐然，甚具代表性。成功类的书籍诸如《白手起家的商人给儿子的信》、《罗斯福总统给子女的信》和《如何度过一天的 24 小时》；文学类的书籍众多，包括赫赫有名的《马克·吐温自传》，开创了美国西部牛仔小说先河的《弗吉尼亚人》，反映纽约上层社会生活的《纯真年代》，表现女性自我探索的《满溢之杯》，讲述一战之后生死与重建的《贫穷的聪明人》，扣人心弦、探求正义的《公平与不公平》，文字优美、充满真挚情感的爱情小说《百分之一的机会》和表现纽约曼哈顿贫民区生活的《明确的目标：纽约爱情故事》等；此外还有文化类书籍——世界史研究界几乎无人不知的 H. G. 威尔斯的《历史的概要（世界史纲）》。每本读来都会有不一样的收获，可以满足读者对不同类型书籍的偏好。

阅读美国百年畅销图书，浸润美国最地道的语言，了解美国原汁原味的文化。

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## PREFACE TO THIS EDITION

This preface, though placed at the beginning, as a preface must be, should be read at the end of the book.

I have received a large amount of correspondence concerning this small work, and many reviews of it – some of them nearly as long as the book itself – have been printed. But scarcely any of the comment has been adverse. Some people have objected to a frivolity of tone; but as the tone is not, in my opinion, at all frivolous, this objection did not impress me; and had no weightier reproach been put forward I might almost have been persuaded that the volume was flawless! A more serious stricture has, however, been offered – not in the press, but by sundry obviously sincere correspondents – and I must deal with it. A reference to page 43 will show that I anticipated and feared this disapprobation. The sentence against which protests have been made is as follows: – “In the majority of instances he [the typical man] does not precisely feel a passion for his business; at best he does not dislike it. He begins his business functions with some reluctance, as late as he can, and he ends them with joy, as early as he can. And his



engines, while he is engaged in his business, are seldom at their full 'h.p.'”

I am assured, in accents of unmistakable sincerity, that there are many business men – not merely those in high positions or with fine prospects, but modest subordinates with no hope of ever being much better off – who do enjoy their business functions, who do not shirk them, who do not arrive at the office as late as possible and depart as early as possible, who, in a word, put the whole of their force into their day's work and are genuinely fatigued at the end thereof.

I am ready to believe it. I do believe it. I know it. I always knew it. Both in London and in the provinces it has been my lot to spend long years in subordinate situations of business; and the fact did not escape me that a certain proportion of my peers showed what amounted to an honest passion for their duties, and that while engaged in those duties they were really *living* to the fullest extent of which they were capable. But I remain convinced that these fortunate and happy individuals (happier perhaps than they guessed) did not and do not constitute a majority, or anything like a majority. I remain convinced that the majority of decent

average conscientious men of business (men with aspirations and ideals) do not as a rule go home of a night genuinely tired. I remain convinced that they put not as much but as little of themselves as they conscientiously can into the earning of a livelihood, and that their vocation bores rather than interests them.

Nevertheless, I admit that the minority is of sufficient importance to merit attention, and that I ought not to have ignored it so completely as I did do. The whole difficulty of the hard – working minority was put in a single colloquial sentence by one of my correspondents. He wrote: “I am just as keen as anyone on doing something to ‘exceed my programme,’ but allow me to tell you that when I get home at six thirty p.m. I am not anything like so fresh as you seem to imagine.”

Now I must point out that the case of the minority, who throw themselves with passion and gusto into their daily business task, is infinitely less deplorable than the case of the majority, who go half – heartedly and feebly through their official day. The former are less in need of advice “how to live.” At any rate during their official day of, say, eight hours they are really alive; their engines are giving the

full indicated “h.p.” The other eight working hours of their day may be badly organised, or even frittered away; but it is less disastrous to waste eight hours a day than sixteen hours a day; it is better to have lived a bit than never to have lived at all. The real tragedy is the tragedy of the man who is braced to effort neither in the office nor out of it, and to this man this book is primarily addressed. “But,” says the other and more fortunate man, “although my ordinary programme is bigger than his, I want to exceed my programme too! I am living a bit; I want to live more. But I really can’t do another day’s work on the top of my official day.”

⑦ The fact is, I, the author, ought to have foreseen that I should appeal most strongly to those who already had an interest in existence. It is always the man who has tasted life who demands more of it. And it is always the man who never gets out of bed who is the most difficult to rouse.

⑧ Well, you of the minority, let us assume that the intensity of your daily money – getting will not allow you to carry out quite all the suggestions in the following pages. Some of the suggestions may yet stand. I admit that you may not be able to use the time spent on the journey home at night; but the suggestion for the journey to the office in the morning is

as practicable for you as for anybody. And that weekly interval of forty hours, from Saturday to Monday, is yours just as much as the other man's, though a slight accumulation of fatigue may prevent you from employing the whole of your "h.p." upon it. There remains, then, the important portion of the three or more evenings a week. You tell me flatly that you are too tired to do anything outside your programme at night. In reply to which I tell you flatly that if your ordinary day's work is thus exhausting, then the balance of your life is wrong and must be adjusted. A man's powers ought not to be monopolised by his ordinary day's work. What, then, is to be done?

The obvious thing to do is to circumvent your ardour for your ordinary day's work by a ruse. Employ your engines in something beyond the programme before, and not after, you employ them on the programme itself. Briefly, get up earlier in the morning. You say you cannot. You say it is impossible for you to go earlier to bed of a night – to do so would upset the entire household. I do not think it is quite impossible to go to bed earlier at night. I think that if you persist in rising earlier, and the consequence is insufficiency of sleep, you will soon find a way of going to bed earlier. But my

impression is that the consequences of rising earlier will not be an insufficiency of sleep. My impression, growing stronger every year, is that sleep is partly a matter of habit – and of slackness. I am convinced that most people sleep as long as they do because they are at a loss for any other diversion. How much sleep do you think is daily obtained by the powerful healthy man who daily rattles up your street in charge of Carter Patterson's van? I have consulted a doctor on this point. He is a doctor who for twenty-four years has had a large general practice in a large flourishing suburb of London, inhabited by exactly such people as you and me. He is a curt man, and his answer was curt:

“Most people sleep themselves stupid.”

He went on to give his opinion that nine men out of ten would have better health and more fun out of life if they spent less time in bed.

Other doctors have confirmed this judgment, which, of course, does not apply to growing youths.

Rise an hour, an hour and a half, or even two hours earlier; and – if you must – retire earlier when you can. In the

matter of exceeding programmes, you will accomplish as much in one morning hour as in two evening hours. "But," you say, "I couldn't begin without some food, and servants." Surely, my dear sir, in an age when an excellent spirit – lamp (including a saucepan) can be bought for less than a shilling, you are not going to allow your highest welfare to depend upon the precarious immediate co – operation of a fellow creature! Instruct the fellow creature, whoever she may be, at night. Tell her to put a tray in a suitable position over night. On that tray two biscuits, a cup and saucer, a box of matches and a spirit – lamp; on the lamp, the saucepan; on the saucepan, the lid – but turned the wrong way up; on the reversed lid, the small teapot, containing a minute quantity of tea leaves. You will then have to strike a match – that is all. In three minutes the water boils, and you pour it into the teapot (which is already warm). In three more minutes the tea is infused. You can begin your day while drinking it. These details may seem trivial to the foolish, but to the thoughtful they will not seem trivial. The proper, wise balancing of one's whole life may depend upon the feasibility of a cup of tea at an unusual hour.

A. B.

## 1. THE DAILY MIRACLE

“Yes, he’s one of those men that don’t know how to manage. Good situation. Regular income. Quite enough for luxuries as well as needs. Not really extravagant. And yet the fellow’s always in difficulties. Somehow he gets nothing out of his money. Excellent flat – half empty! Always looks as if he’d had the brokers in. New suit – old hat! Magnificent necktie – baggy trousers! Asks you to dinner: cut glass – bad mutton, or Turkish coffee – cracked cup! He can’t understand it. Explanation simply is that he fritters his income away. Wish I had the half of it! I’d show him –”

So we have most of us criticised, at one time or another, in our superior way. We are nearly all chancellors of the exchequer: it is the pride of the moment. Newspapers are full of articles explaining how to live on such-and such a sum, and these articles provoke a correspondence whose violence proves the interest they excite. Recently, in a daily organ, a battle raged round the question whether a woman can exist nicely in the country on £85 a year. I have seen an

essay, "How to Live on eight Shillings a Week." But I have never seen an essay, "How to Live on twenty-four Hours a Day." Yet it has been said that time is money. That proverb understates the case. Time is a great deal more than money. If you have time you can obtain money – usually. But though you have the wealth of a cloak-room attendant at the Carlton Hotel, you cannot buy yourself a minute more time than I have, or the cat by the fire has.

Philosophers have explained space. They have not explained time. It is the inexplicable raw material of everything. With it, all is possible; without it, nothing. The supply of time is truly a daily miracle, an affair genuinely astonishing when one examines it. You wake up in the morning, and lo! your purse is magically filled with twenty-four hours of the unmanufactured tissue of the universe of your life! It is yours. It is the most precious of possessions. A highly singular commodity, showered upon you in a manner as singular as the commodity itself!

For remark! No one can take it from you. It is unstealable. And no one receives either more or less than you receive.

Talk about an ideal democracy! In the realm of time there



is no aristocracy of wealth, and no aristocracy of intellect. Genius is never rewarded by even an extra hour a day. And there is no punishment. Waste your infinitely precious commodity as much as you will, and the supply will never be withheld from you. No mysterious power will say: — "This man is a fool, if not a knave. He does not deserve time; he shall be cut off at the meter." It is more certain than consols, and payment of income is not affected by Sundays. Moreover, you cannot draw on the future. Impossible to get into debt! You can only waste the passing moment. You cannot waste tomorrow; it is kept for you. You cannot waste the next hour; it is kept for you.

I said the affair was a miracle. Is it not?

You have to live on this twenty-four hours of daily time. Out of it you have to spin health, pleasure, money, content, respect, and the evolution of your immortal soul. Its right use, its most effective use, is a matter of the highest urgency and of the most thrilling actuality. All depends on that. Your happiness — the elusive prize that you are all clutching for, my friends! — depends on that. Strange that the newspapers, so enterprising and up — to — date as they are, are not full of "How to Live on a Given Income of Time," instead of "How