



HOW MY CHILDREN WERE DRILLED.



AT Dr. Blimber's excellent establishment for young gentlemen, nothing so vulgar as play ever happened. During the half-hour allowed for recreation, the boys indulged in the Olympic game of lounging in pairs, arm-in-arm, up and down a small piece of ground behind the house. . . .

As to Mrs. Blimber, it was the steady joy of her life to see the young gentlemen go out walking, unlike all other young gentlemen, in the largest possible shirt-collars, and the stiffest possible cravats. "It was so classical," she said. —What do you think of that, Mrs. Nettlefold?"

"I can only have one opinion about it," answered Mrs. Nettlefold, "and that is the same as your own. But now lay the book aside. I know what you mean quite well. You want to speak to me about the children. I saw it in your face yesterday when you congratulated Johnnie about his prize; and when you came in with your work this afternoon, I knew at once what your errand was. And, dear friend, I am quite willing to hear you, so go on."

Of course I was caught, and there was no use in denying it. I *did* want to speak about the children, and it was to introduce the subject that I had, skilfully as I thought, turned the conversation to Dickens. But my little ruse had been very speedily discovered.

"You are quite right," I said laughing, "I have come expressly for that purpose. I hope you will forgive me if I seem impertinent."

"No need for apology," said Mrs. Nettlefold. "I am only too thankful to know that I have a friend who cares sufficiently about me to speak out plainly. You think I am not as careful as I should be to make the children take plenty of exercise?"

"I do think so."

"And I am inclined to agree with you. Our children, the two elder ones especially, are fond of study, have been very successful and have made considerable progress, but——"

"Oh, they are very clever children, there is no doubt about that. But how sorry you will be if, in your anxiety that they should get on at school, you neglect their physical well-being!"

"I know that," said Mrs. Nettlefold, "still it is difficult to find out what is best. Every one nowadays is subject to such a high pressure. There is so much to be learnt, and such a high standard has been set up, and the competition is so keen, that unless the children are thoroughly trained mentally, they will assuredly be left behind in the race."

"But all the more do they need to be made physically strong, to enable them to bear the wear-and-tear of life," said I. "Don't you remember the remark of a modern writer, that the first requisite to success in life is to be a good animal?"

"What are we to do?" said Mrs. Nettlefold. "I will confess to you that I have become very uneasy on this subject. Johnnie lately has had a weakly look. He has very little appetite. He is soon tired, and we fancied that he was beginning to be rather knock-kneed."

"Have you taken advice on the subject?" said I.

"Oh, yes; I took him to our doctor, who said at once, 'The boy wants exercise. Let him play at cricket, and football, and leap-frog, and give him plenty of nourishing food.' But this is not the time of the year for out-door games. Besides, I must say I don't admire the game of football. It is such rough play. When the season comes round, I shall certainly urge him to play cricket. But what are we to do now?"

"Johnnie is fifteen, is he not? What do you say to getting a bicycle for him?"

"We propose doing so. I believe bicycle riding is splendid exercise, though some think it dangerous."

"Then, has he any dumb-bells? I met with a gentleman the other day, who told me that when he was about thirteen, and growing fast, he began to be very delicate. To use his own expressive language, he felt 'loose,' as if he were going to drop to pieces. A friend advised him to get a pair of dumb-bells, and to use them for a quarter of an hour every morning before he began to dress, and every evening as soon as he was undressed. After persevering in this for three months he felt quite different. It 'pulled him together' wonderfully. I ought to say that he did not begin with a quarter of an hour. That would have been too much for him. At first he practised for a few minutes only, and gradually increased the time as he was able to do so."

"Then he shall have dumb-bells; and the bright days will be here soon, and we shall urge him to take plenty of outdoor exercise."

"Then I think you may hope he will soon be all right. You can but do your best now. Of course, when the weather is favourable, I would have infants and children spend as much time as possible in the open air. After two or three years, walking is capital exercise, if it is not kept up too long. It ought to be done habitually, and is so necessary that nothing but very bad weather should interfere with it. But why should we talk of walking or anything else, when we know that letting a child have plenty of play is better than all the gymnastics in the world?"

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," said Mrs. Nettlefold.

"Indeed it does. Gymnastics should certainly not be regarded as a substitute for play. The formal muscular movements practised at the gymnasium do not secure so equal a distribution of action in every part of the body as will be obtained by means of a good game at chevy-chase or poise-ball."

"Besides," said Mrs. Nettlefold, "the children are happier when they are playing, and I am quite sure that exercise in which they are interested, and which they enjoy, is sure to be more beneficial than the monotonous amusements which are gone through because they must be."

"Quite true," said I; "in saying that, you are only expressing in another way the idea of a modern writer, who said—'Happiness is the most powerful of tonics.' Formal exercises are better than nothing, but they

must never be made a *substitute* for those which are prompted by nature."

"But," said Mrs. Nettlefold, "we must face the fact that, in this climate of ours, there are many, many days in the year in which the children cannot go out, and cannot have a good romp. Now, are they to do without exercise then?"

"No, indeed," said I. "Those are just the occasions when the children need to be drilled. Of course, when there are the means and the opportunity, this can be done systematically and scientifically. The regular movements, of course, are good. But independently of these a good deal might be done. The mother might begin, say at the age of four, and make her children at least once a day stand perfectly upright, throw the shoulders well back, and draw a deep breath, so that

the air, which should be as cool and fresh as possible, may fill the lungs entirely. When this is done the mouth should be closed and the breath held, and the arms thrust actively up and down, backwards and forwards. If this practice is begun early and kept up every day, not only for months but for several years, it will wonderfully expand the lungs and act as a preventive to consumption and similar complaints."

"I will certainly begin that at once with the younger children," said Mrs. Nettlefold. "But there is something else your children do. What



EXERCISE.

were those ropes I saw in the play-room one day? Were they not intended for exercise of some kind?"

"I am glad you mentioned that, for those ropes afford an excellent and at the same time an interesting exercise for boys and girls in wet weather. I heard of the plan from a very clever doctor, and it has proved of great service to my own children. We have two large spiral hooks firmly screwed into a beam or rafter in the ceiling. Two ropes (of uniform length) are hung from these, and at the end of each rope is a kind of holder covered with wash-leather. By using these freely young people can amuse and straighten themselves, and expand their chests, without any difficulty."

"The ropes will, of course, need to be altered in length as the children grow older?"

"No; we get over that difficulty very easily. The ropes are made to pass through a perforated piece of wood, and in this way can be made of any length. I may say that I forbade the children to use the ropes as a swing, for I consider swinging not only a useless but a dangerous amusement."

"Do your girls use these hand-swings as well as the boys?"

"Indeed, yes. Girls are constituted to need exercise quite as much as boys; why should they not have it? I know they do not often get it, but this is a pity. I suppose the teachers and parents who encourage girls to be quiet and still, are afraid that they will become unladylike if they are allowed to romp about. But I don't think there is any cause to fear this."

"I am sure there is not," said Mrs. Nettlefold. "Engagement in manly games does not prevent boys from growing up gentlemen; why should it hinder their sisters from becoming ladies?"

"Certainly. I was reading a little while ago a very clever book on education. The writer said that, in his opinion, very little needed to be said now-a-days on the importance of bodily exercise, as far as boys were concerned; people were awake to it; but that it was quite otherwise with girls. It happened that there were both a boys' school and a girls' school near this gentleman's home. The boys soon made their presence known, for every day before breakfast, again towards eleven o'clock, again at midday, again in the afternoon, and once more after school was over, the neighbourhood was awakened by a chorus of shouts and laughter as the boys rushed out to play, and this continued as long as they remained. It was not so with the girls, however. For a long time the gentleman did not discover that there was a girls' school near. At last, when his attention was drawn to the fact, he noticed them occasionally sauntering along the paths with their lesson-books in their hands, or else walking arm-in-arm. Only upon one occasion

during five months did he see them chasing one another round the garden-paths."

"I can believe that without any difficulty," said Mrs. Nettlefold. "We all know that girls prefer walking together and chatting to running about."

"Yes, but it is a great pity. I would have the girls not only take vigorous walks, but also practise daily skipping (for a short time only), tossing balls to one another, playing at battledore and shuttlecock, and the use of dumb-bells; and I would allow little girls to trundle their hoops, and jump and run."

"I can tell you of a very good way of imparting a graceful gait and carriage to young ladies," said Mrs. Nettlefold, "and that is to let them walk for a few minutes every day with a bag of beans or peas, or coarse sand, balanced on the head, just as in Eastern countries women carry their water-cans."

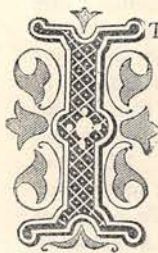
"I am sure that is good," said I; "exercises of this kind improve the figure, and give precision and grace to the body, more than regular drilling exercises would do."

"I don't fancy," said Mrs. Nettlefold, "that we shall have much difficulty with the children when they have grown a little older. They will see the importance of taking exercise themselves then."

"Of course, it is whilst they are growing that we need to be specially careful for them," said I, as I rose to leave; "and we will do our best. I think more and more that what is wanted is for people to get to *know* what is right. The will to do well is far more general than we think. But you and I will do what we can, and perhaps some one else will be influenced to copy our example, and so the good work will go on."

PHILIS BROWNE.

THE NURSING OF THE LONDON POOR.



IT is impossible to reside in this immense metropolis, or to read the daily papers, without feeling oppressed by the consciousness of being surrounded by thousands of fellow-creatures lacking, not merely the ordinary necessities of life required by those in health, but that a large proportion of them labours under the aggravation of disease and accidental sufferings, creating extra necessities. To those charitable souls whose genial hearts are larger than their purses, it will be the greatest solace to be told of the machinery at work for the relief of the London sick poor by means of nursing and medical advice.

According to the list of medical officers' districts, I find that London contains fifty-nine. The most extreme poverty exists in St. Paul's, Whitechapel; St. Augustine's, Haggerston; St. Mary's, Charterhouse; St. John's, Walworth; St. Matthew's, New Kent Road; St. Matthew's, Westminster; and St. Pancras, No. 1 District; while St. John's, Fitzroy Square, is noted as the district populated by "the dirtiest poor in London;"

and St. George's-in-the-East, No. 1 District, as being, of all others, "the most dangerous in London." To alleviate so much misery, and thus to effect cures—where God-blest human means can accomplish it—I find we have at present twenty-two organisations at work as nursing institutions. Some of these supply regularly trained, and in every respect perfectly efficient nurses; while others send out the partially trained; and others again, the wholly untrained, who only afford such service as personal experience, combined with earnest and unselfish devotion, may render.

A large proportion of mankind are only too willing to

"Leave human wrongs to right themselves;"

but to hear that such societies exist will not satisfy those who take to themselves the Divine command, "Bear ye one another's burdens." I should not have space to give any minute and satisfactory account of all, but will select one from amongst them as a specimen, and give as many private details, connected with both the internal arrangements of the Home and the district work, as may be interesting. Holding the