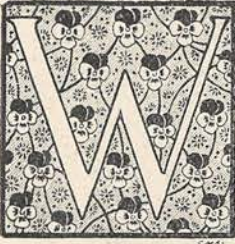


ATHLETICS FOR LADIES.



WHATEVER may be thought of the intellectual advance of the modern woman, there is no denying the thousand benefits that she has received from her physical or muscular progress. The proprieties which ruled

the simpering miss of a hundred years ago would to-day be considered mere absurdities. In the times of Miss Lydia Languish any exercise more exciting than embroidery was considered, to use the jargon of the day, as "unbecoming and indelicate." Horse exercise was indeed allowed, but regular hunting was considered somewhat unusual. But, besides the dictates of fashion, woman was considered to possess an inherent weakness which forbade

her entering into the athletic amusements of the other sex.

All these theories are now swept away. Any opposition to her invasion of what was once considered as man's domain is now put down to the jealousy of the "mere male," as he is sometimes contemptuously called. And certainly woman ought to be proud of her victory. The pioneers of the movement had a hard fight for it. For years they were a standing object for ridicule and abuse, and in this their own sex were often the worst offenders. However, they triumphed, and now woman can take pretty well almost any exercise she likes.

But in the flush of victory she must remember that there are perils which she must avoid. It is physically impossible for her to compete with men in their more dangerous pastimes. Her motto should be moderation, and she should not attempt feats which can only prove injurious to her health. Indeed, the leaders of feminine athletics have justly condemned the women who have tried to gain notoriety and, what is more to the point, pocket-money by displays on the football field and the cycle path. However, the number who have thus foolishly exhibited themselves is too small to allow of their being considered in any way representatives of the modern movement.

Of all forms of feminine athletics the most popular at the present day is undoubtedly cycling. Whether it be but the passing craze of the hour or whether it has "come to stay," as our American friends would term it, it is impossible to decide. Probably its many advantages as a means of rapid and easy progression will always recommend it to ladies until a flying machine or some such novelty is invented. At present, however, the demand for ladies' cycles is so great that the makers find it difficult to keep up the supply. The London parks are crammed with the fair enthusiasts, who number amongst them representatives of every grade of society.

Makers who could read the signs of the times invented long ago a special machine for ladies' use. In 1893 all Paris went mad after the new craze, but the gay Parisiennes produced



LADY NORREYS ON HER "HUMBER."

(From a photograph by Alfred Ellis, Upper Baker Street, N.W.)



A GROUP OF ROYAL CYCLISTS.

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. PRINCESS OLGA OF RUSSIA. | 5. PRINCESS VICTORIA OF WALES. |
| 2. PRINCE NICHOLAS OF GREECE. | 6. PRINCE ANDREAS OF GREECE. |
| 3. PRINCESS XENIA OF RUSSIA. | 7. PRINCESS MAUD OF WALES. |
| 4. PRINCE GEORGE OF GREECE. | 8. PRINCE WALDEMAR OF DENMARK. |

(From a photograph by A. Th. Collin, Copenhagen.)

such wonderful "creations" in the way of rational dress that the movement in England was rather retarded than advanced. Last year, however, cycling sprang into sudden popularity amongst English ladies. It became the "proper thing" to do, and the lady cyclist at last felt her position assured. From royalty downward everyone seemed to have caught the cycling fever, and that severely. In fact, 1895 will probably be known in the future as the "ladies' year." Battersea Park was the great rendezvous. There ladies rode at a moderate pace, met their friends, and extracted just that amount of enjoyment out of the exercise which was possible without over-exerting themselves. The presence of the fair riders soon collected large and fashionable crowds, and Tuesday and Thursday mornings in Battersea Park soon became recognised society functions. It would be impossible to enumerate the names of half the well-known ladies who were to be seen at the cycle promenades,

amongst whom were Lady Dudley, Lady Wolverton, Lady Lurgan, and Lady Norreys. This year Hyde Park has been opened to cyclists, and this convenient field of operations has still further increased the number of lady cyclists. On a fine morning the moving crowd of pretty faces and dainty dresses make a charming spectacle. Occasionally the old and new styles meet, and the spectacle, which cannot fail to prove amusing to old Park habitués, is presented of a damsel on her iron steed accompanied by a cavalier on horseback. Accidents are rare, for the bicycle "scorcher" is conspicuous by his absence. If he does put in an appearance, the police "keep their eye on him" pretty closely.

The latest recruit to royalty on wheels is Queen Margherita of Italy. An amusing story is told of an interview between the Queen and a sentry, who, in ignorance of her identity, was protesting against her crossing the royal sward of the Park Monza. The



LADY FOOTBALLERS.

(From a photograph by Symmons & Thiele, Chancery Lane, W.C.)

Queen, who had just had a tumble, replied merrily, "I may do what I like with mine own, but I find that mine own sometimes does what it likes with me." Princess Maud of Wales has lately become an enthusiastic cyclist, and has been photographed on her machine in company with her *fiancé*. Princess Victoria of Wales has now ridden for some time.

On the vexed question of rational dress it is difficult for a mere man to speak. It would appear, however, that society has set its face sternly against its introduction. It is scarcely ever seen in the London parks. On the other hand, the more energetic and enthusiastic lady cyclists, who believe in long tours in the country, have in most cases adopted it. It is certainly safer, and seems more appropriate when long rides in a strong wind or heavy rain may have to be undertaken. At the same time a shortish skirt well cut and stiffened is far less an encumbrance than many ladies who do not cycle would imagine. However, the whole question is a problem, the solution of which only the future can show.

The protests lodged against the new fashion are singularly few. Mrs. Lynn Linton, as was only to be expected, found it necessary to include cycling amongst the "cranks and crazes" of women in an article which she wrote last December for the *North American Review*. According to her, it is "a doubtful sort of amusement—such a queer cross between the treadmill and the tight rope—demanding such a constant strain of attention to keep your balance, with such a monotonous and restricted action of the limbs as to render

it a work of penance rather than of pleasure." After this it is needless to add that Mrs. Lynn Linton does not cycle herself, and thus feels peculiarly capable of criticising the fondness of others for that form of exercise.

Before leaving the subject, it is necessary to mention the exhibitions of cycle racing by women which have taken place in several of our large towns, and at the Aquarium, in London. It should be distinctly understood that this is paid, or professional, cycling, and is absolutely unconnected with cycling as a pastime. There is not a ladies' club or asso-

ciation in the country that has not set its face against such foolish performances. Those who race are in exactly the same position to the lady cyclist as the circus rider is to the horsewoman taking her morning canter in the Row. There can be no doubt that women are physically incapable of bearing such severe strains without injury to their health.

During the summer months, the Thames



THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK.

(From a photograph by H. S. Meinelsohn, Pembroke Crescent, W.)

offers an opportunity for all ladies who care to scull and punt under the most favourable conditions. Many girls can pull a very fair oar indeed, and in some of the up-river regattas there are races set apart for them. On several occasions eights have been formed, and have regularly practised together. But hard is the

Punting and canoeing races are favourite fixtures for ladies in the minor regattas. Punting is a capital exercise. When once the desire to hold on to the pole and topple into the water has been overcome, it is perfectly safe, and the work is not too severe. There is no prettier sight than that which may be seen on the Thames almost any day during the summer, of some handsome girl, with her sleeves turned up in workmanlike fashion, wielding her bamboo punt-pole with the grace and ease of long practice. The glimpse of a man amongst the cushions in the bow of the little vessel, gives us a peep into the probable



lot of the instructor who has to "coach" them. From reading descriptions of the athletic man written by the novel-writing woman, each rower has become convinced of the fact that there is only one seat in the boat worth occupying, and that seat is stroke. To place her in any other position is little less than an insult. So the "coach" goes sorrowfully to work, and, taking one of his crew aside, points out to her that there is really only one place in the boat where a first-class oar is wanted, and that is "bow." Will she accept that post of honour? She eagerly consents, and off he goes, begging her not to say anything about it, as it may cause jealousy amongst her companions. The artful man pursues exactly the same course with the one he wishes to row "two," and so on, through the whole eight of them. From a very short experience, the most truthful "coach" finds himself morally certain that the end justifies the means.

LADIES ON THE RIVER.
(From a photograph by Marsh Bros., Henley.)

future of the "mere male." A few generations of athletic women, and he will be reduced to his "proper subordinate condition."

A game that is in great vogue amongst girls is hockey. Many schools and colleges can place highly-skilled teams into the field. At the colleges for women, at both Oxford and Cambridge, regular teams are formed, and the game is played with great science and enthusiasm. In imitation of the athletics of the undergraduates, an annual match has been arranged between the girl students of Oxford and those of Cambridge. The game is generally decided at Wimbledon Park, and here

the ladies, armed with their clubs, fight out the battle of the rival Blues. Accidents are rare, though on one occasion, as a celebrated Cambridge poet sang—

“But a rather nasty knock,
Caused a universal shock,
And the men who came to mock,
Shed a tear.”

He even went further in his cynicism, and described—

“How the temporary rout,
Brought the smelling-bottles out,
And the Cantabs lay about,
Pale as ghosts.”

But besides this match, the members of Newnham College at Cambridge play other ladies' clubs about the country; while amongst themselves the different houses compete for a cup, for which they play twice a year. Indeed, the fame of the Newnham hockey has spread far and wide. Tennis is nowhere, and it has laughingly been suggested that, instead of the short hair and spectacles which heretofore have represented the ideal Newnhamite on the stage, the make-up in future should include a hockey stick, and cap and belt of her college colours. While on the subject of these colleges,

we may mention the game of “fives,” which is regularly played. Fives courts have been built at nearly all of them, and a regular system of competitions has been instituted.

Golf is another game that has of late attracted many fair supporters. It is a form of exercise well suited to ladies who are not anxious to undergo any very violent exertions. At many links ladies take their places side by side with their husbands and brothers in journeying round the course, but on others special links are set apart for their benefit. In a few cases, ladies have taken matters into their own hands, and several links have been started for ladies only, men either not being admitted, or merely allowed admission on certain days of the week. Medals and cups are competed for, and many of the lady golfers attain a very high standard of proficiency. Matches are also played between representative teams of rival clubs. It is pleasing to note that the fair sex seem to keep their temper under better control than the average male golfer. There is no authentic case, for instance, of a lady golfer, after playing atrociously, wading into the sea, and hurling her clubs solemnly, one by one, out into the deep

water, as is recorded of an irate elderly gentleman on a Scotch links.

It is difficult to deal fairly with the subject of lady cricketers and footballers. A strong prejudice has arisen against these games since the country has been traversed by professional teams, whose displays were rather of the circus character. Even if ladies had seriously intended to adopt the former of these games, it is improbable they would now care to do so, after the foolish exhibitions given by travelling teams before large and very mixed audiences. Cricket in a modified form is, indeed, played by girls at some large schools, but these games are in the privacy of their own grounds. In the country, matches between ladies and gentlemen are of common occurrence, but in

MRS. RYDER
RICHARDSON.

MRS. WILLOCK.



LADY MARGARET
SCOTT.

MISS LYTHGOE.

THE MEDALLISTS FOR THE LADIES' GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP, PORTRUSH, 1895.
(From a photograph by Messrs. Lee, Portrush.)



THE FINAL IN THE LONG VALLEY: MISS LYTHGOE "PUTTING."
 (From a photograph by Messrs. Lee, Portrush.)

these cases the gentlemen are handicapped by being obliged to bowl, field, and bat with the left hand only, while they have to find in a broomstick a very inadequate substitute for a bat. Such a game, however, has no pretence to be called cricket, although it is sure to offer plenty of amusement, and is an excellent method *pour passer le temps*. We cannot but conclude that cricket is not a game which will ever be taken seriously by ladies. There is, indeed, too great an element of danger in it to allow of their doing so, were they even so minded. Further, with the many means of pleasant exercise now thrown open to them, there is no reason why they should make the attempt. As to the advisability of ladies playing football, there can be no two opinions. It is essentially a man's game, and even then it is a game suitable only to the strongest. For a woman to attempt to play it is to make her appear ridiculous. It is evident that the opinion of the nation is against it, for last year, when a team of lady footballers appeared

and played in public, every newspaper condemned the innovation with remarkable unanimity.

We have now mentioned the chief forms of what may fairly be called ladies' athletics. Lawn tennis, indeed, has been excepted, but lawn tennis is too well known an amusement to need mention or criticism. Of course, there are plenty of other forms of exercise into which we find ladies entering, but which can scarcely be termed athletics. There are girls who hunt and girls who shoot; girls who explore, and write books of their travels, and girls who mountaineer, and take photographs on giddy heights; girls who play billiards, and girls who play "Badminton." In short, it seems as if in a few years' time there will be nothing left that man has done for the enthusiastic woman pioneer to try to likewise attempt. This will be quite a depressing state of affairs, and will demand fresh exertions on the part of mankind in this game of "follow my leader," into which the sexes have entered.

B. FLETCHER ROBINSON.