

THE POETRY OF MOTION.

BY DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.



FIG. 1.—STANDING—FIRST POSITION FOR WALKING.

THE attention of both England and America has been called to the subject of physical education and exercise, and its excellent effects exhibited more than ever during the last five years. In America, indeed, the system of Delsarte has had a wide-spread popularity, and "the Poetry of Motion" taught by his disciples is very largely practised. In New York there are numbers of teachers as well as gymnasiums, both private and public, for girls and women of all ages; and this study has become a fashion of the day. Here, in England, we are well-advanced in our opinion and practice as regards out-of-door exercises, and lawn-tennis, golf and croquet are immensely popular, and form part of the business of our lives. But we have not gone far enough yet in our ideas of the absolute necessity for the daily and constant training in physical education. A very recent writer on the subject says, "Children should have regulated calisthenics for half an hour each day, and not less." We well know how the money and the time are alike grudged for this useless employment. "But let us tell the fond mother that, that half hour's education is doing more for her daughter, and will leave more permanent results for good than anything else for which she spends her money."

Now this quotation exactly represents the true state of the case with regard to the instruction of the body, and the effect that it has on its health and beauty. Indeed, we have only to look about us to see that girls are not taught, and that they have no idea of the elementary actions of standing or walking. It is rare to see a girl who can do either gracefully and well. But we must not think that our grandmothers were not taught these things, for they not only knew and studied grace of movement, but the best books on the subject now extant date from the early part of this

century, and the middle of the last, and what is known as "deportment" has been taught and learned by multitudes of girls from the earliest days till now. As a rule, everyone who has to approach Her Majesty takes lessons from some capable person in the proper method of entering the throne-room, of holding the train, and of performing the proper courtesy to the Queen. This is one portion of deportment. For the present article, we have had the personal aid of one of the best modern mistresses of the art of physical culture in London, Mrs. Vincent Glass, and our illustrations have been sketched from her pupils. The lady is the inventor also of a number of exercises which follow the old-fashioned ideas of combining physical exercise with an increase in grace, and also in good health; and some of our first doctors, such as Mr. Noble Smith, have expressed themselves strongly in favour of a system which rests on a sound physiological and hygienic basis, and adds ease and elegance of movement, to great physical improvement in the bodily health and strength.

The first things we selected to illustrate were the proper methods of walking and standing, and the first sketch (Fig. 1) shows the proper and easy position for standing. Additional strength, however, is gained by advancing the right foot a little and firmly on the ground, which gives, of course, a broader basis of rest, and takes off in some degree from the fatigue of standing, which is considered to be one of the most trying positions for a woman or a girl; on account of which we have so many endeavours to provide seats for them in shops, or in the pursuit of any occupations where standing is a necessity.

The position of standing as shown at Fig. 1 is the first position for walking; Fig. 2 shows the second position, and Fig. 3 the third. The



FIG. 2.—SECOND POSITION FOR WALKING.



FIG. 3.—THE STEP—THE THIRD POSITION FOR WALKING.

object of all walking and balancing exercises is to teach the free movement of the limbs, preserving at the same time perfect squareness of the shoulders, and the utmost steadiness of body. No labour should be spared to attain these, as they form the essentials of good walking. From the first position, as shown in Fig. 1, the right foot is brought to the front, the knee straight, the toe turned out a little to the left, and remaining about three inches from the ground. This position is retained for a few seconds at first, but should be practised till absolute steadiness is acquired. The right foot is then brought to the ground, as seen in the next position, at Fig. 2, at a convenient position, the other foot being raised at the same moment, and continues extended at the rear; the body remains upright, the head erect, neither turned to the left nor the right. The last position we shall name is bringing forward of the left foot on a line with the right, the toe a little turned out, the sole quite flat, but raised three inches from the ground. The weight of the body rests on one foot, while the other is advanced; it is then thrown upon the advanced foot, while the other is brought forward, and so on in succession. A firm, easy and graceful manner of walking adds greatly to the beauty and dignity of the presence, and is very uncommon.

It will be seen that Mrs. Vincent Glass's pupils exercise in their ordinary costumes, and in this, her ideas are in opposition to those of most instructors in physical culture, who consider a gymnastic costume a *sine qua non*; and insist on their pupils obtaining one for use. Mrs. Glass, however, does not think it requisite, as all dress, she says, should be so well cut at the arms, and so easy, that any kind of exercise should be freely taken in it; she insists, however, on a flannel bodice, or binder being worn, instead of the stays, to

avoid cold, as well as to give support. This should be as wide as a narrow riding corset, and can be tied or buttoned on. Shoes without heels are also insisted on; but otherwise we have the pupils looking their best, and we are able to judge of their progress in grace and ease of movement at once, without waiting till they change from a gymnastic dress to the ordinary attire of daily life.

Fig. 4 showed one of the movements in the fan drill, a charming method of teaching "rhythm-movements," and exercising at the same time the muscles and limbs in various positions. In order to preserve a proper balance, and to keep up the continued interest of the pupil, it is needful for her to hold some object in her hands, and for this reason we find the fan very generally used. But Mrs. Vincent Glass has invented a novelty for her classes, in the shape of the "flower drill," of which our artist has selected for delineation three amongst its prettiest and most graceful postures. The flowers are artificial violets and primroses, arranged in small wreaths, one being held in each hand; the exercises being constantly performed holding them; and the postures taken being easy and varied in character.

Much thought has been given on this subject of exercises by many writers, and the arrangements of Mrs. Glass for teaching, and her ideas, are eminently hygienic and wise. She disapproves of all violent motions, of heavy clubs and dumb-bells; and considers that all exercises should be performed slowly and with grace. All active exercises should be proportioned to what can be spared by the other organs in favour of muscular action; for violent and long-continued movements would soon produce disorder in the frame. Under such pernicious exercises the palpitations of the heart become immoderate (if nothing worse should happen),



FIG. 4.—FAN DRILL.

the breathing becomes difficult, the system is over-heated, the digestion is deranged, and the body loses what it cannot regain; languor and debility are felt, and there is no increase of either health or strength.

And here it may be well to devote a few pages to the guidance of exercises, which is the more necessary because I hope these articles will fire our girls with ambition to practice and excel in muscular exercises; and I feel sure that to many of them they will be found a blessing and a cure; and a little perseverance will not only promote good health, but what is more grateful and blessed to those around them, a flow of happy spirits and a brightness which will replace languor and irritability, cross speeches and black looks.

In the first place, exercises are not so needful in hot climates, though "rhythmic movements" should always be taught. The sedentary avocations of women and girls necessitate active exercises of the body, which should be more moderate than those of men, but equally useful. They should vary also according to age; an infant or very little child should take its exercise on a mat or carpet; or, still better, a padded mattress on the floor; there you will see the exercise of pure enjoyment, for baby will throw himself about as the fancy prompts him, and indeed the restless nature of children is enough to show us that they need to move the muscles, and exercise the growing body. For young

people, exercises favour development and are most truly useful to direct their natural activity into channels which will benefit and serve them. For adults, exercise serves to distribute over the body those vital juices which are too often concentrated in the head or elsewhere, leading to undue obesity or serious illness. For old people, we are only just beginning to perceive a certain amount of exercise means both health and happiness, and for them the ball exercises are more especially pointed out. And some of our first London doctors recommend the use of an india-rubber ball as a panacea and help for the feelings of bodily constraint, and the low spirits of old people. By its use, and through the simplest exercises, much benefit results at times. Of course, there are some states of body in which the utility of such exercise would be doubtful, in those, for instance, inclined to asthma, or showing a predisposition to apoplexy. The general effect of exercise is to strengthen the body; and in doing so we get rid of nervous irritability, the tendency to hysteria, and the "fads" to which so many young people are given.

The dwellers in towns are more distinctly in need of gymnastic exercise than those who dwell in the country, and have the benefit of more fresh air, and of out-of-door exercise of various kinds. But to both the discipline, and method of orderly exercises are extremely useful as a means of drill, and of acquiring the facility of controlled and graceful movements.

"The training of the body must be attended-to just as much as that of the mind; and this training can only be attained by application. The eye needs to learn quickness of observation and precision; the hand steadiness of grasp and of aim; the limbs rhythmic and restrained



FIG. 5.—FLOWER DRILL.



FIG. 6.—FLOWER DRILL.

gesture; the neck and head, grace of poise and carriage; and the whole body, dignity and ease of manner, and of presence. Undisciplined exercise, romping and running about wildly over hill and dale is likely to develop an awkward gait, hoydenish demeanour, and round shoulders; so all such liberty should be supplemented and corrected by a daily drill, which should never be neglected, but practised as a pleasure, not as a task." I have selected the preceding sentences from one of our first writers on health, which she rightly thinks may be acquired, together with grace and beauty, by sensible and correct treatment in youth.

The best time for exercises is unquestionably the morning, before breakfast, if possible, for "grown ups," because fifteen or even ten minutes can easily be found then, before the daily bath, when the warm dressing-gown can be donned and a few simple movements can be gone through without haste. Each gesture being resolute, well-defined and separated by a distinct pause from the preceding and the following movements, all distress, pain, and fatigue or exhaustion must be carefully avoided. For young people, the room for the exercises



FIG. 7.—THE BEND IN FLOWER DRILL.

should be airy and bright. Shoes without heels should be worn, and eleven o'clock in the forenoon is the best hour to select, as there

is time for rest before the next meal of the day. No active exercises should be practised except when digestion is finished, because with our organisation we cannot properly perform several actions at one time, nor should any meal be partaken-of when fatigued by any exercise whatever, as the stomach has been deprived of the strength requisite for performing its functions properly.

No general rule could be laid down for the duration of these exercises. The age, habits and temperament must all be consulted, and no violent nor long-continued efforts should be required from anyone not capable of supporting them. The wisest rule is to stop before feeling fatigued, for the exercise of the body should be a source of enjoyment and not of distress. In producing fatigue we run a chance of weakening and not of strengthening ourselves.

If the exercises be performed before the bath, there is no difficulty about over-heating; but if taken during the forenoon, great care should be observed not to cool too suddenly, not to sit in a draught, and not to drink cold water. In no case should the pupil remain in a state of total inaction, and after violent exercise gentle movement should still be kept up, unless it be possible to retire, divest oneself of clothing and then to rub the skin well with a Turkish towel in a warm room.



FIG. 8.—EXERCISE WITH THE BALL.

VARIETIES.

NO CROSS WORDS TO HIS WIFE.

Sometimes it is hard to face the truth in public. Doubtless that was the trouble with those present at a meeting held in California recently. A San Francisco paper tells how the speaker shouted:—

"Is there a man present who never spoke a cross word to his wife?"

The silence was becoming oppressive. People looked here and there. Every husband present wanted to get up, but did not dare to. At last a round-faced good-natured man rose from his seat.

"Let us be thankful," exclaimed the speaker, "there is one man who never spoke a cross word to his wife."

The good-natured man smiled a bland smile, and said:

"No, sir, I never did. I'm a bachelor." Then he put on his hat, and calmly walked out.

HIDING DEFECTS.—There are few defects in our nature so glaring as not to be veiled from observation by politeness and good breeding.

FOR OUR GOOD.—We all want a little more than we have, and it is for our good that we do not get it.

THE MOST POWERFUL FORCE IN NATURE.

George Stephenson was once asked by a scientific lady what he considered the most powerful force in nature.

"Oh," said he, in a gallant spirit, "I shall soon answer that question—it is the eye of a woman for the man who loves her: for if a woman look with affection, and her lover should go to the uttermost ends of the earth, the recollection of that look will bring him back. There is no other force in nature that could do that."



FIG. 9.—CATCHING THE BALL WITH ONE HAND.



FIG. 1.—ARM EXERCISE. EXTENDED.



FIG. 2.—ARM EXERCISE. RETURNED TO SHOULDERS.

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THE further we travel in this line of thought, the quicker we are to see that the great need of the present moment is a system of home exercises, without apparatus, with no special room assigned to their practice, and requiring no expensive outlay; but which, if practised for a quarter of an hour each day, regularly, will turn the round backs of stooping girls into upright and graceful figures; and will also give aid to the mothers and sisters, and add years, it may be, to their lives, and a renewed brightness to each day. The morning, while dressing, is the



FIG. 3.—EXERCISE FOR THE WAIST. EXCELLENT IN DIGESTIVE AND LIVER DERANGEMENTS.



FIG. 4.—EXERCISE FOR THE MUSCLES OF THE BACK—TO REDUCE CORPULENCY.



FIG. 5.—EXERCISE FOR ELASTICITY OF BODY.

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easiest time for their practice, for we are then free from any article of dress, and the corset especially, which constrains the figure, and prevents the perfect play of the muscles.

A celebrated American, however, declares that he prefers the evening, when going to bed; and that a "hand-bath" should be taken afterwards, as a sure cure, according to him, for restlessness and insomnia. But even while relating his own experience, he remarks that "What is one man's meat may be another man's poison"; so that each person may select the time that appears the best for their own constitution and well-being.

We have, in our first article, discussed and illustrated the best methods of standing and walking, and this forms the first step towards physical culture. In standing, the weight of the body must be thrown upon the ball of the foot, so much so, that although you may be still resting upon the heels, you are bearing but little weight upon them. The test that you are standing properly is that, if you be, you can rise from the heels without swaying the body forward from the ankles, or bending it from the waist.

The second thing to be learnt is correct breathing. You will have noticed, no doubt, how much stress is now laid upon this matter. There are four modes of respiration, all of which you must comprehend. The first I shall mention is that movement of the upper chest, called "clavicular breathing," which is the wrong and improper kind. The only true and healthful method is the "diaphragmatic action." To obtain this, the chest should be raised, or what is called "active," and fixed by muscular effort entirely independent of the breathing. Raise and lower the chest muscularly, at the same time drawing back the abdomen. When you have placed yourself in this position, place the tips of your fingers in front, on the line of the waist, and take a deep breath very slowly through the nostrils. You should then feel below your fingers a perceptible forward movement. Hold the breath a moment, and then exhale it as slowly as you inhaled it, and do this until you understand completely the method of "abdominal breathing." "Intercostal," or side breathing is the next kind, and for this you must place the backs of your fingers against the lower ribs, still keeping the line of the waist, and take a deep breath through the nostrils, and at the same time you will feel your breath against your fingers. Inhale slowly, and hold the breath, exhaling it slowly.

"Dorsal breathing" completes the action of the diaphragm. Place the two thumbs on either side of the backbone, still on the waist-line, and taking the breath as before, you will feel the movement against your thumbs; count three while inhaling, holding, and exhaling the breath. Avoid, in these exercises, any movement of the upper chest. The right aim should be to exercise all these muscles, and keep them active by using them simultaneously.

The following extract is taken from a recent article on the subject of breathing, and will be found interesting to our readers, I am sure.

"Men and women do not breathe alike.

"In a woman the breathing is from the thorax, or chest, while in a man it is mainly from the diaphragm, which is lower down. This peculiar difference is so marked that it is possible to recognise by it a woman disguised as a man, although the disguise may be faultless in other respects. Most physiologists say that this difference is not due to sex, but owing to artificial conditions, such as the wearing of corsets.

"A Philadelphia doctor made a series of investigations on the subject a short time ago, and from this it would seem that where the

body is unconfined the stomach moves in breathing, but where corsets are worn the breathing moves the chest. Eighty-two girls, from ten to twenty-two years of age, were examined, half of whom were of pure Indian blood, the others being of mixed descent. Seventy-five breathed from the diaphragm, and the other seven from the thorax or the side. The latter belonged to comparatively civilised tribes."

The correct position to stand in for the performance of these exercises is the first one, but with the heels slightly apart. The test of the correct position is, as I said before, that you can rise on your tiptoes, from your heels, without swaying the body forward from the ankles, or bending it at the waist. The first exercise I have selected is one of the oldest, but it is an invaluable one for girls; as it develops the biceps and triceps muscles, and the upper arm. The first position is shown at Fig. 1, the second at Fig. 2. Do not lower the arm in performing it, but keep it level, and strike out the arms, bringing them back also strongly to place on the shoulder. This exercise should be performed ten times, gradually rising to twenty, counting carefully at each exercise as you take them in rotation.

At Figs. 3 and 4 we show the exercises of the waist and body. That of the waist is performed by placing the hands at each side of the waist, and then bend the body to the right and then to the left, as far as possible. The second part of this exercise is to turn the body round, to the utmost extent, to the left and then equally so to the right; neither moving the feet nor bending the body forward, nor yet from side to side. Make these movements very slowly. Fig. 4 is also to be performed very slowly, without jerking or force; feeling the even stretching of the muscles. Great care must be taken in following this advice, and in keeping the feet steady and firm.

Fig. 5 is an excellent and most beneficial exercise, especially for "grown-ups." Keep the body erect, and gradually bending both knees, sink by degrees in a sitting position to the floor, landing, if possible, on the heels. Directly that you have reached the lowest position possible, spring up to the first position in which you began, standing firmly on both feet. I fear very few people will be able to manage this exercise without a few months' practice every morning. It is extremely difficult to recover the elasticity of the knee muscles if once it have been lost; and a good rubbing with oil will often be of service in reducing the stiffness. The increase in the elasticity of the muscles of the thigh will make walking so much more pleasant, that it is worth while to persevere.

Figs. 6 and 7 are continuations of the same thought, and form, also, an admirable exercise in securing grace of movement. The first (Fig. 6) part is, to put the foot forward and place it on the ground firmly, and as you do so, to sink on it, bearing your weight forward upon it, and assuming the position of Fig. 7. This should be practised till you can perform it easily on either the right or the left foot. Resume the upright position with a springy movement, but be graceful and slow in what you do at all times. In jerky-haste, grace of movement can never exist.

One of the most important of our exercises is that at Fig. 8, called by many people the "sleep producer," from a conviction that its performance each night will lead to natural sleep. Indeed, walking about the room on the tips of the toes has been suggested, I believe, by a well-known doctor as a good exercise for the purpose. Placing your feet in the position already taught you, rise slowly on your toes, lifting the heels as far as possible from the floor. Rest, or poise yourself in this position for ten seconds, then allow the heels to touch the floor, but do not come down

heavily, nor sway the body in any degree. Rise quite high enough to walk on the toes, and persevere till you can perform the exercise fifty times without fatigue; but do not exceed ten times, for at least a fortnight, with any of these exercises if you have not performed them before.

And now I must mention here several exercises which I have not thought it needful to illustrate, as they can be learnt by anyone easily. The exercises of Figs. 3 and 4 should be practised for the neck, as well to give strength to the muscles of the neck and throat, as to conquer the bad habit of hanging the head. First, bend the head backwards and forwards ten times, then from side to side ten times; and then turn the head round slowly from left to right, till a perfect profile be formed when looking direct over each shoulder successively. Keep the head up and the body fixed. There are numbers of the exercises performed with dumb-bells that can be better performed without them; such as extending the arms on each side, and bringing them to meet in front, holding them down on each side, and raising them to meet over the head, and keeping the arms stiff and quite straight. Lastly, the exercise now so fashionable of making full and complete circles with each arm successively; first a forward sweep and then a reverse one to the back. Ten times is the utmost that these should be practised, and even less. I have no doubt many of my girl readers will know these exercises well, the latter being a favourite one for Indian clubs.

The following are the celebrated Dr. Schreiber's exercises in the exact order of rhythmic gestures recommended by him.

1. Describe a circular movement with each arm, twenty times in succession. Extend the arms forward, outwards and upwards, thirty times in succession, taking eight or ten deep inspirations between each series.

2. Execute a circular movement from the waist, swaying the upper part of the body slowly round, the hands resting on the hips, thirty times.

3. Extend the leg as nearly at right angles with the body as possible, twelve times a side, taking eight or ten deep inspirations between each series.

4. Extend and bend the foot twenty times each side, and perform the gesture of reaping or sawing thirty times. Bend the knee rapidly twenty times, and take eight or ten inspirations.

5. Raise the arm swiftly and rapidly, as in the action of throwing a lance, twelve times in succession; throw out both arms simultaneously twenty or thirty times, and take from eight to ten deep inspirations.

6. Trot on one spot, resting the hands on the hips, and lifting the feet briskly, one to three hundred times, and take eight or ten deep inspirations.

7. Jump with the hands on the hips, and the head and the body erect, fifty or one hundred times, and take eight or ten inspirations.

The orderly execution of these movements takes about half an hour. They should have intervals of repose between them; but all the vigour and heartiness possible should be put into them; every gesture being simple, resolute and well-defined, each separated by a distinct pause from the preceding and following movements. Be careful to avoid fatigue, distress, and exhaustion, and preserve the feeling of pleasure in motion if possible. I have taken these exercises at full length from a well-known writer, whose book on health is admirable in every way, because since the first article appeared we have had so many queries on the subject, and entreaties for some simple, plain rules which could be exactly followed, either for the instruction of teachers



FIG. 6.—FIRST MOVEMENT IN STOOPING TO PICK UP.



FIG. 7.—STOOPING TO PICK UP.

or the help of adults. These exercises are excellent for both purposes, and everyone can comprehend them.

In conclusion, I must say, that upon the art of standing correctly all the health and beauty of the person depends. The poising of the body allows nature to perform all her functions, and prevents the fatigue which makes walking a pain and grief to most women and even young girls. Holding the chest erect lifts all the organs into a proper position; the abdomen drawn back, and the body poised on the balls of both feet, is the position intended by Dame Nature. Most girls throw the shoulders back, settle the

weight on the heels; or else they huddle up the shoulders, compress the chest, and round their backs. You have only to observe how women walk in the eternal procession of the London streets, to correct your own faults, and learn where everyone fails in grace and beauty.

A few more words as to Figs. 9 and 10. The first represents the correct method of going up-stairs. The usual way of mounting is in a stooping attitude, which effectually prevents proper breath being taken, or the expansion of the lungs, so needful to increased exertion. Very little fatigue is felt if the proper attitude be preserved. Fig. 10

represents the modern method of playing battledore and shuttlecock, for one's own personal amusement and exercise; and that is, to play it high enough, to make it really exercise. Not the stupid pastime which is dangerous, as well as foolish, of hitting the shuttlecock up and down endlessly, and counting to see how many times you can keep it up. This is not exercise, and only fatigues the head, eyes, and brain.



FIG. 8.—RISING ON THE TOES.



FIG. 9.—THE CORRECT METHOD OF GOING UP-STAIRS.



FIG. 10.—BATTLEDORE AND SHUTTLECOCK.