

THE ATHLETIC GIRL.

BY ANNE O'HAGAN.

THE REVOLUTION THAT HAS OPENED THE REALM OF OUTDOOR SPORT TO WOMAN, AND THE CHANGES IT HAS BROUGHT IN HER HABITS, HER DRESS, AND HER HEALTH.

NOT long since, a very entertaining writer, named Gerald Stanley Lee, who seemed to be suffering from an attack of that scorn of majorities which is inevitable in a country ruled by them, ridiculed the pretensions of the crowd, and jeered at the intelligence which sought to accomplish all things by monster mass meetings. He made numerous witty remarks on the convention as a cure all, and to prove how very slight is its influence, when compared with that of the single enlightened mind, he instanced the dress reformer and the bicycle. He declared that what conferences unnumbered and "movements" beyond the possibility of counting had failed to do had been quietly

accomplished by the unaided efforts of the man who placed the first "ladies' wheel" upon the market.

There may be, of course, some who will object to Mr. Lee's contention, and who will claim that the Hartford manufacturer owes as much to women as women owe to him; who will assert that only minds prepared by the discourses of the delegates to many conventions would have given open welcome to a toy requiring a marked change in attire.

However that may be, one point is indisputable; to whomsoever the athletic woman owes her existence, to him or her the whole world of women owes a debt incomparably great. Absolutely no other



THE ATHLETIC GIRL ON THE GOLF LINKS—OF THE TWELVE HUNDRED GOLF CLUBS IN THE UNITED STATES THERE IS ONLY ONE THAT EXCLUDES WOMEN.

social achievement in the behalf of women is so important and so far reaching in its results. The winning of the Sacred Latchkey, from which such magnificent results were argued, and the half winning of the ballot, are far less important, even in the minds of those who fought for them. With the single exception of the improvement in the legal status of women, their entrance into the realm of sports is the most cheering thing that has happened to them in the century just past.

THE BENEFIT TO BODY AND MIND.

In the first place, there is the question of health. The general adoption of athletic sports by women meant the gradual disappearance of the swooning damsel of old romance, and of that very real creature, the lady who delighted, a decade or so ago, to describe herself as "highstrung," which, being properly interpreted, meant uncontrolled and difficult to live with. Women who didn't like athletics were forced to take them up in self defense; and exercise meant firmer muscles, better circulation, a more equable temper, and the dethronement of the "nervous headache" from its high place in feminine regard.

The revolution meant as much psychologically as it did physically. After all, philosophy and ethics have a certain weak kneed tendency to form themselves upon tastes and desires instead of forming these; so that any course which inculcates a taste for wholesome living and a desire for simplicity and sunshine is of incalculable benefit even in the realm of morals.

In dress, since the day when the Greek girdle became the Teutonic corset, no boon has been granted to woman so great as the privilege of wearing shirt waists and short skirts. When the tennis players of ten or fifteen years ago first popularized that boneless, free chested, loose armed bodice they struck a blow for feminine freedom compared with which the vigorous assaults of Mrs. Jenness Miller and Mme. Sarah Grand were puny thimble taps. The woman who plays golf has made it possible for the woman who cannot distinguish between a cleek and a broom handle to go about her marketing in a short skirt; she has given the working girl, who never saw a golf course, freedom from the tyranny of braids and bindings; she has made wet ankles an unnecessary evil, and restored to the street sweeping department entire responsibility for the condition of the thoroughfares.

To have improved half the race in health, disposition, and dress would seem

almost enough for one movement to have accomplished. But athletics have done more than this. They have robbed old age of some of its terrors for women, and they promise to rob it of more. The golfing grandmother is a subject upon which the humorist occasionally whets his wits; but those in whom the sense of humor is not so strong can only rejoice in everything that adds to the pleasure, the interests, and the health of the good lady who for generations has been forced to consider herself amply repaid for the trials of a long life by the privilege of taking care of her grandchildren whenever their parents needed a holiday. It is a magnificent institution which has exchanged her felt slippers for the calfskin boots of the athlete, and has delayed for fifteen or twenty years the purchase of the lace cap of her decrepitude. Any one who can see, in the spectacle of a gray haired couple wheeling along in the spring sunshine, only an object for mirthfulness, has developed his sense of humor at the expense of other and even more valuable senses.

WHEN "PLAY" WAS "WISELY BANISHED."

There was a time, which one does not have to be an Oldest Inhabitant to recall, when American women took no part in outdoor sports or in any form of exercise. It is not a quarter of a century since the round eyed children of Washington used to press their faces against the iron fence surrounding the British legation grounds and gaze with wonder and awe at the young Englishwomen playing tennis. They could see croquet without pausing in their own occupations to gape and to speculate concerning its nature, but any more violent sport was unfamiliar to them. Now it would require an open air trapeze performance to stir their wonder.

Twenty five years ago a woman so fortunate as to live in the country probably rode on horseback—primarily as a means of locomotion, however. She could also play croquet. The city woman might walk, and she too might play croquet, if she had a large enough lawn; but that was about the sum of the sports permitted.

The change began with the gradual introduction of physical training into the schools. Today there is not a girls' school of any standing that does not include in its curriculum a course in gymnastics, and encourage or insist upon some sort of outdoor exercise. In the public schools in the large cities supervisors and instructors of physical culture are chosen as carefully as the teachers of mathematics and history. Boards of education require that



THE ATHLETIC GIRL ON THE TENNIS COURT—
LAWN TENNIS IS A GAME IN WHICH
WOMEN ARE A PARTICULARLY
STRONG FACTOR.

the newer school buildings shall be properly equipped with gymnasiums. It is a long journey to this condition from that which prevailed when one of the most public spirited of our early citizens said exultingly of a Maryland college: "The Methodists have wisely banished every species of play from their college."

That was Dr. Benjamin Rush's opinion about a hundred years ago, and it prevailed so widely that there was no physical training in any American institution, except West Point, until 1825. As for physical culture for girls—our good forebears would have expected a thunderbolt from heaven to answer the impious suggestion.

DIO LEWIS AND HIS WORK.

Until the time of Dr. Dio Lewis to attempt worthy the name was made to apply the "sound mind in a sound body" saw to the education of girls. Probably it was deemed unnecessary for them to have sound minds. Miss Catherine Beecher, in 1837, had introduced into a Cincinnati school a set of callisthenic exercises whose sole aim was to give gracefulness "without dancing." They were mild exercises and rather futile ones, but Miss Beecher thought them all that a well regulated young person of the then gentler sex should have. Later, she expressed her disapproval of Dr. Lewis' exercises. "They were so vigorous and *ungraceful*," she wrote, "as to be more suitable for boys than for young ladies." It is disturbing

to imagine what Miss Beecher's feelings would be if she could read the daily newspapers now, with their reports of fashionable women riding astride and of college girls temporarily disabled in basket ball games.

When Dr. Lewis' Normal Institute for Physical Education was opened in Boston in 1861, with President Felton of Harvard as its presiding officer and its active supporter, people breathed a sigh of relief and sank back convinced that the relation of women to exercise was settled with dignity, finality, and gentility.

A full course of training at this estab-



THE ATHLETIC GIRL IN THE SALLE D'ARMES—FENCING IS A SPORT THAT HAS MANY FEMININE DEVOTEES IN NEW YORK AND ELSEWHERE.

ishment took just ten weeks, and consisted in the familiar dumb bell and club movements. Today a normal course in physical culture occupies two years of eight months each, and includes instruction in such airy branches as anatomy,

anthropometry, physiology, and physical diagnosis.

AN AWAKENING IN THE COLLEGES.

In 1878 the Hemenway Gymnasium was established at Harvard, under Dr. D.

A. Sargent, the most accomplished athlete of his time at Bowdoin, the stroke oar of the college crew, and afterwards a successful physician and teacher of gymnastics at Yale; and the cause of women's exercises looked up as well as men's. At that time women's colleges had not quite proved themselves. They were taking serious pains to make their course no less thorough than that of the masculine institutions. If Harvard had such a gymnasium and such an athletic instructor, then Vassar and Wellesley and the rest must bestir themselves on the physical culture side. Today the Hemenway Gymnasium is itself important to women, being open to them, with the rest of Harvard, for the summer school work.

The result was a gradual supplanting of the old two by two walking system of the seminaries. Today no college for women would think of sending out a catalogue without its alluring half tone cuts of the interior or exterior of its gymnasium, its duly set forth attractions in lake or river, tennis and hand ball courts, golf grounds, and the like.

That the gymnastic and athletic work at women's colleges is a real factor in promoting health, and not merely an unimportant though natural catering to a prevalent craze, is shown by statistics. At Wellesley, where rowing is the chief of the outdoor amusements, and where class and college crews practice during five winter months in the gymnasium, as well as on the lake, measurements were kept for many seasons. The average girth of chest in November, in the case of forty students, was 31.5 inches, and the average shoulder measurement 14.4 inches, while the average strength of the back was represented by a hundred and forty five pounds. In May, after five months of gymnasium training for the lake and one month of actual rowing on it, the average chest measurement was 33.4 inches; shoulder measurement, 15.3; strength of back, a hundred and sixty two pounds.

Forty other students, who had not been in the crews, but who had taken a course of Swedish gymnastics, showed an increase of chest girth from 31.6 to 33.4 inches; of shoulder girth from 14.6 to 15.4, and of strength in the back from a hundred and forty five to a hundred and sixty six.

Another forty girls, excused for various reasons from all gymnastic and athletic work, showed no increase whatever in the average chest measurement of 31.6 inches, or in the average shoulder measurement of 14.9 inches, while the average back strength decreased from a hundred and

forty six to a hundred and eighteen pounds.

Measurements kept in another woman's gymnasium show that in six months of regular exercise of about three hours a week, there was an average gain of about two inches in chest girth, and as much in chest depth; an average gain in lung capacity of about seventeen cubic inches; an increase in shoulder measurements of about one and a quarter inches, while the increase in back strength was about forty pounds, and in leg strength about sixty pounds.

Even women long past the age for striking changes in physical measurements are affected by the regular exercise of the gymnasium. Dr. Mary Taylor Bissell, one of the most prominent physicians in New York, who has been connected with gymnastic work for women for many years, cites the case of a woman of thirty seven, who, after a seven months' course of two hours a week in a gymnasium, found that her chest increased four fifths of an inch, her waist lessened one and four tenths inches, and her hips two inches, while her lung capacity increased thirty cubic inches.

THE GROWTH OF COLLEGE SPORTS.

From being the chief factor in the athletic life of the women's colleges, the gymnasiums have grown to be distinctly subsidiary. They supplement the outdoor exercises which the location of most of the institutions for higher education makes so natural and attractive. Each has its specialty in the line of sport, and the young woman who wins a championship in rowing, swimming, track events, basket ball, bicycling, or whatever it may be, is a lionized creature who tastes for once the sweets of the cup of utter adulation.

At Wellesley, where the distinctive sport is rowing, Float Day is the banner festival of the year. No girl is allowed to row upon the crews who is not able to swim, but, even with this wise precaution, the only contest permitted is in rowing form, not in speed. Bryn Mawr has by far the most complete and elaborate of the gymnasiums connected with the women's colleges, and its basket ball is famous wherever college women, past, present, or to be, are gathered together. Vassar's tennis vies with her basket ball in the hearts of her students. At Smith, in addition to all sorts of general outdoor sports, there is snowshoeing. At Mount Holyoke, a rink polo club is a feature of the winter life. Vassar's ice carnival is as famous as Wellesley's aquatic festival.

Just now the active gatherer of feminine sporting news makes rather a specialty of alleged accidents in the basket ball courts—items which an anti college education league, if there is one outside of Elbert Hubbard, would find admirable for parental reading. As a matter of fact, there are no serious mishaps in the games; and if there were, it would prove nothing in particular. An old graduate of Vassar tells somewhere a delightful tale of the faculty's blinking at small accidents in the days before gymnasiums, when the world of outdoor sports was undreamed of so far as women were concerned.

In those dark times the irrepressible energy of the young women found its outlet in a form of baseball played with some skill, great vigor, and the utmost secrecy. The faculty knew, of course, that the young women were emulating the idols of the bleachers, but they sanctioned the game to the extent of not prohibiting it. One day a young woman broke her leg in a game. Dread sat heavily upon the other enthusiasts. They had no hope that the faculty would allow them to continue their pastime; but the authorities proved unexpectedly reasonable, admitting that accidents were liable to occur in the best regulated sports, and agreeing that baseball was no more to be condemned for the young woman's broken leg than dancing would be if she had slipped upon the floor in a waltz. Whereupon, to bear out this benign judgment, a girl fell a few months later while she was dancing, obligingly broke her leg, and thereby saved baseball from exclusive aspersions.

There are many reasons why college athletics for women are the most important of all. In the first place, a girl who, while struggling for a degree, develops a taste for outdoor sports, never loses it. The chances are ten to one that as a grandmother, she will be an active pedestrian or mountain climber, and that the only chimney corner which she will agree to occupy will be that in a country club after a vigorous day's sport. Moreover, it is college athletics that have the greatest effect upon the physique of women. Once they have attained their full growth, exercise may keep them well, or make them stout or thin, but it will not have the marked effect upon their bodily development that it has upon that of a growing girl.

PHYSICAL CULTURE IN THE CITIES.

Once upon a time the young woman who came out of college was somewhat at a loss how to expend her energy and to

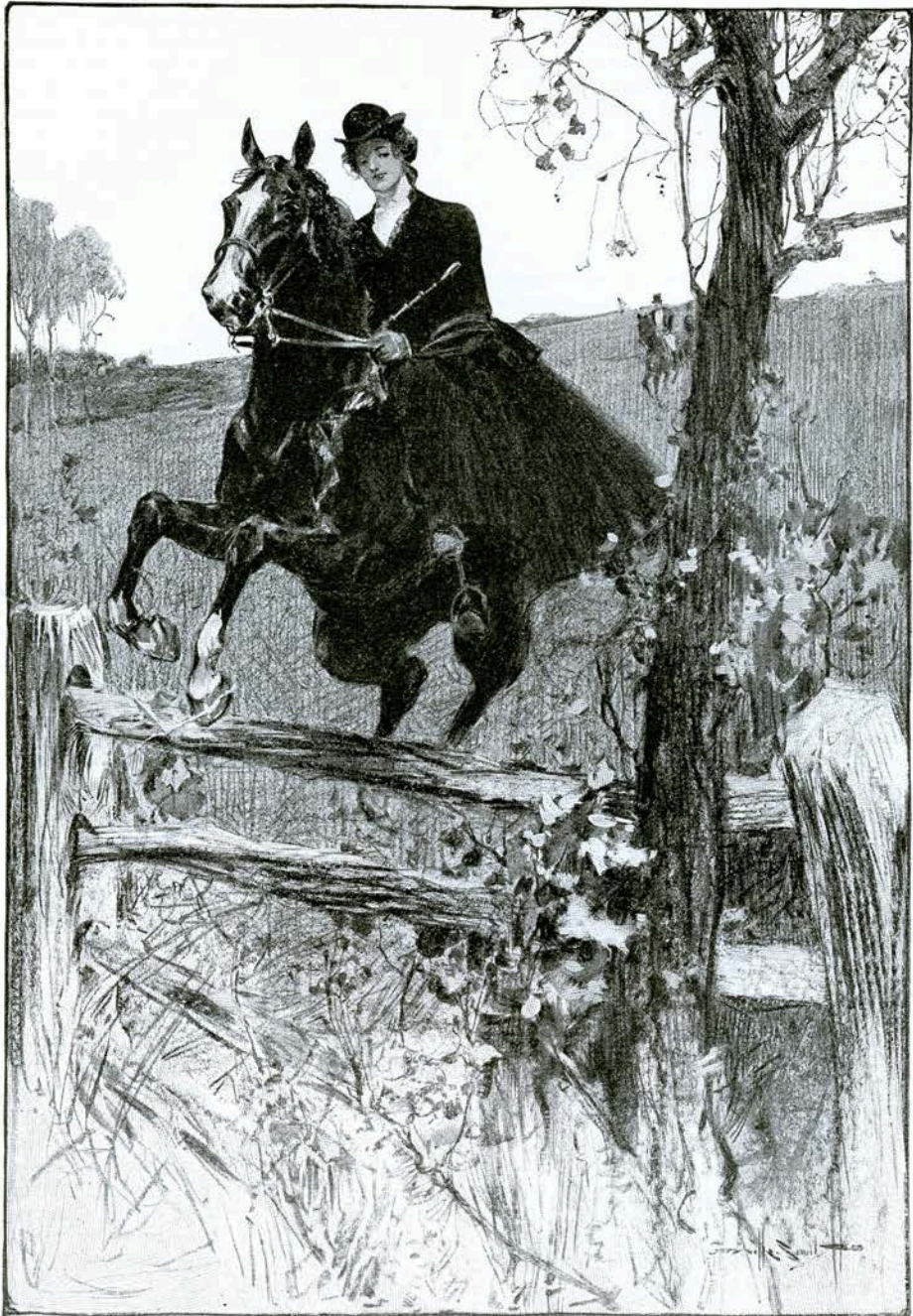
keep up her sports. Bicycles, golf, and the country clubs have altered that. Moreover, for those seasons when the rigors of the miscalled temperate zone make outdoor exercise almost an impossibility, there are, in the large cities at any rate, excellent gymnasiums. In New York, for instance, apart from the gymnasiums in all the schools, in the working girls' clubs, and in the various branches of the Young Women's Christian Association, there are at least six well known private gymnasiums where women may pursue physical culture to their hearts' content and the good of their bodies.

Many systems have been developed since Dr. Lewis first tackled the problem. You may go to a Swedish gymnasium, where no small apparatus is used, but only body movements and exercises on the larger apparatus are practised. You may go to a place where the German system is in vogue. Athletics in this country, by the way, owe a great deal to the German citizens, whose *turn vereins* were among the earliest athletic associations.

In gymnasiums managed on the German plan, all sorts of apparatus are used. In the Delsartean schools of grace there is no apparatus at all. The Delsartean's secret of a happy life is relaxation, and she does not believe that a wooden horse or a vaulting pole is an aid to relaxation. The American system, as the one developed by Dr. Sargent at the Hemenway Gymnasium is called, is, in a way, a combination of all. It is almost universal in this country, forty eight of the leading gymnasiums having adopted it.

Between three and four hundred women are enrolled as pupils of the Savage Gymnasium, which, both in attendance and equipment, is the largest in New York. There are classes and there is individual work. Fencing and boxing, both of which have many ardent disciples, are taught privately. Girls of five and women of fifty and sixty are among the patrons. It is an encouraging fact that the gray haired women look almost as well in their blue and crimson bloomers and blouses as the little girls.

The cost of being a gymnast in New York varies. There is one gymnasium with pillowed couches about the room, soft, lovely lights, and walls that rest weary eyes; where a crisp capped maid brings the exerciser a cup of milk during her rest upon the divan, where her boots are laced or buttoned by deft fingers other than her own. For these privileges and the ordinary ones of gymnastic training the charge is a hundred dollars a year.



THE ATHLETIC GIRL RIDING TO HOUNDS—SOME OF THE MOST SKILFUL RIDERS OF THE HUNT CLUBS ON LONG ISLAND, IN THE GENESEE VALLEY, AND ELSEWHERE, ARE WOMEN.

Forty dollars covers the cost in less Sybaritic circles, and if one has the distinction of being a working woman, ten dollars will pay for gymnastic instruction and privileges. The gymnasiums con-

nected with the Christian Associations, the working girls' clubs, the settlements, and the like are even less expensive.

What New York offers women in gymnastic opportunities, all the other large

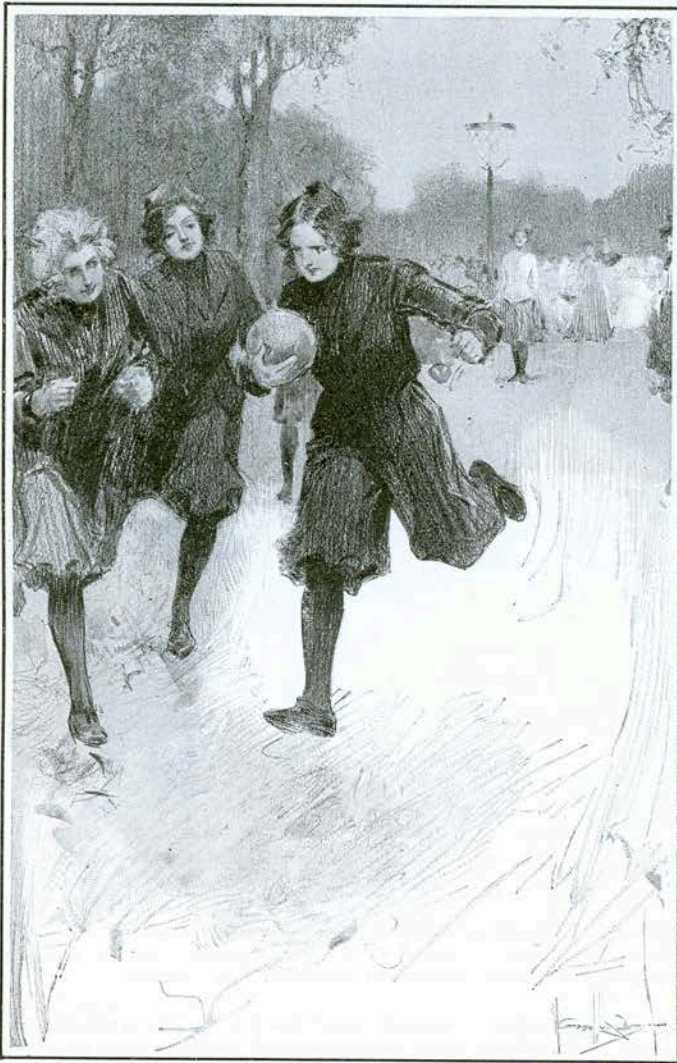
cities duplicate. Chicago, indeed, is in advance of the metropolis, for it has a woman's athletic club, the only large and successful one now in operation in this country. It was started more than a year ago through the efforts of Mrs. Pauline H. Lyon, who interested Mrs. Philip Armour, Mrs. Potter Palmer, Mrs. Emmons Blaine, and other wealthy women in the project. A business building was remodeled to fit the needs of the club, the cost being about sixty thousand dollars. In addition to the gymnasium proper, a swimming tank, sixty five feet long, eighteen feet wide, and nine deep, has been con-

structed. It is constantly filled with filtered water, and mirrored sides and ceilings add to the glittering effect. A Swedish teacher of swimming was engaged, and the gymnasium instructor is also a graduate in the Swedish methods. There are bowling alleys, rooms for fencing, a Turkish bath, parlors, library, a tea room, diningroom, and everything that such a club could possibly require. And—a crowning glory—there are absolutely no literary or social annexes to the athletics.

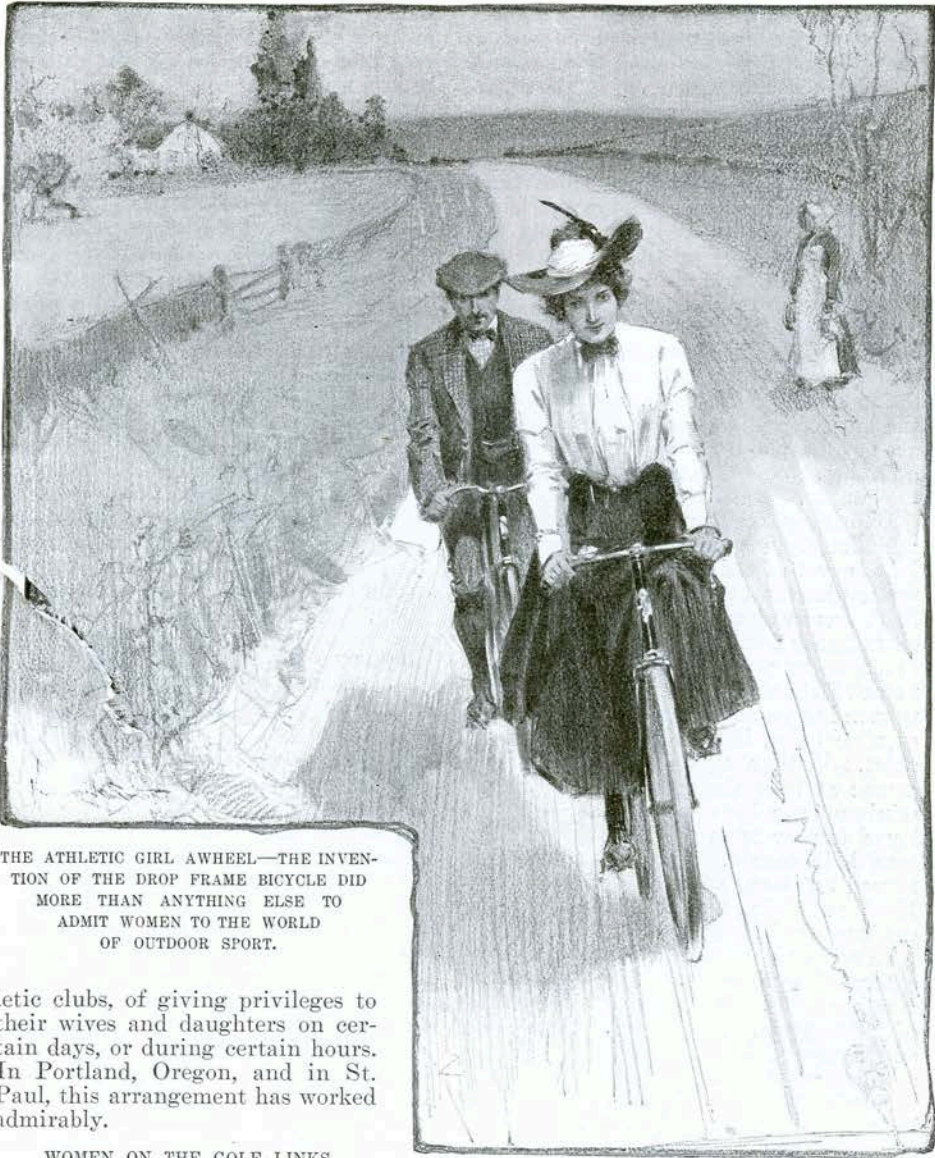
In London there is an older and even more interesting club where women may exercise, swim, fence, bowl, and become

general athletes. Its greater interest lies in the fact that it is a sort of coëducatonal venture, men and women belonging. The seven years of the Bath Club's existence have demonstrated the entire practicability of the scheme. It has a membership of about two thousand, one third of whom are women. It is a very distinguished membership at that, including Lord and Lady Curzon, the Marchioness of Granby, the Countess of Minto, the Duchess of Sutherland, and no end of "smart" London women. For women, the entrance fee is twenty five dollars, and the annual dues for both town and country members thirty five dollars. The Turkish bath, the gymnasium, and the swimming pool are open to women three days a week and to men three. There are two sets of apartments for fencing, bowling, and so on.

In one or two progressive Western cities the plan has been tried, by the generous men's ath-



THE ATHLETIC GIRL PLAYING BASKET BALL—THIS VIGOROUS AND EXCITING GAME HOLDS A POSITION AT MANY OF THE WOMEN'S COLLEGES CORRESPONDING TO THAT OF FOOTBALL AT THE MEN'S UNIVERSITIES.



THE ATHLETIC GIRL AWHEEL—THE INVENTION OF THE DROP FRAME BICYCLE DID MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE TO ADMIT WOMEN TO THE WORLD OF OUTDOOR SPORT.

letic clubs, of giving privileges to their wives and daughters on certain days, or during certain hours. In Portland, Oregon, and in St. Paul, this arrangement has worked admirably.

WOMEN ON THE GOLF LINKS.

With the gradual athletic development of women, the tendency of men to regard their gymnasiums and country clubs as close corporations from which women must be barred at any cost, is disappearing. Of all the twelve hundred golf clubs which dot the United States with red and white flags, only one was instituted upon the monastic principle of excluding women. A club near Chicago was guilty of this painful lack of gallantry, and there was, at the time of its formation, not much hope that it would be long able to resist public sentiment.

There are, however, many courses where women are not allowed to play on Sundays and holidays. There is excellent and almost universal masculine testimony to the fact that on crowded days nothing so discourages a man as women playing before him on the golf links. In England, where women have had their own golf associations since 1867, this difficulty was settled to the entire satisfaction of the men by providing the women with small separate links of perhaps five holes, where they could very comfortably play a sort of ladylike golf, a close relative of croquet.

There is something to be said in favor of the separate course, though not of such as those early English ones, now happily abandoned. The best drive of the champion women players is equal in distance to the average drive of the average man. In other words, Miss Beatrix Hoyt, of the Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, three times the national woman's champion, has a drive of from a hundred and twenty to a hundred and sixty yards. The men who are champions drive off from two hundred to two hundred and fifty yards. A good average drive for a man is a hundred and fifty yards. Therefore it often happens that the woman playing on a course laid out by men and for men either drives into the bunker and wastes several strokes to get out, or, playing purposely short, loses a stroke at once in endeavoring to avoid the bunker.

In driving, skill counts most, but muscle undoubtedly counts for something also. In the rest of the game the well trained woman has an equal chance with a man. Still, most women would rather lose that extra stroke from the tee than be banished to a nursery course, as it were. At Shinnecock Hills there is a separate course for women known as the "red" course. It is of nine holes, but the distances are not short. Until a woman has played this course at least three times in a certain minimum number of strokes, she is not allowed to play upon the "white," or eighteen hole course. The red course has turned out some admirable players, Miss Hoyt and Mrs. Charles Turnure being graduates of it.

In some places women have been more enterprising than men in the matter of forming clubs. The Morris County Club, of Morristown, New Jersey, was started and managed by women alone. In the associations of golf clubs there are both women's and men's. There is a Women's Metropolitan Association, under whose direction the women's championship matches have been played. There is a women's association of the clubs around Boston, though there is not yet a men's.

Every country club nowadays has its golf course, and perhaps three fourths of the country clubs are merely golf clubs. All this has come about in a very short space of time. St. Andrew's, near Yonkers, was the first golf club in this country, and the links were laid out only fifteen years ago amid much derision. Up to that time a country club was generally either a riding and driving or a hunt club, and women were admitted by courtesy, or, in a few instances, through actual achieve-

ment. The membership was of the rich leisured class, the healthy spirit of democracy that characterizes the golf club being utterly unknown.

WOMEN AFIELD AND AFLOAT.

On Long Island, women have ridden to hounds, after the satisfactory fashion of their English cousins, for a long time. Occasionally the newspapers have recorded an accident in the cross country runs of the women on Hempstead Plains, or at Lakewood or Aiken, but on the whole the casualties have been infrequent.

In water sports the American woman is not so proficient as her cousin across the Atlantic. Most Englishwomen can row; many race their own yachts, and not a few have reputations as swimmers. Lady Constance McKenzie is the swimming champion of the Bath Club, mentioned before, and there are cases on record where young Englishwomen, challenged to jump overboard from a yacht and swim to shore in the full regalia of serge and calfskin, have not hesitated to plunge in and cover themselves with glory and water. Only the "lady natators" of the dime museums would be likely to do that in this country.

Water tournaments in general are little known here, although the number of those who dare great feats in the waves is increasing. The Newport colony, too, has several women who can sail small craft, and a race with feminine skippers takes place every year.

Of course there is not any equality between the athletic accomplishments of women and those of men. The best Vassar "dasher" could not do a hundred yards in less than thirteen seconds, while the men's college record is nine seconds and four fifths. Vassar's running high jump is four feet and five inches, instead of six feet and two inches like the University of Pennsylvania, and so on. But this is no more to be deplored than it is to be wondered at or changed. In gymnastic work the record breakers, according to the medical authorities, generally find their reserve strength gone by the time they are forty five. The aim of athletics among women has been the establishment and maintenance of a high general standard of health and vigor, rather than some single brilliant achievement.

So far, with a few notorious exceptions, like the triple century riders, women have made freedom and fun their objects in athletics; and there are certain indications that this temperate view of the subject is gaining ground even in the ranks of the record breaking sex itself.