

## PHYSICAL TRAINING FOR SCHOOLBOYS.

BY

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I PROPOSE to make a few general observations on what a rather extended experience has shown to be the most useful in the way of organization and equipment for developing the physical nature of schoolboys. While it will, of course, be admitted that the best foundation can be laid in the gymnasium, healthy outdoor sports, properly conducted, should accompany or follow this training. Obviously, however, all training, physical as well as mental, should be adapted, as much as possible, to individual capacity. The first thing to be done, therefore, is to subject each boy to a careful physical examination by experts. On the result of this examination, duly recorded and periodically repeated, proper exercises can be prescribed. A gymnasium of ample size should be provided, but its equipment should be installed, not all at the start on the prescription of an interested manufacturer or an inexperienced physical director, but as a thoroughly accomplished teacher shall have felt his way to his needs in the course of handling the particular school in which he finds himself.

In the selection of this man the greatest wisdom is required. He must be a born leader of boys, a man of irreproachable character and boundless energy. No salary on the pay-roll, except that of the Principal, should be higher than his. To procure the services of any man below this standard is to waste money. The deadest thing known is lifeless gymnastics.

The gymnasium properly equipped and managed, we turn to the playground. A city school should have at least five acres to every 100 boys, and a boarding school from ten to fifteen acres. These fields should be laid out for the out-of-door games most popular in the school to be provided for. The plans should be drawn only after a careful examination of the best fields of the country. Drainage presents the chief difficulty. No playing-field (including running tracks, jumping pits, and runways) can be regarded as adequate without well-nigh perfect drainage. With correct plans and specifications, and honest contractors, supervised by a skilled engineer, the desired results can be realized—but in no other way.

With proper fields, the organization of the games to be played on them is in order. It is absolutely essential that there be in charge of each of the leading sports of the school, a skilled instructor of the highest character, a man with whom any patron of the school would be willing that his son should associate intimately. Such men are rare, and they come high, but they must be had.

As regards the eligibility of players, I would say that too much care cannot possibly be exercised in this regard. The aim should be, at least in all competitive games, first, to utilize to the fullest possible extent, the incentive to advancement in studies afforded by rightly managed games; second, to play together boys of substantially the same age and strength; and, third, to legislate against migration from one school to another—that is, for athletic purposes.

To secure these ends, absolutely bar from participation in competitive games: (1) all boys who have completed their 20th year; (2) those who have failed to pass their college or technical school admission examinations; (3) those who have not completed a full year of attendance at their school; (4) those whose class has graduated, whether they themselves failed or not. Foul play and roughness arise from the following causes: (1) the way the teams are made up, hence the eligibility rules just proposed; (2) the way they are handled before the games, hence coaches of the highest character and skill; (3) the way they are handled during the games, hence officers of skill, integrity, and backbone.

While these regulations and precautions apply with greatest force to football, baseball, basketball, and hockey, they also apply, though with less force, to track sports and cricket. Boys ineligible by this code, however, should be allowed to play in practice games, or games played (alas! all too infrequently in these days) for pure sport. Had such a code of rules as that suggested been in force in the schools of the country, during the past two or three years, most of the objections advanced against certain sports would never have been made. The moment sports are brought into the position that they should occupy in an educational institution, and the temptation to import athletes is removed, the whole complexion of the situation is changed.

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### THE BODILY BASIS OF EDUCATION.

BY

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**P**HYSICAL education is a term which only in comparatively recent years has come to have a definite meaning. The work of the specialist in physical education is in part to prescribe exercises (corrective gymnastics) applicable to certain disorders and malformations, as spinal curvature; but it is his work chiefly to secure, through appropriate muscular exercises, the highest general bodily efficiency and vigor of the individual. Time was when the services of such a specialist were not generally needed, and when

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they could not have been secured if they had been needed. When children generally ran wild in the country—in the woods, along the streams, across the fields—and when parents led lives of manifold bodily activities, on the farm, or in the shop, with plenty of air, and exercise, and change, there was little need of what Herbert Spencer has called the “factitious exercise” of the gymnasium. A man who swung an axe all day had little use for Indian clubs. But the life of to-day differs from that of a generation ago in being largely urbanized, and largely specialized. Urbanization, generally speaking, tends to deprive of air and space, to force people to ride instead of to walk, to cramp the chest, curve the back, “wing” the shoulder-blades, dwarf the legs, and protrude the abdomen. Specialization tends to cultivate a narrow set of muscles or powers, and at the expense of “general somatic life.” Both tend to overwork the nerves and underwork the muscles. To these conditions is to be added the fact that children to-day spend a longer time than formerly under the physically cramping and devitalizing influences of schools. For both urbanization and specialization the specific remedy is afforded by the specialist in physical education. As an integral part of the school he undertakes to provide the exercise which the conditions of life do not afford, to counteract the ills incident to indoor and sedentary occupations, to fortify the body in childhood and youth so that it can stand the strain of later life.

Any one who will glance through such an admirable book as that recently written by Dr. Luther H. Gulick on “Physical Education by Muscular Exercise” (Blakiston, Philadelphia) will readily see that the task of the teacher of physical training is a most delicate one. He must adapt the exercises to individual needs; must realize that he is dealing not merely with muscles but also with nerves and with minds, with a psycho-neuro-muscular organism. Pupils whose nervous force is already low should not be required to give swift response to quick commands, or be subjected to the strain of competition or excitement. On the other hand, pupils whose neuro-muscular force is greater than their mental control, may be trained in attention, imagination, thought, and will, by performing exercises at command; for “we think in terms of muscular action”; “the muscular system is the organ of the will.”

The aim of the specialist in physical education in American schools seems to be a combination of two strongly contrasting systems: gymnastics and athletics. The old-time German gymnast (described by Dr. Gulick) has powerful shoulders; the individual fibres of the muscles stand out prominently; he has a powerful grip. The muscles upon his chest and shoulder-blades are prominent. His chest appears large; but this may be due rather to excessive muscle than to the position of the ribs; the thorax is rather flat from repeated severe exertion of the abdominal muscles. The muscles of the legs are vigorous, but are light in proportion to the development of the

shoulders and arms. He can do almost anything on the apparatus when suspended by his arms, but he cannot run for long distances, and is not graceful as a walker or jumper. He is apt to be "muscle-bound," and is often the slave of his own condition—his muscular establishment being an expensive one to maintain.

The pure athlete, on the other hand, of which the English school-boy is a type, works less for abstract indoor muscle-building, and more for concrete sports and games. "His characteristic games and sports, and exercises, are running, jumping, throwing, wrestling, boxing, cricket, football, lawn tennis, hunting, fishing, horseback-riding, rowing, mountain-climbing, and so on. These exercises furnish conditions more similar to those under which the body was developed in evolutionary times than do the more or less artificial exercises of the gymnasium. Each part of the body is exercised in accordance with the way in which it is developed; the heavy work is done by the legs, work demanding speed and agility is done by the arms; the arms do not support the weight of the body for long periods as they often do in systems of gymnastics. He is fairly strong, is erect and graceful. He is a fleet runner, and has splendid endurance. He rides horseback; can spar and wrestle. He has played his game of football, and has rowed in one of the many crews in his university. He is quick, hardy, can take care of himself in an emergency; is used to handling himself in a crowd. He cannot do any particular gymnastic feats with skill, nor is he interested in them. During later life he will drop his active participation in most of the more strenuous sports; but he will ride, play golf, swim, row, and will always maintain a keen interest in these things."

The aim of physical education in America is to produce neither gymnasts nor athletes, but a happy combination of both—to build a body whose "different parts are so related to one another as to produce a whole in which each part is exactly adapted to perfect coöperation with every other part." The means employed to this end naturally combine some features of both systems; but the emphasis is increasingly laid, even among the schoolboys and girls, on athletics; and properly so. Athletics calls for and includes gymnastics, but gymnastics does not necessarily issue in athletics. It is proper to regard the body as a means; it is not proper to regard it as an end in itself. It is interesting to note that this change of emphasis in physical training is in line with similar changes in other school subjects, in manual training, in drawing, and in literature. The abstract and the subjective have in every case given way to the concrete, the objective, and the practical.