

Physical Training for the Mass of Students

by

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For a well developed individual there must be equal development in every way. The mind must not overpower the body nor must the other extreme be carried out. A great mind cannot live in a poorly developed body nor work in an illkept house. The physical and mental being must work in correlation, not the body as slave to the mind nor vice versa. Grote, the historian says that in the old Greek system of education more time was devoted to physical education than to all other branches combined, and yet the Greeks were as superior to us intellectually as we are to the African negro. It is a commonly known fact that the Greeks were physical models and also that we owe much of our scientific knowledge to them. England, through her games and athletic sports, Germany through her gymnasiums and military systems, give more attention to physical training than do any other nations, and these nations rank highest in their mental attainments. Look at France with her fashions which cultivate a false development of the natural form, unnatural modes of living and uncomfortable dress. Did you ever see the name of a Frenchman mentioned in recent history as a great mental worker? Is it not a statistical fact that France is even decreasing in population, which shows that the nation is killing itself by neglecting the laws of nature? As an example in literature of an over developed mind we might take Hamlet in Shakespeare's great tragedy. Hamlet was a profound thinker but never acted except on the impulse of the moment. His mind alone had been developed and his body did not act in correlation with it. He could plan what to do but he had not the power to do it. In our own U.S. History are many striking examples of what can be accomplished when mind and body work together. The most of our great statesmen have come from the country where they lived a free, active life while young and developed a sound body

as a home for a well developed mind. We all know of Lincoln, Washington and innumerable others of fame and in their biographies may read of their well developed bodies as well as wonderful minds.

One of the leading educators of the U.S. has said: "It may never be known scientifically what a tremendous influence the body and all its organs, every nerve and muscle, vein and artery, exert upon the brain, and consequently upon the intellect, and the more I see of this good work (of physical training) the more I believe in it; the more I study psychology, especially physiological psychology, the stronger my belief becomes in physical training." The laws put in practice in order to build up a system of physical and mental education should be in accordance with the laws of physiology, psychology, and pedagogy. It cannot be done at in an entirely unsystematic manner without regard for the personal peculiarities and weaknesses of the individual.

Athletics are assuming a more important place in our American colleges as their value is appreciated and their need felt. At Wellsley college a great deal of attention is being given to physical training, and in the summer of 1903 an annual Field Day was established. The faculty of this college has seen fit to employ an athletic coach under whose direction are the outdoor sports, besides the regular physical director who oversees the work in the gymnasium. In all the leading colleges time is being given to physical training. It is a fact that, as a rule, those students who are first in athletics are first in their other classes. This is the case where physical training is given time and attention and is conducted according to a high standard of honesty and with high ideals of living. In most any college it will be found that the best students have the best physiques. Dr. Wm. T. Porter found, by examining thirty thousand school children of St. Louis

that those having the best grades were the tallest and weighed the most and vice versa. An examination of the school children of London was made by Mr. Chas. Roberts, of England, and similar results were obtained. The standard of physical education in the United States is very low as compared with that of many other countries. By many of the leading educators it is claimed that physical training should receive the same amount of time and attention that the other branches do. In many of the schools there is no attention what ever paid to the ventilation and other sanitary conditions of the school room, and no effort is made to teach the pupils the need of such. No attention is given to the way the pupils stand and sit. In the country schools there is not the need of systematic exercise that there is in the city, but the principles should be taught so they may be practically applied in the daily walk to school, on the play-ground, in the work at home, and in the every day life. In the city schools gymnasiums are about the only means of solving the problem of exercise for the pupils. If such is the case great care must be taken to provide good ventilation. Exercise in the form of calisthenics can be given in the school room with the pupils standing in the aisles. This is better than no exercise at all but is only a poor substitute for the freedom needed by growing children. It does however serve as a rest to their tired minds and does away with a great deal of nervousness and restlessness. The principles of correct positions can be taught if the teacher is competent, but too often he is not competent and even if he has studied the theoretical side of physical education has not put into practice the practical side of the question and hence is a poor example for his pupils.

Some of the leaders in physical training say that the gymnasium of the city school should be at the top of the building so the ventilation

may be the best possible under the existing conditions and there may be light and sunshine. There should be a regular teacher who is thoroughly qualified to take charge of the physical education of children and a time set apart for classes. The pupils should be graded according to age, sex, and physical condition. Outdoor exercise in the form of calisthenics, games, and sports are of greater benefit than indoor exercise. If at all possible an outdoor court should be provided. The gymnasium in the school should be for education, recreation, and healthy growth.

The results of exercise in school are both physical and mental. It has already been shown that high mental and physical development go together. Teachers in public schools should teach correct habits of sitting, standing, walking, and breathing. Rational physical training begins here. The results are both direct and indirect. Some of the direct mental results are ; a change of mental attitude, a resting of the mind from study, a quieting of the nerves, a general tone which enables the pupil to study harder and to learn more readily. His carriage is improved and his muscles rested from the general stooping posture of the student. As an indirect result there is a general physical development, and hence better health and a better mind. The healthy student has much more strength to devote to his studies than has the weaker one. The physical development made in youth will tell on a person through out his life. The results of an experiment made in a reform school show that there is a direct relation between physical and mental development. A number of boys were put under severe physical training for two years. They were given the same opportunities otherwise that the other boys of the institution received. At the end of the two years it was found that these boys averaged much higher in their studies than those who had not had the training, and that their will power and moral character was im-

proved beyond that of the other boys. This is a practical test and shows some of the practical results.

The college student is one in whom we are directly interested. In his busy life he is prone to neglect his physical for his mental education. In many of the colleges physical training is not compulsory, and in a great percent of those where it is made so it is considered as a secondary instead of a primary branch. Too little time is allowed for it and hence too little time is devoted to it. Many of the difficulties which exist in public schools exist also in the colleges. These are inefficient gymnasiums and apparatus and overworked teachers. The matter should be taken into the hands of the college authorities and proper time and means provided. The classes should be graded and credit given for work done. In too many of the colleges this is not the case. Students are put into any class which does not interfere with their other studies and no account is taken of their physical condition. Strong and weak students are given the same exercise and the result is overwork, and hence great harm to some while others do not receive their just deserts on account of underwork.

Voluntary exercise is of as much importance as compulsory if it is not overdone. Open air games and sports are considered one of the best means of physical development, especially if the individual has the principles of correct carriage and a knowledge of the general effects of exercise. Baseball, foot ball, tennis, running, jumping, basket ball, and in fact most any outdoor exercise can be profitably engaged in by the student. He need not begrudge a half hour each day devoted to some healthy exercise, for if he will only note the effects he will soon decide that he can do enough better at his studies after the exercise to more than pay for the time spent. Systematic exercise at home taken in the students room brings very good results.

If taken each evening the time spent is not missed and the results are very decided. No apparatus is necessary for the Swedish system of gymnastics furnishes many forms of exercise which require none. Many of the shoulder blade movements, slow leg movements, head movements, and arch flexions can be practiced.

The student of physical training must not expect the direct results to be too great. To accomplish the results desired requires time and perseverance, but the practice soon becomes a pleasure and if the days exercise is missed it seems as if we have lost something which the day owes us. Those who have watched a class through college could have seen the contrast between the Freshman and the Senior. The Freshman with his look of health and readiness for work. The worried tired look of the Senior who has neglected his exercise for his studies.

The results of physical training are many. There is a direct relationship between the physical condition and intellectual capacity, the latter varying directly as the former. State Supt. A. B. Poland, of New Jersey says in his article on the "Scientific Value of Physical Culture," that there is a basis for the cry against pushing the intellectual training too far for the good of society and of the individual. He says that this warrants the interest taken at present in physical culture. He says it is an absolute necessity for the well being of not only the present generation but of generations to come. There must be an equal development of mind and body. He says that to be effective physical training must be organized, supervised, and controlled, as effectively as intellectual education. One author has said, "Physical culture adds dignity and strength of character in proportion as dignity of attitude becomes habitual and is reflex in its action." It gives self-possession in the place of self consciousness. Only when we give equal

attention to physical and mental education can we reach that high plane of civilization such as has been attained by the people of ancient Hellas, who did this. In them we can see the results of such a course.