

THE RELATION OF THE PHYSICAL BODY
TO THE MENTAL BODY.

By
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When we consider physical culture in the various states of development, we find that it runs parallel with the intellectual and ethical efforts of mankind. The latter were caused, to a great extent, by the material wants of the individual.

To the pre-historic human being, the struggle for existence was a severe teacher of physical training. Man, in his primitive state soon found that he who could handle the largest club and throw the heaviest stone had the best prospects for life. The wild woods were his gymnasium; his competitive games were battles for life, either with the beasts of the woods or with the human foes of his tribe.

History tells us of but one people in whom physical culture manifested itself, as it were, as the living idea of beauty. These were the ancient Greeks. But only for a comparatively short time did the Greeks stand on this unparalleled high pedestal of physical culture. In proportion to their intellectual and political decline, physical culture returned again to little better than barbarism, proving thus that mind and body will always ascend or descend together.

Though the aspiration for the noble and beautiful had proved the most successful teacher of physical culture, the Romans dismissed him and engaged Master War again as their ideal teacher. It is true he served them faithfully, but could not prevent the downfall of the Roman Empire, because the Roman mind soon degenerated and mighty Rome died of voluptuousness.

In the middle ages chivalry became the bearer of physical

training, but the people at large were "dumb-driven cattle". Europe fell victim to this piratical state. Rapacity, ambition, struggle for supremacy were the motives of its physical culture.

This universal mental and physical stagnation lasted uninterrupted until the gigantic movement known as the "Revival of Learning" began to germinate. Mind and body would no longer endure the oppression of slavery. Men's minds began to feel their independent individuality and became imbued with certain of their human rights. The body too claimed its inherent rights and the intellectual warriors of Europe united in behalf of physical culture. In France, Rosseau sounded the bugle-call for the liberty of mental and physical evolution; in England, Locke broke the scholastic fetters of the down-trodden mind and body. The progress of physical training has always been dependent upon the progress of the general evolution of mankind.

The present time looks upon physical training very favorably. Public gardens, public play grounds, open air gymnasias and bath houses among other philanthropical institutions are open for use. General education is now standing on a higher pedestal, having for its aim the symmetrical development and growth of mind and body. The body claims its right and the time is coming when the brain is not cultivated at the expense of the body.

Modern physiology and psychology, however, do not separate mind and body, but study mental phenomena in their physical relations, and vice versa. It is mainly due to these sciences that it gradually dawns upon the educated classes that mind and body are a living

unity, that the body determines conditions of the mind, and the latter influences structure and functions of the body. The present educational ideal is, therefore, the fully developed man, his perfection only limited by inherent physical and mental possibilities.

Life is movement and wherever it manifests itself in mechanical expression, it results from muscular movement. All the functions of our bodies, as respiration, circulation, digestion and certain excretions require muscular activity. These vital processes are intensified and stimulated through general and voluntary muscular movements. Nature has implanted in every animal an innate impulse to move and made it hereditary--this of itself is of sufficient proof of what importance muscular exercise is for our well-being. The products of inactivity are relaxed, slender muscles, weak nerves and a cold, pale, skin; symptoms that sooner or later work great harm upon our will and character. Even common reasoning will lead to the conviction that all organs are strengthened by well regulated muscular movements and are thereby rendered more capable to assist one another. This undisturbed working in harmony of all parts, as it were, is the very foundation of health. This will become clearer when we examine the results of muscular exertion in another than casual way.

That muscular exercise does strengthen the nervous system is made evident through experiences in our daily life. These experiences go to show that thousands of people who through mental strain have become fatigued find relief in taking light exercises such as walks, gymnastic exercises, etc. Healthy children after the close of their school hours relieve themselves preferably by

running games. Muscular activity heightens the benefits of recreation, since it increases the circulation and provides the fatigued brain more rapidly with oxygenized blood.

In the past we have appeared to proceed upon the assumption that man was but a brain, a bodiless something for the acquisition of facts, a sort of memorizing machine, which was so unfortunate as to sometimes require the services of a gross and corrupt medium--the body. But after all there is something higher than the body and its needs. The person who through intelligent study and persistent effort, attains to a knowledge of the bodily structures and functions and strengthens them through physical conquest, acquires a true reverence for its beauties and uses that make it impossible for him to be a sensualist or materialist.

The greater part of the work of education, however, is directed toward giving guidance to the activities of the body, especially to the volitional activities as shall produce the best physical, mental and moral results. Not only is muscular activity necessary to the proper development of the nervous and muscular systems but over and above this, health is so intimately dependent upon muscular activity and muscular activity is so hard to maintain in a physically defective body that some sort of physical training must go along with study in youth to make our education scheme complete.

Nature does not make the adult as machinist does a piece of mechanism by completing one thing before beginning another and when every part is complete putting all together into a harmonious

whole. A moment's consideration of this brings out clearly the fact that the mental education of the child begins during the time of its physical development. Whether the highest physical development is ever consistent with the best mental training is indeed very doubtful. The mental training of youth has introduced an unnatural physical environment which if not corrected, will in nine cases out of ten tell upon subsequent bodily health, and so in too many cases upon mental and moral health as well. If children never went to school, if no attention were paid to mental training, physical training would be for the greater part unnecessary. It is, therefore, one of the main functions of physical education to correct the injurious effects of the unnatural environment created by mental education and to do this without endangering the efficiency of that mental training. Its purpose is not to train athletes, although it may be developed in that direction; it is primarily an attempt to conserve the physical man during his mental training so that when the period of schooling is over, he shall have a body physiologically capable of sustaining him in his life work.

Harvey, the discoverer of the blood circulation, laid down the fundamental law that mental and bodily life have their origin in one and the same source, and that they are subject to the same higher laws. The muscular system as the motor part of the body and the digestive organs as the assimilating part necessarily belong together with the functions of the mind. Frequently the superiority of the mind reveals itself in opposition to the body and history records men of high genius and heroic strength of

character who had a crippled body only at their command. But to draw conclusions from such cases would lead to pitiful errors. On the contrary it appears that the organism is capable of the highest manifestation of strength only when all its parts have arrived at the highest state of development. Thus our vital energy will be able to set free its entire latent power only when body and mind have been developed in harmony. The true mental education must, therefore, always go hand in hand with the highest bodily and physical culture.

The truth of the old adage, "Mens sana in corpore sano", (a sound mind in a sound body) has been established by the experience of centuries. It has been observed and the fact has impressed itself on the minds of thinking men and women that, no matter what might be the native talent and the careful education of an individual, if the bodily health is neglected, or is bad from the first, the intellectual development does not come up to the expectations of the fond parents. The sickly body, the failing physical strength, the general debility, hold back the native talent, and prevent the development of what bade fair to become a giant intellect; dwarfing it by physical deficiency and the consequent want of energy. The youth of genius who would soar high above his fellows, making himself a name and writing that name far up in the temple of fame, is often rendered weak, deficient in energy, devoid of ambition, his talents wasted by the want of physical health.

How shall we go on cultivating the intellect without interference from failing health and want of physical force? One

must nourish and strengthen the body which constitutes the machinery by the aid of which the mind does its work. No one is more to be pitied than the intellectual sufferer; the mind rendered sensitive and acute by training and the body a broken constitution like a shattered musical instrument, resounding plaintive discord, sad accompaniment or rather sad impediment to the noble execution of intellect, the more sad because too often the direct result of injudicious confinement. Study is continued until an exhausted mind disposes the body to a slothful inactivity and exertion is avoided not so much for want of time as for want of inclination. The active walk, the jolting ride, the hearty sport is not time lost from the studies but a guarantee that the whole framework will return to the task more able to compete with the entanglements of ancient or modern lore.

"In as far as gymnastic exercises fit our youth for becoming healthy and strong in the future, and implant in our adults a greater power of resistance against all unwholesome influences down to old age, they are an important medium of the hygienic art and as such have undoubtedly a high significance for the cultural evolution".

"The gymnast shall be like unto a man formed after God's heart; perfect outward and inward, robust of body, so that no raw breath of wind can fell him, and strong of mind, so that he becomes apt for every good purpose; faithful, i. e. chaste in thought and deliberate in action but withal devoid of sanctimoniousness;

vigorous and applicable in body and soul, enthused and ever ready for all that is noble and beautiful; always the first in manliness and last to refuse succor to fatherland and liberty. As such a man he will also be merry of heart and a prototype in all respects for succeeding generations".