

Commencement Thesis,
upon
Physical Culture for Americans.
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Outline of thesis.

Physical Culture for Americans.

I. Introduction :

The attention paid to Physical Culture is becoming wider spread.

II. Established example of benefits derived from systematic physical training.

(a) Ancient Greece

(b) Romans.

(c) Germans

(d) English.

III. Physical conditions of people in the United States.

(a) Our fore-fathers

(b) Present Generation

1. Men. (a') Professional

(b') Farmers

2. Women

(a') House keepers

(b') Society ladies.

(c') Those in professional work

3. Children.

(a) City

II Slums

II Middle class.

III Highest aristocracy.

Physical Culture for Americans.

77

As man advances, his mind growing stronger, the limit of his mental powers wider, he recognizes that there will come a time when comparatively little can be done unless his body is developed proportionally as is his mind. His nature is such that mind and body are inseparable and as in the order of Nature, body comes first in importance so it should be first in importance of correct development.

And each day, each year it is becoming more evident that the success with which the body is correctly developed determines in a very considerable degree the success to be obtained in mental and moral development.

America's day of great agitation over this subject is yet coming. Today we find the field much broader than once it was and in the shade of many of her higher institutions of learning are to be found the playgrounds and gymnasia as evidences of the deeper interest in the subject. But America is behind many European nations in this field of teaching.

America is a new country and we can hardly expect to find as well developed a system as England and Germany possess.

Then too at the time of the

2
78

Civil war military pursuits had largely taken the place of physical training and when the war closed interest died away in such education and no progress was made for several years;

But first let us see if training, turned considerably towards man's physical needs can help to make his life more perfect.

In looking at the history of man we find that originally he was the possessor of a strong healthy body and that the nations most prominent were those whose sons had the strongest and best physical development.

Greece, the mighty nation of early time gives us the first example of a people using systematic training for the body.

In Homer's Iliad is found a glowing description of athletic feats and these are the first of which any record is known.

At the siege of Troy Achilles expressed his feelings of triumph at his slaying Hector by preparing a feast and introducing races for which elaborate prizes were offered and exciting times ensued.

From this time on it seemed that the celebration of games were to introduce dignity and interest at all important ceremonies

The Olympian games were the most famous of regularly recurring games which were established not later than the Trojan war is supposed to have taken place.

First these games were to fill four days every five years but finally were extended to fill five days.

A wreath of laurel leaves crowned the victor's brow but greater enthusiasm could not have been wished for.

Designed wounding and other brutal methods were not unknown and were not severely condemned, but always, he who killed the opponent forfeited the prize.

The influence of these National games upon the Greek character was incalculable, they gave great impetus to interest in physical training and this with the realization of the need of systematic preparation for the contests, led to the establishment of the gymnasium.

The ideal they aimed at was the perfection of the intellect, the moral nature and the body, the last being as important as were the other two.

They were in utter ignorance of the

true physical organism or even of the nature of muscles, but their ideal of physical perfection is shown to have been very high by the statues of human forms they have left us.

The gymnasia were kept by private persons and were simply open spaces for exercising at first, later, buildings especially constructed were used, these were ~~more~~ very simply regulated at the start but later upon becoming state affairs they were minutely regulated by law and the time was when every city of importance had at least one gymnasium.

The Greeks believed that the training of the body should begin when the child was very young and the Spartans realizing the influence of the mother upon her children paid close attention that they also should receive physical training.

These games arose, reached their climax and decayed into oblivion, but they are yet good proof to us what can be done towards developing the body.

The Ancient Romans through somewhat religious feelings instituted games and festal processions as a declaration of their gratefulness for military achievements.

The professional element entered, however, and the study for the art's sake only, degraded the purpose of the system and true Romans felt it beneath their dignity to join the field their more vulgar and brutal neighbors did.

The Roman youths did not lack muscular development, however, for they obtained exercise in the military field.

Later they understood the Greek methods and instituted many Greek customs thus materially changing their ideas of physical education. Contempt for gymnastics passed away and even private gymnasia were built in connection with many homes. A public gymnasium after the Grecian plan was erected by Emperor Nero.

It was in the public thermae or baths that the leisure class of Romans passed much time.

The character of the public games as sources of amusement was not changed and the religious features died away.

Every important public event became the occasion of great celebrations and it went so far that every extraordinary event, even funerals became a time for the whole people to witness the giving.

of shows and the celebration of games.

The chase of hares and foxes did not longer satisfy the people when once they had tasted the vulgar, brutal fascination of the gladiatorial fights which were led up by the Etruscan belief that human blood should be spilt on newly made graves, combats between condemned criminals being the first of such scenes.

The spirit was exaggerated however and as the professional exhibitions became too numerous the interest in great physical strength died out.

Thus we see that the two most powerful nations of ancient time, both mentally and physically owed much of their success to their means of education, the great attention they paid to physical culture and when interest in this failed they as a nation of note passed into remembrance only.

We now look at more modern nations and see how they compare with our own land.

The Germans, noted for their superior strength both of mind and body afford us perhaps, the best example of a nation to compare with our own.

The early Germans were of a war like nature, they obtained little by honest labor for

they could by shedding human blood gain a livelihood from the results of their dead brother's labor. Military activity greatly developed their bodies.

After the invasion of the Gallo-Roman territory many of their customs underwent changes, the chief's followers left him to take up the tilling of land, but even then they were expected to render military service whenever called upon to do so.

Chivalry brought considerable of physical training with its education of the knight and the exciting features of the tournaments and as Chivalry declined the study of physical development declined also. But their strong healthy nature ever characterized them as a people.

Today we find them a sturdy class far excelling the Americans as far as health is concerned. Especially do we find a noted difference between the German ladies and the American, the former being of a very rugged nature.

The immediate causes are easily to be found for the physical superiority of the Germans. 1st, We find that two thirds of the schools of Prussia have gymnasiums of their own and nearly all have provisions for exercising.

In Saxony, gymnastic societies developed

84

especially between 1843 and 1848, and 1892's report is that 615 cities and towns had 755 gymnastic societies with 87,388 members over fourteen years of age and the entire German Empire had 447,046 members in 4,567 societies.

2nd Besides this is the military training each able bodied male is obliged to receive when in the army.

3rd The ladies especially of the poorer classes do a great amount of out door labor.

All this gives them a body to help them to better carry out their mental work and is perhaps one of the reasons why they as a people have such intellectual power.

Looking at our neighbor the English we find there that physically they are ahead of us and though perhaps their system of physical training is no better than ours the fact that they take a great amount of out door exercise may explain to a great extent their more rugged nature.

But now let us look at our own country. When our forefathers came to our land they lived at a time and in such surroundings that they were obliged to wrestle with stern Nature with scarcely any tools and what they did have

were very crude, man walked to and from his place of worship, business or visiting. His fields were tilled mostly by hand, his grain was planted by hand, harvested and even threshed by hand and he with his wife whose household furniture was of the most crude style, who was obliged to weave her own cloth for cloths and who helped him in the field work, had plenty of exercise that kept them free from petty ailments and made them physically superior to us.

Today look at our professional man, usually of delicate health, whom it would kill inside of a week to be obliged to work as did his grandfather; he would be completely fatigued should he attempt a walk of five miles yet his grand father would have thought nothing of the same.

But man is better off physically today than he was but a few years ago for he now uses the bicycle extensively.

Our farmers are not able to show a perfectly developed body - far from it. His muscles are not developed for the reason that they are not properly exercised. He rides his cultivator, his planter, his harvester, his stacking is done by machinery, his water hauled by wind power and at every beck and call some labor saving machine

will do the work originally assigned him, and his body is left enervated at the expense of an over-worked brain and mind.

House wives do not do one tenth what their grandmothers did and why? Not because there is nothing to do but because they can't. Look at the present generation of girls. Are they on an average as strong as were their mothers before them? I think we are safe in saying No!

Professional working women show a notable lack of perfectly developed womanhood and when we look at the children today what do we find?

In the poorer classes whether in the poorly ventilated slum homes of the crowded city or in the country where God's air is pure and free, we seldom find a child we can safely expect to develop into a perfect man.

In the middle class as a whole the child is not his best physically and especially the farmers child.

In the circles of aristocracy, perhaps, is found the best physical perfection, but here also we find ample room for improvement.

I think the reason for this great deficiency in the proper development of our people is to be found in their habits of living. Labor saving machinery

is a blessing in its correct use but we must not let the mind be the only part of our organism that works, we must exercise our bodies one way if we don't another.

Indoor life also is doing a great injury to many. Men, women and children should go out into sunlight and gain health, strength and vigor.

And then another great mistake the majority of our people make is to select the wrong kind of amusements, entertainment and recreation.

They choose to ride by carriage, car or horse to the concert, opera or theater and thus gain purely intellectual amusement while if they even occasionally indulged in some recreation that gave work to needing parts of the body, while it gave rest to other parts, just so much more might be gained.

Thus we see that the physical training of Americans should begin deep rooted. From the little child on up to old age there is need of proper physical development by systematic methods and to bring about this change every means available should be brought to bear upon it. Our newspapers, those mighty thought transmitters, should take up the subject and not desist until positively sure that every man

woman and child in America is alive to the responsibility for the aid of physical culture.

In our public schools the child should be taught from his first year onward the proper means of developing his body as well as his mind. Give him suitable physical exercise and do not leave it to his choice, for he is no more capable to judge than he is in regard to his studies.

When he is sent to College instead of planning four and five hours of mental work which is to come under the supervision of instructors and not less than eight or ten and sometimes more outside, he should have at least one hour and two if possible, of physical work of just as carefully chosen plan as the mental work.

Broaden the lawn about the school house, bring the tennis court, golf grounds, ball grounds, rowing matches onward in the higher institutions to encourage a pleasure in the exercise and then and not until then can be hope for a type of Americans we should not now be seeking for in vain.

Emerson says. "Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. v v v For every thing that is given

something is taken."

He thinks what we have gained over the savage mentally we have lost physically and perhaps this is true and if we do not improve will we not finally become worse than they? For without body no mind can exist.

Then let us develop both of our natures side by side and though our advancement in the mental field should be slower it would be surer.

Let America receive a Physical culture that is broad and deep and far-reaching in its ends, that the New World may not lose her high place in civilization.