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## Original Communications.

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

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Competition is felt to-day, not less in education than in commerce; the machine finds nearly as much employment in our school system as in politics. Competition has become a crying evil, so that mental cramming is to-day a barrier in the way of attaining individual or national greatness. Upon the school children, and especially upon the girls, the strain has fallen most heavily. The machine emphasizes what can be put down in black and white, it tends to obliterate the individuality that seeks to assert itself, and by the ever-haunting "examination demon, who is going up and down in the land, seeking whom he may devour," it reduces to an unvarying level all grades of taste and genius which Nature, in her simplicity, has given us.

There is an Eastern fable which tells of a learned physician who cured the Prince of all the Faithful of a seemingly mortal malady, by the daily swinging of a pair of clubs, the mysterious virtues of which diffused themselves through the palms and thence into all parts of the system, carrying renewed health and vigor.

Asclepiades, a Greek physician of the second century is said, by Pliny, to have cured all ills by physical exercise alone.

The principle thus alluded to in fable and history was adopted by the Greeks as an important stone in the foundation upon which they built a superstructure of art, literature, philosophy and physical development which, in many respects, modern nations have not been able to equal. The

cultivation of the body by means of gymnastics, fostered by the reward and fame which came from success in their public games, and by the strict application of the laws of heredity, resulted in the nearest approach to physical perfection in an entire people, that the world has ever witnessed. With them physical culture attained to the dignity of a science. The gymnasias not only wielded a power in the development and perfection of the physique, but exerted a greater and more enduring influence upon art and upon intellectual development, and in the formation of an ideal of physical beauty and excellence which reacted upon their art, literature, and entire civilization, in such manner and degree as made them pre-eminently superior to the rest of the world. So intimately interwoven with the whole life of the Greeks, were these physical exercises, that they could not picture to themselves even the Islands of the Blest, without wrestling grounds. One writer says: "A Greek became not a soul, not a body, but a man, a complete, thorough, perfect, all-round being, who was neither a brain with an appendage of legs and arms, nor a physical organism with the brain left out."

The education of an Athenian lad began with his seventh year and fell into three divisions, elementary instruction in the three R's, music, gymnastics. Out of this system grew the typical Greek, whose form was not hampered and trammelled by artificial supports, but was simple, free, natural, gracefully developed; whose intellect, in harmony with its environments, was fitted to run out in spontaneity and find in the world of thought the beauties and excellencies which have made their literature as enduring as time.

Afterward, the love of gymnastics became with some an over-mastering passion, and the games ceased to be a means of individual and national culture, the people became admiring spectators rather than participators, and physical training became debased by professionalism.

Amongst the Romans gymnastics never enjoyed the same reputation and never became a branch of public education, although the soldiers obtained a thorough and varied physical training because of the advantages afforded in military life. Instead of the manly games of the Olympia, we read of the contests of gladiators.

From the days of Greece and Rome till recent