

And last, but not least, permit me strongly to urge upon your attention the duties you owe to your parents. Could you realize the labor and toil it has cost them to care for you in infancy and childhood, could you count their weary footsteps in tending and caressing you when sick, could you number the anxious days and watchful nights they have spent by your bedside, aye, could you see the anguish-stricken heart of your mother while she pressed you to her bosom and prayed God that the hand of death might not be permitted to bear you away,—you would weep because of your ingratitude and your inability to ever repay them for their parental love and tenderness.—*Erie Gazette.*

### Our Experience with Gymnastics.

We have wasted no enthusiasm on the subject of school gymnastics. We have listened somewhat attentively to much that has been said upon it, but with considerable scepticism and hesitation, suspecting that, after all, it might prove one of those questions which have assumed a temporary importance, and filled the minds of the more sanguine and excitable, to be gradually supplanted by other questions like them, which, in their turn, must rise, and sink, and disappear.

But, on the other hand, we have seriously asked ourselves, whether this ought so to be,—whether the subject of physical training in schools does not justly claim our permanent and earnest attention and interest? Could the Greek mind, the most acute and subtle in all the ancient world, be, for generations and centuries, engrossed in this theme,—could her four great national games call forth, at regular periods, the noblest of her sons, to exhibit and to witness the power and grace of human form and action, and shall the question assume but a temporary importance in the American mind? Shall we carefully copy her dead forms in sculptured marble, and care not to see our sons and daughters rival in form and action, the grace of the sons and daughters of lovely Greece?

We were not, however, compelled to go to history for examples; for living arguments met us in our daily walks. We used to meet an Irish hod-carrier, who, though evidently poor and somewhat advanced in age, had often, by his very gait and bearing, attracted our notice and admiration, he walked so like a prince, whose royal form neither poverty nor toil could bend. Chance at length having thrown us in contact with him, our wonder was relieved when we learned that our fancied Hibernian prince had acquired his splendid form and action while, in earlier days, he was trained as a soldier in the service of His Majesty. We applied the "rule of three" to our prince's case, and stated the question somewhat as follows: "If a training of ten years in His Majesty's army can give to a poor Irish soldier a grace and dignity which neither years, nor poverty, nor toil can destroy, how much can we do for our own American boys and girls, by a systematic physical training of ten years in our public schools, at a time in life when their minds and bodies are most susceptible to permanent impressions? Answer—Something."

Another Irishman, a clerk, had also often crossed our path, and we had almost as often admired his erect and elastic bearing. He, too, we found, at length, had served in the British army. An old gentleman appeared in our church and continued to meet us in our worship. He was badly crippled by an injury received by an accident upon the spine, but yet neither age nor pain had made his shoulders stoop, nor bent the erect and manly posture of his head. He, too, had, when but a boy of eighteen years, served in an army, and was present at the battle of Plattsburg.

What effect the campaigns of the present war will have upon the forms and bearing of our own soldiers will better appear when we shall see, not, as now, the inmates of our hospitals, but the hardy forms of men who have received their training on the tented field.

Influenced by thoughts like these, our mind was prepared, when our school committee employed a professional teacher of gymnastics in our public schools, to welcome him in cordial good faith, and with some degree of confidence in his success. He proved a faithful teacher and an excellent man. He believed, however, in dumb-bells, and wand, and wooden rings; while we, viewing the matter from a different standpoint, saw less in them to be admired. Two hundred heavy boots daily entering and traversing the floor of our school-room, had so pressed upon the shoulders of our patience, that when two hundred dumb-bells were added, the poor shoulders began to bend beneath their load, when, finally, the wooden rings proved "the feather that broke the camel's back." It became a serious question with us, not alone how much benefit the bodies of our boys were receiving from their exercises, but how

we could best contrive to suppress the provoking rapping of dumb-bells and rattling of wooden rings. These delectable instruments were not only instruments of exercise, but also instruments of torture. Numerous, too, were the sources of their annoyance. They must be bought, and sold, and dropped, and moved in the desks, and lost, and broken, till we could have heartily wished they had never been invented.

We do not hesitate to say, that however agreeable and useful these instruments may be for a more private practice, they so tax the nerves and the patience of the teacher, in a large school of boys, that they cannot for a long time enjoy that teacher's favor, which is so essential, so indispensable to their successful use.

Moreover, we gave too much time to each lesson. There was too much waiting to be instructed, too many exercises were attempted, and too little accomplished by way of perfecting any one of them. Too much time was spent in getting the instruments in hand, assuming positions, etc., etc., and too little in actual muscular exertion.

Our first essay at introducing gymnastics would have almost inevitably failed, had not the system been greatly modified.

The excellent work of Mr. Mason came to our hand in a fortunate hour. It has supplied for us just what we most needed, viz, the muscular exercise without the clatter of instruments and the delay attendant upon getting ready to begin. At a snap of the fingers the boys may be brought to their feet, and upon a single word they may be actually engaged in their practice. They like the exercises. The transitions are easy and natural; the motions are well adapted to develop the chest and otherwise secure the objects desired; and so little verbal instruction is required, so little delay occurs, and so directly does one order of motions succeed another, that the five minutes spent in gymnastics are among the most quiet, orderly, and agreeable of the day.

Our experience leads us to make the following suggestions:

1. These exercises should be commenced with the greatest promptness, and conducted with the greatest vigor and exactness, and with the fewest possible interruptions.

2. The way to teach gymnastics is to "go at it," and not "talk about it." Gymnastics are best learned through the eye.

3. Five minutes at a time is as long as these exercises should continue. Even with the naked hand, Mr. Mason's lesson, if briskly and vigorously practised, afford as much muscular effort as most boys will with pleasure bear.

4. These exercises should be brought on at precisely their allotted time in the day, like the other exercises of the school. Here we may differ from some of our friends who only practice gymnastics when they seem most to be needed. To say nothing of judging of the feelings of pupils by the feelings of their teacher, (an obviously unsafe criterion,) daily observation shows us that men are inclined to defer physical exertion. The invalid finds a thousand excuses for neglecting to take the regular exercise which his physician requires. If the practice of gymnastic exercises is left to the feelings of teachers or the whims of pupils, they will, in most schools, soon fail altogether to be employed. The pressure of intellectual labor and the natural aversion to vigorous physical exertion, will eventually crowd them out.

5. These exercises must not be optional, but should be as rigidly required of every pupil as the other exercises of the school.

6. The time devoted to them should be one of the greatest vigilance and activity on the part of the teacher. Otherwise the sluggish motions of the lazy, and the irregular motions of the listless and those who do not enjoy the practice, will vitiate and destroy the beauty and pleasure of the whole exercise.

7. No set of motions should be dismissed till it is so accurately learned, and can be performed with such precision, as to afford to the actors a positive pleasure. We all love to do what we can do well. We soon tire, if conscious of only half success.—Short, brisk, vigorous exercises, so perfectly learned that all the hands in school move as if impelled by a single will, are those which, in our experience, afford the highest pleasure and effect the greatest good.—*Monthly Ed. Massachusetts Teacher.*

### Dependence of Education upon habit.

A complete system of education should embrace a consideration of the phenomena presented not only by healthy, but by morbid, growth. It should be able not only to *form* but to *reform*—not only to develop with the assistance of nature, but to correct when her general laws seem to have been superseded by untoward influences. With respect to this point, education is purely an inductive science, and its principles and rules must be based upon a long and careful