

## PHYSICAL CULTURE.

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A quarter of a century ago the question of Physical Education was very rarely discussed in scientific or in any circles. It was regarded as a subject lacking dignity for the minds of the wise and the great, and as unworthy the consideration of the intellectually inclined. It was dimly remembered, it is true, that the most wonderful nation of ancient times gloried in the physical development of her men and women as the foundation of their intellectual greatness, but more modern ideas of physical culture were associated with individuals to whom the development of the body meant the neglect of all mental and spiritual graces.

In truth, the brutal, sensual ideas held by many nations of mediæval history, laid the foundation for much of the prejudice that existed in later times with reference to everything pertaining to bodily vigor.

The culture of the spirit, the education of the mental faculties, were doctrines religiously inculcated into the minds of youth, until a contempt for physical perfection, and a belief that ruddiness was incompatible with sanctity, and flesh with brain was the natural result.

As the outcome of such teaching, a race of sickly, diseased men and women began to consider the causes that had defrauded them of their birthright, and questions began to arise among the saintly and the learned as to whether any powers given by God should be allowed to become weak through disuse. New philosophers sprang up, who taught as boldly as did those Grecian ones of old, that man's noblest and highest possibilities could only be attained through synthetic development of all his powers, and then it was that a revival of interest in physical education began, and gymnasia began to be established, first in Sweden and then in France, and about 1862 in England and in this country.

It is only, however, within very recent years that a general and intelligent interest in the subject has manifested itself. Gymnasia have, it is true, existed in connection with many of our colleges and seminaries, but the work as done there has not been of a character calculated, in any sense, to result favorably. The use of apparatus whose aim is merely to pile up muscle, or the practice of movements whose direct tendency is to rigidity and stiffness, cannot by any miraculous process of nature produce harmoniously developed bodies. And yet this work has been, in a sense, necessary, in order to enable men and women to understand the beautiful simplicity of nature's laws.

To-day, at the Physical Education conventions held throughout the country, the most progressive educators are contending for more intelligent study of natural methods of development.

The divinity of man's three-fold being is coming to be compre-