

and investigation need not necessarily be a drain upon the vital powers and functions of the body.

There is, of course, a natural limit to the amount of mental effort which can be safely required of children. They may be goaded or stimulated to a ruinous degree of mental exertion; and it is beyond question true, that this sometimes occurs in the public schools of our cities and towns, as well as in colleges and other private schools. In some schools the pressure to cause pupils to reach a high per centage in examinations, is excessive, and certainly ought to be abated. Teachers should not be subjected to such powerful temptations to neglect the health of their pupils that they may prepare them to pass brilliant examinations, to secure the commendation of the school authorities and the public. Our school work must be measured by a truer standard. But in abating this evil of unwise pressure, we must be careful not to break down a reasonable standard of study and thoroughness in our schools. Because a few children are over-tasked and injured, it certainly is not necessary to treat each generation of youth as though health and long life depended upon their being fools.

Let us see to it that the study of the pupils in our schools is of a kind adapted to their mental as well as bodily condition; let us avoid premature mental exertion, either by forcing the development of their minds beyond the growth of their bodies or by cramming their memories with incomprehensible abstractions and generalizations; let us secure vigorous study when the brain is not in sympathy with an over-loaded stomach; let us reduce as much as possible the *fret* and *worry* which arise from an attempt to prepare lessons in half the time necessary for their mastery; let physical exercises and changes of posture be made to alternate with periods of study and recitations; let the pupils have *pure air* and choerful and inspiring conditions of study—in a word, let the *laws of health* be observed in the management of our schools and the evil of over-study will largely disappear. Indeed it is my firm belief, that in the case of a majority of the pupils in our schools above twelve years of age, the absence of vigorous, earnest study is a more wide-spread evil than excessive study.

We would, in conclusion, call attention to the fact that the sickly appearance and poor-health of children are due largely to causes which lie outside of our school-rooms. Among these causes are a want of bodily exercise, unwholesome food, late hours, unventilated sleeping-rooms, insufficient and fashionable clothing, and unhealthy parents. No amount of physical training or sanitary discipline in our schools can be made a universal panacea for these evils. But let us see to it that the *school-life of children does not aggravate them.*—*Ohio Educational Monthly.*

### The Play-Ground, or Uncovered School-Room.

The playground deserves to be entitled school-room, less for what it reveals, than for its positive effects. Indirectly its influence is doubtless powerful for good. Here occur those incidents which the earnest teacher makes so fruitful at another time, and here are the occasions constantly arising in which to practise those lessons of forbearance, kindness, generosity, justice, and self-help, that have been inculcated under more formal circumstances. But the play-ground is in itself a great educational force. More powerful and more lasting in its effects than anything that springs indirectly from it. There is real education going on in it. There is a direct influence of the lads upon each other, and there is an influence from its pursuits, that is continually moulding their characters, and that will be felt through their entire life. Much of this influence—especially in the absence of moral oversight—may be for evil, but much of it too is doubtless for good. There cannot be large numbers of boys congregated, and actively engaged in sports and games, without good—physical, moral, and social—growing out thereof. And the larger the school the larger the benefit, from this point of view.

Of the pictures which remain in the mind, and which circumstances bring vividly up, few are so permanent, so distinct, or

come up with such life-like reality as the games in which we took part at school. Here is present proof of our then interest. We must have been intensely excited by what we engaged in, or its impression would not have been so deep, nor its realization at subsequent times so vivid. Hence such a fact alone proves the games of the play-ground to be forces of immense power. Not all games, but those in which was the element of contest;—the sham battle, foot-ball, and cricket—in which party was pitted against party, in which victory brought honour, and defeat often excited shame. Now the force of these for good or evil consists not in their being *amusements*, but in their being for the while *real life*, having to the actors all the features of those, it may be, more momentous, but not more real struggles, which the warfare of life entails on their elders.

The physical benefit derived from such vigorous contests, in which so much muscle is expended, and so much energy thrown, and the intellectual advantages arising from the recruiting of brain and nerve force, are positively the least advantages—regarded from our present point of view, that of contest. It is this which gives them moral and social advantages far higher than grace, agility, strength, or brain force. There are influences at work in these contests that are fitting the boy for his future. That future is to be one of unintermitting contest, one of alternating triumph and defeat. Now the contests of the play-ground, being in all essential features the same as those of the future, must be regarded as preparing for them. In some few cases, where tyranny exists, or evil predominates, because the play-ground is not under moral supervision, the results may be different, but in the majority, such as these now to be enumerated, may be confidently predicated.

Courage to grapple with difficulty, to encounter the chance of defeat, and to meet some degree of danger, is certainly fostered by the contests of the play-ground. Few contests can occur there, and certainly none likely to call forth the highest energies of the lads, unless they involve these elements. But these are the very elements met with in the engagements of life—engagements often requiring moral courage of the severest kind to enter on, when there is the consciousness of uncertainty in the issue, and of difficulty and danger in the pursuit.

School work, with its teaching, learning tasks, reproduction and examination, does little comparatively to give a boy knowledge of himself. So much is due to his instructor, and so much to sheer repetition, that what he is, conceals itself from him, until he enters on the competition of life. But this is not the case with teachings of the play-ground. Here he gets to know himself. He puts himself into comparison with others, and finds out that he has amongst his associates some superior, some inferior. He thus acquires self-knowledge of an invaluable kind. He learns to accept his position, yet not to settle on his lees in it. He learns to be ever striving, yet gracefully to yield where others excel. And while thus acknowledging merit greater than his own, he learns also to hold his own against equals and inferiors. Nor is it hard to understand this practical superiority of the uncovered school-room as a revealer of character—not to others only, but to the pupils themselves. It is altogether due to the reality, to them, of the contests there. In the play-ground every lad exhibits himself. There his physical force, practical skill, and quick wittedness, as compared with the same things in others, are made apparent. What he does is voluntary. What he achieves is his own. Where he fails he has to seek the cause in his deficiency as compared with his companions in prowess, activity, diligence, perseverance, strength, or skill.

Nor is it a trifling advantage that lessons are thus inculcated not to undertake what he is not fit for; but accepting his position to deal with things practically. He finds that there are many that he cannot conquer. He finds that in competition with others the goal is often reached when he is hard toiling far behind. He discovers that events are often the very reverse of what he expected or could wish, and he learns that it is to his advantage, to his present peace, and to his own success, in his proper sphere, not to repine at what he cannot help.