

## Contributions.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

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*(Read before the Ontario Teachers' Association at Toronto.)*

With regard to physical training, I think I am safe in saying that in our public schools, especially those in country districts, there exists a great necessity for the introduction of some definitely planned and well conducted system for corporeal development and muscular exercise in a certain direction—I say a certain direction, *not* mere bodily vigour, concentrated brute force, can be obtained irrespective of true physical culture, in a variety of ways; at the blacksmith's anvil, between the plough handles, swinging the woodman's axe, &c. Physical culture has for its aim, higher developments; strength and vigour unquestionably, but trained strength and systematized vigour; enduring hardihood certainly, but organized and educated hardihood; muscular development and physical prowess indubitably, but muscle companioned by grace, and prowess associated with dignity of comportment and elegance of motion. A sledge-hammer, though a powerful and a dangerous weapon, is but a blundering and plebeian instrument with which to perform the exploits of a hero on the battle field. The keen and polished rapier made of tempered steel, which will bend double at a twist of the wrist, has yet strength sufficient to accomplish the same end with infinitely less labour and with far better grace. What are we to understand by physical education? Why, the training of the body irrespective of the mind by certain well-fashioned laws of exercise. Exercise which indulged in tends to promote corporeal growth, to strengthen and develop nerve and muscle, to expand the lung system, to inure the body to hardships under which an unseasoned or debilitated frame would succumb, to fortify it so as to enable it to resist the insidious attacks of disease, to make it, in short, a fit tabernacle for the reception of a strong and useful intelligence, capable of permitting the full exercise of that intelligence, without endangering bodily health or mental acumen, able to defend itself in case of need from exterior inimical influences, and while accomplishing these objects, to acquire simultaneously grace, ease, dignity, to the end that a healthy human form may be rendered the fit associate of a healthy human mind.

I am hardly yet prepared to say whether I do or do not advocate the Darwinian theory. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." I, in common with most of my countrymen, confess to prejudices of ancestry, I am ready and willing at any moment to believe that my paternal ancestor, in the long ago, was John of England, who was a murderer, a liar, a craven, and a renegade, or that I am maternally related to Boadicea, who was doubtless a half nude, wholly uncivilized, vindictive Amazon. Even Bloody Mary, the most despicable woman who ever assumed the English crown, would look well as an eighteen hundred and eighty-first cousin. I am not so certain whether a paternal gorilla or a maternal chimpanzee, however guiltless of treason, bigotry or blood-thirstiness, would fit the earl's chair of ancestry as well. But, joking aside, I am prepared to admit this at all hazards, that the orang-outang is the natural effect for natural cause. That the orang-outang is at best but a poor mathematician, natural, too, you will say. That the merest tyro of an orang-outang as an athlete would knock our doughtiest gymnast—if I may be allowed the expression—into a cocked-hat, and this, I presume, is natural also. I never heard of an orang-outang—unless in confinement—suffering from gout, indigestion or the blues, natural again, altogether natural; nature there is evidently the true mother, the true nurse, the true first

preceptress, ergo, we should obey the teachings of nature and follow, physically, the example of the orang-outang; spend much time in the open air; take a large amount of exhilarating out-door exercise, run, leap, swing, climb, live temperately; religiously,—abjure strange gods, and the worship of individuals in creeds; socially,—renounce class prejudices and back-biting one's neighbours; morally—abolish whiskey stills and their associated evils; intellectually—reject competitive examinations as tests of scholarship and too much mathematics as an intellectual cultus, and go a step farther, wear a remnant besides our own hair. Pay school teachers decent salaries, and study the humanities but not to the perverting of our own intellect or the deterioration of our muscular system; of such folly even an orang-outang would be guiltless.

I must say I am an advocate for muscular christianity. I may add I am no admirer of an awkward, shambling gait. I have been lately led to ponder upon this subject of gait by the strange opinions which, during a residence of three or more years in the country districts of Canada, I have heard time and again formulated by country residents. There seems to be an idea prevalent that a perfectly upright, free, confident carriage, is inseparable from pride and self-conceit. This is no mere fancy, the sentiment has found expression in words over and over again in my hearing. Conversing one day with an old resident, our conversation happened to turn upon a young man of my acquaintance, a farmer's son, who had received a tolerable education, and who was by far the smartest looking young man about those parts. "Ah," said my companion, "he is too big for his cloth, he walks as if he owned the whole world." The stricture was a most unfair one.

I have not known whether to be more amused or angry at such utterances, promptings of an ignoble or perverted taste. I suppose it has become so much the fashion in country districts for youth to struggle from the cradle to the grave with "lack-lustre eye," and hand in "poke" that anything in the shape of an erect posture, swinging gait, and independent front, is looked upon as an abnormal and offensive state of being, a metaphorical challenge to personal combat or an unspoken assertion of physical superiority, and this because one presumes to lift his eye above the level of the rut and prefers to swing his arms in the glorious day light rather than bury one-half of them in the cavernous recesses of his breeches pockets. Now, I would ask, is an erect carriage a fault that it should be thus censoriously criticised by any section of a civilized community? In the beginning God made man, and he made him a little lower than the angels. He made also the beasts of the field. But observe the difference. He placed man erect, firm, planted in such a position that without effort or diminution of grace he could lift his god-like front and scan the heavens, the wide-spread epitome of all that is loftiest and most wonderful in the created universe, but the beast grovelling on all fours progresses ever with face to earth, its present home, and type of its grosser and irrational nature. Let me here put a leading question. Is an upright, dignified carriage consistent with healthy action, is it a thing to be desired in itself as a mere means of locomotion? With regard to the first point I unhesitatingly answer that there can be no really healthy action, no physical perfection without erect, free, open-shouldered carriage; and as to the second point I think it very much better to progress through life as though unburdened with any particular heavy load of conscience, than to grope from infancy to dotage in a position which might lead the uninitiated to suppose we were staggering under plethoric sacks of individual iniquities committed in the flesh weighing us to earth, or in the anticipations of our particular friends possibly still lower. I do not think I am using a too severe form of expression when I denounce the carriage of the majority of our country school-going