

PHYSICAL EDUCATION OF GIRLS.

Let those mothers who are afraid to trust to Nature for the strengthening and development of the limbs and spines of their daughters, attend to facts, and their fears will vanish. It is notorious that most of the girls who, in opposition to the laws of nature, are encased in stays and get insufficient exercise, become deformed—while among boys, who are left to acquire strength and symmetry from unrestrained muscular action, deformity is extremely rare. In the girls the pressure of stays impedes the flow of blood to the muscles, which, being therefore imperfectly nourished, waste away. They become pale and flabby, and suffer a diminution of their contractile power. They are no longer able to hold the trunk erect, and spinal deformity necessarily ensues. To produce this result, a degree of pressure is sufficient, far below what is requisite to cause distortion of the chest and compression of the respiratory and digestive organs.

In a school of young ladies, containing forty pupils, it was discovered, on an examination by Sir John Forbes, that *only two* of those who had been resident in it for two years had straight spines; while out of an equal number of boys, imperfect as their exercise often is, it would be difficult to discover as many whose spines are crooked. Here, then, is ample proof that stays and want of exercise, so far from contributing to an elegant carriage, are directly opposed to its acquisition; and that disuse of stays and indulgence in exercise, (even when not carried so far as the wants of the system require), instead of being hurtful to the spine, are largely conducive to its strength and security. Yet such is the dominion of prejudice and habit, that, with these results meeting our observation in every quarter, we continue to make as great a distinction between the physical education of boys and girls as if they belonged to different orders of beings!

Spinal deformity may arise either from habitual indulgence in a faulty posture, (as in writing or drawing), or from muscular weakness, caused by deficient exercise, the use of stays, &c. In the former case, the spinal column being bent to one side, retains,