

ON THE DANGERS OF TOO MUCH PHYSICAL EXERCISE.

A GAIN, we feel constrained to sound a note of warning. There is real and great danger in the present athletic "craze,"—in the violent games and athletic feats of the present day. In the December issue of this JOURNAL we drew attention to the investigations of Dr. Morgan which showed some of the serious consequences of excessive rowing; to the report that, of thirty-two all round athletes in a New York club of five years ago, three are dead of consumption, five have to wear trusses, four or five are lop-shouldered, and three have catarrh and partial deafness; and to the writings of the eminent London physicians, Drs. Fothergill, Clifford Albut and Moxon, showing the intimate relation between mechanical strain and diseases of the arteries and of the valves of the heart. Dr. Patton, Chief Surg. U. S. National Soldiers' Home says that, of the 5,000 soldiers in the Home, fully eighty per cent. are suffering from heart disease in one form or another, due to the forced physical exertion of the campaigns. He makes the prediction that as large a percentage of the athletes of to-day will be found twenty-five years from now to be victims of heart disease, resulting from the muscular strain they force themselves to undergo.

Far be it from this JOURNAL to discourage physical exercise, in the open air especially, but in young still growing subjects, or even in the mature, there is certainly great danger in the extent to which it is now carried. As an exchange says: The misfortune of the modern athletic craze is that it stimulates to exercise for the sake of taking part in severe contests instead of encouraging that *moderate regular exercise* which might do every young man good, and no one any harm.

The men, young or old, who make use of a gymnasium for what can be rightly called hygienic exercise are comparatively but few.

Often it is not so much exercise that is demanded as it is outdoor pure air. Athletes usually die young, and much of the more vigorous exercises in the sports

of the present day shorten, rather than lengthen life. The Medical Record says, "the brain worker needs only a regular temperate life, with a walk, fresh air, and sound sleep and the body does not need Herculean muscles in order to be sound; and that athletic work is only safe for young men who have an extra supply of vitality and who can more safely work it off that way than in dissipation." Indeed, excessive development of the muscular system is incompatible with the best condition of general health. The muscles are great sponges that suck up and make use of large quantities of blood, and the other organs are liable to suffer for want of their share. Athletic sports in clubs tempt many to overdo. Those who are naturally endowed with good form and muscular figure can safely indulge, but when the young men of less physique attempt to develop themselves beyond what they were intended to be, and go in competition with the stronger ones, they are likely to seriously injure themselves. The weekly paper, "Life," recently took on a serious aspect long enough to compare the lives of Cardinal Newman and John Boyle O'Reilly. The former was a slight man of infirm constitution who lived to a very advanced age, a sedentary and secluded life; while the latter was a man of great physique, fond of physical exercise and athletic sports, but he died in his prime.

Again we give the advice of Dr. Tompkins, resident physician of the celebrated Hammond Sanatorium at Washington, given in a lecture delivered before the Y. M. C. Association there: Every one who wishes to indulge in athletics should be thoroughly examined by a physician and pronounced perfectly sound beforehand, and even then there should be a competent instructor who should tell him what to begin with, how long he should exercise, and not let him overtax his strength in any way.

THACKERAY tells us that if we "Sow an act we reap a habit; Sow a habit and we reap a character; Sow a character and we reap a destiny."