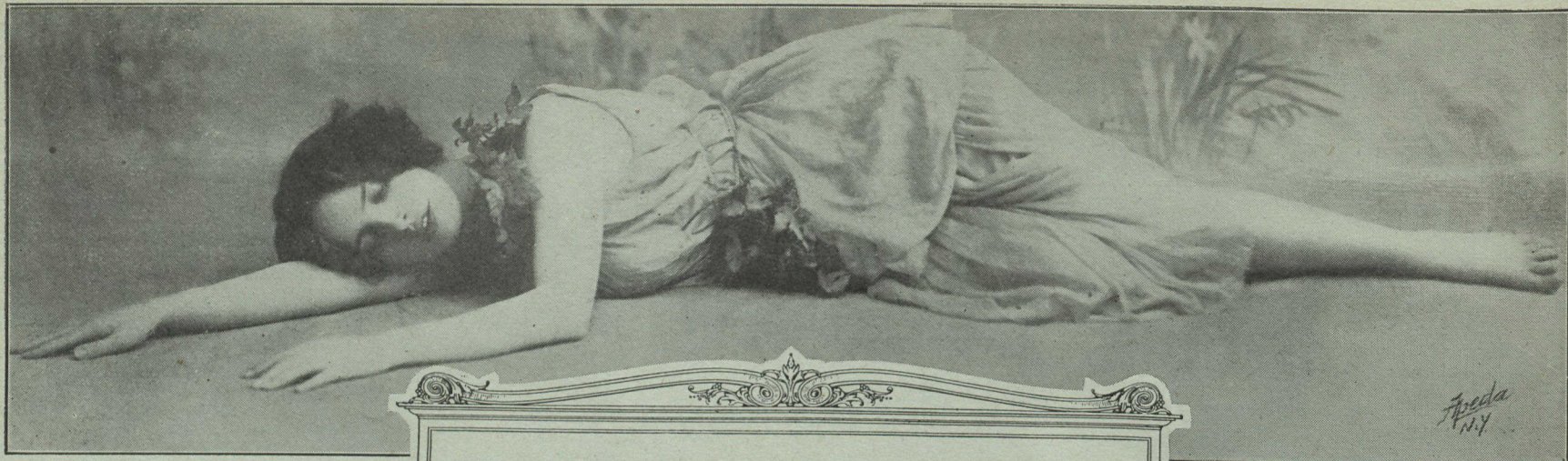




THE RHYTHM OF HEALTH

How Maud Allan, the World-Famous Canadian Dancer, Keeps Body and Mind Vigorous by Nature Dancing

By RICHARD M. WINANS

"This is a graceful and natural position of the body in repose," Miss Allan remarks of this very beautiful position.

and that they may learn to despise the opinion of the vulgar."

"The youth of Greece were educated to the dance principally with a view to the exercise and training of their muscles, although the æsthetic and artistic influence of the nature dancing practised by the Spartans was by no means overlooked."

It may well be noted in passing, that Lycurgus planned to have so normally developed and made pliable the abdominal muscles of the Spartan girls through the medium of the Greek or "natural" form of dancing, that when they came to be mothers they might experience painless, or, at least, less painful, childbirth. And if some of the available records may be depended on as accurate, he almost, if not quite, attained his purpose. The wife of one of the most noted directors of physical education in the United States declares that as a result of living as much and as nearly as possible an out-door life, *a la Sparta*, (while conforming, of course, to modern conventions as to draperies) from early girlhood to the present, she actually has attained to that greatly desired boon—painless childbirth.

This remarkable woman, herself a notable figure in the field of physical education, as directed to the proper physical development of girls, personally told me that because of long and continual practice of such natural exercises, she had experienced no discomfort whatever at any period before, nor mentionable pain or exhaustion at the time of childbirth. "And all because," she said, "when on my long extended outings in the open, I discarded, as nearly as consistent with the conventions, the burdensome hamper of clothes, and thus as much as possible exposed my body to the free play of the sun, the wind, and the rain of the great out-of-doors, dancing with playful, joyous abandon along the streams and through the woods and fields." This experience-wise woman's creed in physical culture is to "take only such exercise—for the sake of exercise—as is pleasing, naturally, spontaneously, without restraint, without set 'method' or regulating formula—simply the doing of some physical exercise as play, or, in other words, just because you want to do it; and natural dancing comes very near to being the ideal form for such exercise, for we do that for (Continued on page 50)

ONE of the broadest visioned of all the nature dancers who practise the translation of music into motion is Maud Allan, a most charming Canadian, born in Toronto.

Those who witness her interpretation of life, through rhythmic movement, cannot help but recognize the obvious, that always Miss Allan will remain a girl, even although she demurely confesses to memories of having lived and danced in the Syracusan groves of Sicily, more than two hundred years before Christ.

The essence of youth is one with her whole life and being, for she is young in the spirit of æsthetic ages; an inheritance which has come down to her out of the cloud-curtained realms of Mythology, even from Cybele herself, daughter of Earth and Sky, who taught dancing to the gods and goddesses in the Fairyland of Myth, at a time when the world was in the momentous throes of Creation.

Blessed with so rich a spiritual inheritance from other centuries, it is not at all difficult to understand how Miss Allan so fully and delightfully experiences the youthful joy of living, having a soul attuned to the heart-song of the world and to the rhythmic movements of the later Hieratic dances of Egypt, which 2500 years B.C. so beautifully interpreted the Music of the Spheres and the harmonic progression of the Stars, and which, centuries after, the Greek, Simonides, so felicitously characterized as "silent poetry."

Miss Allan would have the whole world enjoy with her the practice of natural dancing, to the end of attaining to a more complete and perfect life; a life of more exquisite spiritual beauty, of higher physical development and strength, of more exalted artistic ideals, of greater moral, mental, and physical stamina.

"Every one should dance," says Miss Allan, "but in the free, spontaneous spirit of the Greeks, giving vent to self-expression. This never can be accomplished through the medium of modern ballroom dances, which are, for the most part, hideous. They inspire no worthy emotions, because they are based on decadent dances of inferior races."

"Much more can be accomplished," she declares, "by teaching children than adults whose prejudices and conventionalities must be overcome. Dancing, therefore, should hold a prominent place in school life. Adults could be reached by community dancing, where the spirit of emulation and fellowship would enter, as in community singing."

"The necessity for music and art in the lives of people cannot be exaggerated," continued Miss Allan. "It can be scientifically demonstrated that even a gramophone by its vibrations changes the rate of vibration temporarily of those who are listening, and this modification of themselves (if the music is not base) is beneficial. It helps to shake from off their feelings

and thoughts all that is of a lowering nature. It cleanses the mind and feelings, just as soap and water does the body, thus uplifting the moral standard, expanding the intellect, and making man more spiritual. That, according to Christian teaching, is why man is on earth: that he may grow more spiritual."

"In an age long prior to the Aryan race, humanity first expressed music. The rhythm—the music—of the spheres was then, as it still is, inherent in everything, animate and inanimate, just as everything is subject to the laws of gravitation. Quite naturally, therefore, bodily music—or dancing—was the first attempt at expressing impressions, so far as art is concerned."

"Going back tens of thousands of years, we find that Thoth, the wonderful Egyptian teacher, gave an impetus to dancing, and this dancing, combined with the reverence of the Greek artists for Thoth, whom they called Hermes, was the inspiration for that marvellous music in stone—ancient Greek sculpture—which never since has been surpassed."

"Dancing flourished greatly under the wonderful influence of Orpheus, whom I believe to have been a real man and not merely a myth. Orpheus was a great world-teacher, who came as the 'artist' to sound the note of harmony and establish a mighty reservoir of beauty that has since fed the artistic veins of Europe, bursting into expression whenever we have given it a chance by creating an atmosphere conducive to it. The reverence and the spirit of worship of the early Christians found expression in the beautiful Cathedrals which decorate Europe."

"MUSIC and dancing are the appropriate and normal methods of expression of the whole community, but systems and theories of expression must be made subservient to spontaneity, which is the Divine spark in us seeking outlet."

"As for myself," went on Miss Allan, "I believe that in one of my previous incarnations I danced in ancient Greece, and I want to do

what I can to bring back its message to the Twentieth Century. I hope soon to give Revival Dances based on the old Greek style and in the real spirit of ancient Greece, but with some improvements on the antique. These Revival Dances will be for the whole community. My plan now is to reproduce a part of ancient Greece. I intend to secure the co-operation of five or ten thousand people who feel the same way, and we shall endeavour to entertain, on a colossal scale, upwards of 20,000 people daily, by giving them glimpses of the life that many of them lived in past incarnations."

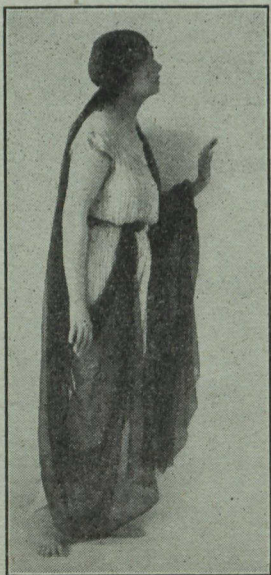
"Merely as a matter of physical exercise, I believe Greek dancing is far more beneficial than calisthenics, because of the element of joy which so largely enters into the former, but which has no place in the dull routine of the latter."

"If proof were wanting of the importance that the Greeks attached to dancing, it may be found throughout the pages of Plato's 'Republic,' where it is prescribed as one of the principal branches of education. All the dances of antiquity took their derivation from the four dances referred to by Plato; and among them, what more idyllic than that known as Caryatis, the dance sacred to Diana, danced by noble Spartan maidens in the forest near Caryæ? It was the Dance of Innocence, danced naked around the altars of the goddess, and their chaste rites have been immortalized in our modern architecture by the pillars which are known to us as 'Caryatides.'"

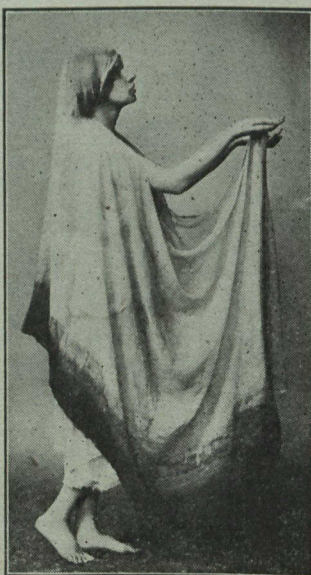
"Sparta, again, was the home of another dance sacred to Diana, the Hormos, a kind of farandole instituted by Lycurgus to inculcate in the youths and maidens, who danced it without draperies, the fearless modesty which was the boast of the Spartan national character. Even in such early days, there were those in whom nudity in woman awoke base thoughts, and to whom Lycurgus replied, 'I wish them to perform the same exercises as men, that they may equal men in strength, health, virtue, and generosity of soul,



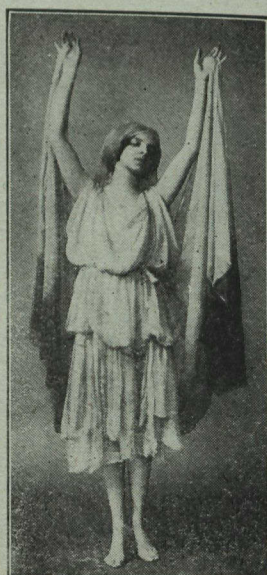
"This is a spiritual rather than a physical expression," is Miss Allan's description of this movement.



"In this pose," says Miss Allan, "I am giving expression to the artistic and the ideal."



"Here, I am giving expression to an emotion that leads to artistic development."



"By these movements a dancer attains poise and grace," Miss Allan says.



"I dance as I feel, and the mood may be changed by the falling or rising of the music."