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CHRISTIANITY AND PHYSICAL CULTURE.¹

By G. STANLEY HALL.

Health means holiness or wholeness. The words healthy, holy, hale, heal, and whole all come from the same Anglo-Saxon root. Physiological psychology is now restoring this deep philosophy embedded in the words. In its light let us re-translate some Bible texts—worship the Lord in the beauty of healthfulness; healthfulness becometh Thy house O Lord; serve Him in healthfulness; preserve my soul for I am healthful; this is a healthful man of God; the healthful Scriptures, the healthful day, spirit, people, etc. This sums up the new hygiene in the blessed revival of which it is our privilege to live, and which is rescuing man's body from the still persistent traces of the old ascetic neglect. Ask with reverence, what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world of wealth, knowledge and power, and lose his own health; or what shall we give in exchange for health? Without it, the mind tends to grow feeble; the will to be freaky; the heart to lose its courage; virtue to be exotic or a pale cellar plant; and the human brain, the very highest and most complex product of the great biologos in the world, the only mouthpiece of God through which alone he has revealed himself, to become anemic and languid. Jesus is the healer or whole maker, who came to purge the world of sin and disease and give us the soundest hearts and souls in the soundest bodies.

One of the best products of health is abounding joy or euphoria, such as we feel in the rapture of just being alive on a spring morning, when we overflow with the superfluous energy that makes the play spirit in the world purge away the primal curse of work and gives a buoyancy that no pain and affliction can entirely overwhelm. This holy or healthful joy is the end toward which creation strives and is the raw material out of which the special and lower pleasures of sense, of wealth, discovery, gratified ambition and art, are made. Educational and even religious systems are thus measured by the health, wholeness, and holiness they can produce.

Chief among the controllable means to health is wise muscle

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¹Address before the International Meeting of the Y. M. C. A., Boston, 1901.

culture. By weight the adult human body is nearly one-half muscle. The muscles are the only organs of the will and are likely to share its strength or weakness. Muscles have done nearly all man's work in the world. They have tilled the soil, built cities, fought, written all the books, and spoken all the words. Through all the past man has been the striver and toiler. There is a sense in which all good conduct and morality may be defined as right muscle habits. More than this, just in proportion as muscles grow weak and flabby, the chasm between knowing and doing the right, in which so many men are lost, yawns wide and deep ; and as they become tense and firm doing becomes—as F. W. Robertson was wont to say it should—the best organ of knowing. Rational muscle culture, therefore, for its moral effects, often for the young the very best possible means of resisting evil and establishing righteousness, is the gospel, I preach to-day, a gospel so reinforced by all the new knowledge we are now so rapidly gaining of man's body and his soul, that it is certain to become a dominant note in the pulpit itself, just in proportion as those whose vocation it is to save souls realize that they must study to know what the soul is.

But, alas ! how much there is now in modern life that makes for decadence and degeneration of both muscle and health. The city, that great "biological furnace," a new and perhaps chief feature of our day, so contrasted with that of the country where alone man can be fully natural ; sedentary life in office and school that favors attitudes of collapses ; that reduces the action and even the volume of the lungs and stomach ; that is so hard on the heart—itsself only a muscle—and the blood vessels, the health of which is so all conditioning ; the restriction of the eye, which normally roves freely far and near, to the monotonous zigzag of the printed page, and as the progressive increase of its defects are shown in the saddening statistics ; the pallid, muddy or chlorotic complexions, stoop, decaying teeth, premature grayness and baldness ; the great increase of nervous disorders ; and added to all these, the use of machines which are now suddenly exempting human muscles from the strenuous life which developed them and to which they have been wonted for generations ;—this is the situation. But this is not all. We are now coming to know the age of adolescence from the early teens into the early twenties, and we find that one of its chief features, when normal, is muscle growth. It is the age of nature's majority, when the young leave home and begin the great struggle for individual existence. Muscles should now grow both in size and power as never before or after. It is their nascent period of now or never, and should be sacred to their culture for the sake of will and virtue. It

is also the age when the strongest of all human passions develop, which exposes it to the greatest of all temptations to sin, and the chief preventative measure to sexual vice is now physical training.

Its neglect is never so dangerous. Careful research shows that the difference in the strength between the weakest and the strongest youth is twice as great in the later teens as in the earlier, and this difference is largely determined by use or disuse. Licentiousness almost immediately reduces strength in a surprising and measurable degree, whereas abundant physical exercise uses the available energy of the body in healthful ways, and reduces temptation in almost inverse ratio. Not only strength, but circulation or irrigation of the tissues with blood is most variable at this age and most dependent upon regimen. Without abundant exercise, the heart which should grow very rapidly in both size and power, remains both small and weak, as does the caliber of the great arteries.

Now physical achievements fire the heart of youth in a way which adults who have not experienced it, find it hard to appreciate. To be "great with hands and feet," an ideal which inspired Pindar who sung the achievements of the Greek athletes, brings just those fervors, calentures and enthusiasms, which are the chief need of youth. Youth must be intense; must tingle and glow; have excitement; stretch lungs, blood vessels, muscles to their greatest capacity by warming up and getting second breath for both mind and body, and this makes for righteousness, because it lessens the power of sin over body and soul.

I have thus stated the need and defined the goal, and now I am called in as an expert, sympathetic but outside enough of the movement to be impartial, to report on the past progress and present state of body training in these Associations. I find that since 1869, when the first gymnasium was opened in New York, over 475 equipped gymnasia, training more than 86,000 young men, have been established in the 610 city or large town associations of the country. Slowly and in the face of much early lack of appreciation and even prejudice and despite many obstacles, the new problems, some of them at first discouraging, have been one after another solved. Physical trainers, at first sometimes chosen from bad surroundings of circus and professionalism, have been trained; well-manned institutions established for this special purpose at Springfield and Chicago; summer sessions, camps and conferences held for further training of leaders; courses of study extended; methods of physical examination steadily improved; experts like Roberts and Gulick, known and honored leaders wherever physical training is studied, and more lately the athletic league of over

100 associations, to still further unify and perfect the work. Among all the marvellous advances of Christianity either within this magnificent organization or without it, in this land and century or any other lands and ages, the future historian of the church of Christ will place this movement of carrying the gospel to the body as one of the most epoch making.

The German Turner system, which sometimes brings 5,000 trained men in the field in this country, exercising in uniform under one command, has been one of the most potent allies of patriotism in the German Fatherland, and for nearly three generations has contributed to improve the bodies and increase the national strength under Jahn's inspiring motto, "only strong muscles can make men great and nations free." For two generations the Swedish system, less national, more specialized, scientific and governmental, has given heart and life to another great racial stock. The English method of play, sports and games expresses the brawn and brain of English life and is both cause and effect of much that is best in our mother country. We seek to combine the spontaneity of the Anglo-Saxon body cult; the science of the Swedish; and the love of country which inspired the Germans, but our loyalty is to a kingdom invisible, not made with hands. The watchword *frisch, frei, froelich, from*, shows the dimensions of this all-round movement. We are soldiers of Christ, strengthening our muscles not against a foreign foe, but against sin within and without us. We would bring in a higher kingdom of man, regenerate in body; make it more stalwart, persistent, enduring, taller, with better hearts, stomachs, nerves, and more resistful to man's great enemy—disease.

To one thing I exhort every man and woman who hears my voice. As you, and you, and you, are Christians, live up to the top of your condition; cultivate an appetite for food that is a physical conscience trained to point true to the pole of the needs of the body; train a little every day keeping well within the limits of your vitality and with careful adjustment to your power to recuperate from fatigue; consider your posture, carriage, bearing, and regimen; if you are young learn, if you can and have not, to run a little without initial embarrassment; work or play actively enough every day to draw away the blood from the centers of congestion; study dosage a little or the effects of the same exercises in large and small quantities; if you work with the brain, avoid exercises that involve spurtiness, close attention, or that throw the strain on the nerves. Remember that nowadays at forty, most men are either invalids or philosophers—invalids if they have done their work wrongly or are burned out with vice, individual or hereditary, and philosophers if they have had the rare insight

to learn to know themselves so as to keep completely well. It is said of the great thinker, Kant, that he prided himself more upon keeping his frail body alive till eighty, and getting so much work out of it, than upon writing all his volumes. Try these things yourselves faithfully, and you will begin to feel within you this new gospel of the body, the light of which is now being shed abroad in the world as never before.

Men are, happily, just now beginning to learn what a power can be brought to bear against the kingdom of evil in the world by right body keeping; how the body can be built up by patient attention; how we can develop the large fundamental muscles that move the great joints, and as it were lead the energy thus generated down and out to the finer muscles that move the face, vocal organs, fingers, and do the work of skill and precision in the world; how we can give rhythm and cadence to the whole soul life by well adjusted movements, and as it were, like some of the Bible heroes again dance before the Lord in worship; how curative of disease and corrective of deformity well prescribed gymnastics can be; how active muscle habits develop a love of nature and teach sentiment which is sometimes prone to go to waste in gush and vapid enthusiasms, to harness itself to do the work of the world; and what a sin and shame it is when our temples of the Holy Ghost are neglected and lapse to premature decay.

Finally, this is a world and age of achievement. Men are coming to be measured more and more not by what they know or even what they feel, important as that is, but by what they can do and actively accomplish in the world. Knowledge can never save individuals or nations. Subjective emotions are not enough. But there is one language and one only of complete manhood, and that is willed action, and it is to make our lives speak in this language and thus to make them historic that we train, what psychology now sees to be the chief power in man, the will, the only organs of which are muscles.