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"ELEMENTS OF STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS TAUGHT IN COLLEGES"¹

By G. STANLEY HALL

A sturdy boy, I knew well, who had won a few petty trophies at preparatory school, resolved on entering college to cut out athletics and go in for scholarship which had suffered from his sports. He was eighteen, weighed one hundred and two, and was a trifle over six feet tall, yet had won a pole vaulting contest and so was beset to enter the collegiates in this neglected exercise. He at first refused but was told that the honor of the institution was at stake and that it would be rank disloyalty to refuse. At the end of the freshman year, the result was two more trophies and two varicose legs, requiring two elastic stockings. The sophomore year he tried for the crew and also for the eleven and the nine, and fortunately failed to make either. Overworking in the gymnasium and doing the giant's swing one day he fell off the bar and double fractured his lower jaw, which was wired together and all the teeth saved. He was in the hospital four weeks taking all his nourishment through a straw. His mates consoled him by telling him that the form of his jaw and chin was improved by the operation, but he could not set it firmly enough to resist the coaxing of his athletic friends. Junior year he became a strong man and tied with another in the strength tests of the year in the New England colleges, but strained his heart, thereby was home six weeks, and fell back a year in his classes. When he graduated after five years, at the age of twenty-three, he had three so-called silver cups, five medals, several ribbons representing several first, second, and thirds, in things, two enlarged calves, one improved jaw, and an irritable heart. He took up the study of medicine and when I asked him why, he said with a faint, sad smile, "Well, it may at least be handy to be able to practice on myself, or," he added, after a pause, "possibly my children, if I ever have any, will need my services."

I. His parents were powerless against the claims of duty to win glory for his Alma Mater, and I will not attempt to describe their feelings toward the system. This, I grant, is an extreme case, but I know many others, and you trainers

¹ Address delivered before the Dept. of Physical Education, N. E. A., Cleveland, 1908.

and heads of gymnasia probably know many more where grave injury has resulted from the very pressure put upon the one-tenth or less of immature collegians who have to uphold the athletic prowess of their institutions. Many, like this husky chap, are too young to bear the excessive strain of the teams. The glory of possible victory and the stimulus of cheering thousands on the bleachers is too tonic a stimulus. You may talk all you will and keep ever so close tab upon heart, lungs, and guard against rupture, strain, and cite ever so many cases of college champions who have escaped unscathed, but there is a darker side to the picture and this is the first element of weakness that I urge. Neither art from the Laocoön down nor the illustrated studies of the physiognomy of the emotions afford any such facial expressions of physical agony as photographs depict in the faces of athletes in the climax of their efforts, and the nerves and muscles of collegians are not ripe for the strain too often put upon them. The training of these men is physical cramp and the reactions from the training table and the severity of preparation are dangerous to the physique and to morals. Only those by nature beefy can come out scathless, and even Schweinfurths are sometimes coarsened; while to become wonted to the intoxication of victory makes life seem for a season afterwards dull and zestless by contrast, especially in the American air and with American nerves, both so unlike the English or German. Do these few men get the most and best out of four academic years on the whole? I do not think so and I could take the rest of my time telling how heartily some of the parents of these lads agree with me. That there are great and offsetting advantages to some of these defects, we all know by heart. And it is these the public and such meetings as this always hears most of, but there is an athletic madness and it is for the silent over-specialized victims who suffer from the system that I now speak.

II. Athletics and physical training should be a school of honor, not of dishonor. Which is it to-day? The latter seeks to win at any price; the former was illustrated by the oft-quoted English tennis champion in an international rubber game, who, when his antagonist slipped and made a fluke which would have lost him the victory, made one himself on purpose to offset it, preferring to lose honorably rather than to win on an accident. The history of physical culture from the Greeks down shows that in its best periods, it has been animated by the ideal of making men gentle. The true sportsman would infinitely prefer to be beaten than to win unfairly or by any trick or cheating. Codes of honor differ, but the spirit of all rules of all games is to so play that the intrinsically

best man or team shall win. Honor should be the very religion of the gymnasium and the athletic field. The best definition of it I know is that it is an instinct for ideal conduct. It would, first of all, be magnanimous to a foe whether in victory or defeat. It is not to be too shrill or strident about technicalities and never to claim or accept a victory upon these alone. To my mind, faculty committees are as much justified in requiring a somewhat higher standard of conduct in the members of their teams than for others, as are trainers in requiring a better regimen and diet, and should disqualify for any sign of sneaking meanness. These men must be true representatives of the spirit of the college and it deserves to lose if any kind of favoritism of family or money put any but the best man forward, and these men must not break moral training. For the president of a great university to have insisted upon this the other day against the president of the nation was the most wholesome illustration of this principle we have had for years, and its effects will be salutary and long. Perhaps there is no greater hero worship in the world to-day than that of the rank and file collegians for their successful champions, and therefore it is of vital consequence, ideal as this may seem, that they should be, so far as possible, heroes of virtue and character. If they are dissolute, great is their influence for bad.

Do you ask for the ultimate reason why the college athlete should be a gentleman or high priest of honor? I reply that, apart from the fact that his example is so potent so that if he can be bad and win, all arguments of the classroom for the healthfulness of virtue fail for his mates and admirers, the muscles are the organs of the will and heart, which are the chief parts of the soul. Their culture closes the gap between knowing and doing. To keep them toned and tense means to make conduct follow more closely upon instinct and motive. Mien, pose, and gesture lay upon the soul more and make acting a part harder. The inmost nature is better known and ready for life, is more demonstrative, and conduct is a larger part of expression and quiet thought, example more than precept, and even the bad is less easily concealed or repressed, because the whole diathesis is more motor than noetic. Psychic tendencies are more revealed and in the open, and the motor type of man is more likely what he seems than to seem to be what he really is. For this reason there is more necessity for the motor minded to be decent in order to seem so, because with them evil, if it exists, tends more to come out. Like muscular Christianity, muscular virtue is more overt and even aggressive. That is why this type of man has always best exemplified honor and why, when muscles decay, vice is more

liable because it becomes more hidden. It is this harmony of mind and body, extending to the minor morals of manners and deportment, to all good hygiene and body-keeping, that physical exercise should develop. The true sportsman would rather be a Lipton, always beaten and always a gentleman, than to be always successful with the traits of some of his victors, for his conduct under every defeat has raised him a notch in the affections and esteem of two countries.

III. Physical is for the sake of mental and moral culture and not an end in itself. It is to make the intellect, feelings and will more vigorous, sane, supple, and resourceful. It should make for control and keep the body under and make it a servant and not a master. This it will never be until gymnastics is a department with its own courses, marks and credits, the same as other departments. If a man is a born athlete, why deny him the same benefit of it as if he is a born mathematician, linguist, artist or musician? It is plain that the academic side here must be developed. The culture history of physical education is a splendid field that we should develop in the classroom; not merely the ordinary rudiments of anatomy and physiology, but the great movements of ascetic contempt and neglect of the body, along with the splendid periods of its development in the palaestra and the *Turnfest*, the best age of which in both should in Germany precede by about a generation their golden age of arms, letters, and science. To always keep at the very top of one's condition requires both science and art; history and biography are rich in inspiring examples and in awful warnings. These must be collected and curriculized that these professors in the future may have both brain and brawn, be virile and virtuous in the grand old Latin sense of these terms. Practical ethics of body and soul is the core of all. The history and psychic physiology of military drill, dancing, the great national sports and games and their effects, the morals of measurements and tests, the psychology of periodic stripping and inspection, the relation of maximal effort to sex, drink and in a clumsy three words—the psychologizing, ethicizing, and æstheticizing of athleticism is now its crying need. The ordinary medical side is not enough. Moral prophylaxis should be included. The love of plain living, of nature afield, should be inculcated, something should be taught of the very interesting and suggestive topics of staleness, second breath, rhythm, stages of development, nervousness of the strong, the philosophy of training and reactions, the need of symmetry, and the dangers of specialization, the psychic characteristics developed by addiction to each of the chief forms of sport, that is, how the swimmer, boxer, runner, dancer, and the rest come to differ in character—these topics have

now a meaty literature that should be brought together here. In this direction we are to-day like Bunyan's man with a muck rake, all unaware of the golden crown just above his head which he would wear upon it would he but straighten up. Now this high story of culture in this field is, save for a few happy and scattered beginnings, all undeveloped. When we have realized what is the matter here, we shall look back with poignant self-pity upon the present stage of materialistic beginnings. The Y. M. C. A. teachers of athletics have shown us how heart, muscle and moral culture can be combined to the great benefit of each, and how worse than useless is strength of brawn and weakness of character, but the best is yet to come. Nothing could do so much to enlist the rank and file of students, the mere rooters and also the grinds, in body culture as such courses; for who could take them, if they began to utilize the resources available, without being inspired to make his own body stronger and his health better, to make the most and best of his physique as the best of methods of attaining any and every kind of excellence and power? Our colleges and universities must offer courses in which they can give degrees, even the highest, with this as a major subject. Every really scientific study which any of you make, whether in the historical aspects and phases of the subject or of the results of training on individuals or groups, the effects of age, temperament, diets, like the memorable New Haven studies, the, just now so much needed, studies of girls, make contributions to such a course. Could a few of the most scholarly and scientific men in this field now organize and compile from the many now scattered sources the material needed and take the epoch-making step of organizing it into meaty academic form, the problem would be solved. No one has done this and, until it is done, your best efforts are scrappy and incoherent. Is it not in fact your fault that such chairs and degree-earning courses are not sufficiently recognized by college dons and is it not up to you to remove the cause of your complaint in this direction, when by combining your efforts you could create a group of courses which every college would feel guilty and ashamed not to give.

The athletic problem is becoming graver every year and only you can solve it. We heads of institutions cannot launch new courses on a mere librarian's bibliography of good but scattered references. So, again I say, get together and put together what is already accessible in a scholarly way and we shall all fall over each other to give it credits and academic standing. I wonder if there was ever in the whole history of higher education such a wealth of material so wanted but so unorganized, or any field where some learned and vigorous

thinker, by a year or two of hard work, could so change the aspect of things? Physical training should be the very corner-stone of every sound educational system. Our college presidents and faculties are now pathetically helpless before the athletic problem, distracted and utterly powerless to control or utilize the tremendous energy now set free. These convulsive conclusions of the entire body academic are parturient struggles. A little skillful midwifery that can bring all this blind æsthetic enthusiasm to the birth into the higher cultural field—this is the need of the hour. In it lies concealed immense wealth of motivation to study hard and long a range of topics the most vital for personal and natural health and well-being. Nor has there ever been so large an opportunity or so loud a call. Hippocrates said “God-like is the doctor who is also a philosopher.” We might almost apply the same superlative epithet to a gymnasial expert who can also be a philosopher. Will this physical Messiah appear or must the work be done by many laboring slowly for half a generation? Sometimes the call creates the man, but such a call is always answered sooner or later; and with all the splendid fore-studies you have already made, it cannot now be long delayed. And of all the great departments of this great association, yours seems to me surest ere long to see the great light or to have a great leader that will bring, inaugurate, this higher, more intellectual, phase of physical education. What I have to say on the other half of my subject, elements of strength, is summed up in a single sentence—that you have prepared the way for such a consummation.