THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN.

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NEARLY everybody is now agreed on the importance of securing the means for scientific physical culture in the case of children both in town and country schools. Now, what I am afraid of is whether we are not going to an extreme in desiring that, whatever the system of physical culture a child is subjected to, it should lay great stress on making the child think as well as use its limbs and muscles, expand its chest, etc. To worry a child too much about thinking while it is at drill or at exercise seems to me as wrong as to ignore thinking altogether: they are both extremes. I think children should thoroughly enjoy drill or exercise. Drill and exercise ought to be recreative in every sense of the term; therefore, do not let us condemn an instructor or instructress because he or she is not continually fussing about changing the order of exercises so that the children shall not know what is coming next, but have to think. So, too, it is a mistake to condemn music altogether. By all means have a certain amount of music to accompany drill if the musician and instrument be available. Do not have the music going the whole time, but for certain concerted movements suitable for music introduce it, particularly in running exercises or exercises with clubs. Part of the value of well designed physical exercises lies in the rhythmic, graceful, and therefore easy, movements they encourage. Music is the audible expression of rhythm. What fun is there in dancing without music? Certain kinds of dancing are in themselves excellent forms of exercise, and the more we can get into our drill of the real human delight in dancing, the better. I must say when I visited Sweden to study the Swedish system of free gymnastics, I thought people were too deadly serious over it, and the work I saw in consequence dull in execution. Do not let us, when drilling children, pull too long a face, but occasionally broaden our expression into a smile.

Free gymnastics will train the body and help to produce mental alert-

ness if thinking be not altogether ignored, but you need apparatus if you are to produce a highly valuable moral quality, courage or nerve. Do not be too rigorous in ruling out exercises that are at all dangerous. Under proper supervision, work on apparatus is safe enough. There is always a slight danger, but that is to the good. What use is a well-trained body to a boy if he has not the pluck to jump to the ground from a wall or shelf ten feet above the ground, or to make his way with his hands along a pipe with his body dangling over a street, as a person may have to do some day to escape from fire, or to rescue another?

Then again, not enough is being done, either in town or country, in connection with our elementary schools to organise games. The line suggested by the Scottish Royal Commission on Physical Training, and also by the Physical Deterioration Committee, seems to me the right one. For the proper organisation of games voluntary assistance should be enlisted. Every school authority should associate with itself a Games Committee. To that committee might well be referred all matters connected with games or athletics, and above all, the necessary arrangements for the profitable employment of holidays and half-holidays in healthy exercise.

Several medical and other witnesses before the Physical Deterioration Committee urged that in the poorer districts of our large towns schools should be established something like Day Industrial Schools, where book-work should be supplemented by handicrafts, as in the children's workshops of Sweden, and where great attention should be given to improving the physique of children by seeing they are properly fed and afforded full opportunity for wholesome exercise.

Lastly, I welcome in the presence of our distinguished chairman at this discussion a change in the attitude of the medical profession. That great profession has done much to combat actual disease, but has, I venture to think, been too much wrapped up in the study of disease and not enough in that of health. Now it is studying and preaching prevention as better than cure, and its influence, backed by science and skill, should do even more for progress than the best intentioned efforts of enthusiastic amateurs.