THE THEORY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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PREFACE.

By means only of a rational and scientific system of Physical Education can we hope to attain the full and harmonious development of all the physical organs and senses, for the preservation of health, the uniform increase and growth of muscular power, and the strengthening and bracing up of the whole nervous system; and only by the establishment of a ready obedience of the voluntary muscles to the mandates of the will can we acquire perfect co-ordination of movement, suppleness and flexibility of limb, an active gait and graceful carriage of the body. *Unequal* development of our mental and physical faculties is injurious; their education should therefore be *coincident*. Now the supreme importance of Physical and Mental culture being conducted concurrently, is as yet far from being recognised by the great bulk of the British Nation, and indeed one may safely affirm, that it has only received any attention at all from the majority

of those responsible for the training of our boys and girls within a comparatively recent period; and up to a very short time ago, the Educational Department in Whitehall made no mention whatever of Physical Exercises in the Elementary School code, and presumably considered it a matter of but small moment, whether the children of the masses grew up with undeveloped and puny bodily powers or not.

A great move however in the right direction has at last been made, by the introduction into the said code of a clause by which it will in August next become compulsory on all Elementary School managers to make due provision for the instruction of their children in "Swedish or other drill or other suitable physical exercises"—so it is worded.

It can only therefore now be a question of time, and let us trust a short time, before managers of High Schools and all other Educational Establishments will be compelled to take the matter seriously in hand, and indeed we may now reasonably hope that before long parents among all classes will simply refuse to send their children to any schools where suitable provision is not made for giving the instruction in question.

The demand then for scientific Instructors is sure to

greatly increase, and at all Training Colleges the Students will doubtless be called upon to qualify themselves in such a manner, as to be capable of giving instruction in this subject, and therefore the production of this book of Mr. Chesterton's on the Theory of Physical Education in Elementary Schools must be considered as most opportune, and as being undoubtedly calculated to materially facilitate the study of the science, without undue labour on the part of the student, and with much economy of time. The book is exhaustive and yet concise, it enters into every detail connected with the proper development and healthy condition of the corporeal powers, it describes in an interesting and intelligible manner the wonderful mechanism of the human body, it teaches how the due performance of all the vital processes is dependent upon the functional health and activity of all the organs, and how again these are influenced and promoted in a high degree by rational and properly directed training, by moderate exercise, wholesome food, pure air, and good sanitary surroundings generally. It emphasizes the necessity for the taking of proper rest, and deals with the question of suitable clothing, and it sums up very fairly and reasonably the advantages and disadvantages attending the employment of music and singing in

connection with bodily exercises, upon which point there is much diversity of opinion among experts, and there is introduced a most interesting and valuable little article on "Singing and Declamation in relation to Physical Exercise," by C. Roberts, Esq., F.R.C.S., a gentleman well known for his intimate knowledge of the science of Physical Education, and for all he has done to advance it. The rules laid down by Mr. Chesterton for the guidance of persons conducting a practical lesson are clear, ample, and precise, and are based throughout on sound principles and common-sense, and should be most carefully read and digested by all students of this subject. Attention is very properly directed to the injurious positions into which children are so liable to fall when reading and writing, and to the serious consequences which but too frequently result from the use of unsuitable desks and seats, for alas! the provision of properly constructed desks and seats is sadly neglected in very many schools, to the great detriment of the little students. The remarks upon games are excellent and much to the point, as any book on physical education, written in our own language for the inhabitants of these islands to read, would unquestionably be incomplete did it not touch upon the subject of our out-door games, for they have