

ATHLETIC TRAINING AND HEALTH

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Athletic Training and Health by John Harrison

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JOHN HARRISSON

**ATHLETIC TRAINING
AND HEALTH**

ATHLETIC TRAINING

AND

HEALTH:



AN ESSAY ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

BY

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NOTE.

A PAPER which obtained the Gold Medal of the Athletic Society of Great Britain in 1864, is incorporated with the following Essay. A few copies of the Paper were printed and circulated at that time.

J. H.

Conington, March, 1868.

Athletic Training and Health.

"HARK hither reader! wilt thou see
Nature her own Physician be?
Wilt thou see a man all his own wealth,
His own music, his own health;
A man whose sober soul can tell
How to wear her garments well;
A *well-olad soul*, that's not oppress'd
Nor choked with what she should be dress'd;
A soul sheathed in a crystal shrine,
Through which all her bright features shine;
A soul whose intellectual beams
No mists do mar—no lazy steams;—
A happy soul, that all the way
To heaven hath a summer's day?
Would'st see a man whose well-warmed blood
Bathes him in a genuine flood?
A man whose tuned humours be
A seat of rarest harmony?
Would'st see blithe looks, fresh cheeks, beguile
Age? Would'st see December smile?
Would'st see nests of roses grow
In bed of reverend snow?
In sum, would'st see a man that can
Live to be old and still a man?
Whose latest and most leaden hours,
Fall with soft wings, stuck with soft flowers;
And when life's sweet fable ends
Soul and body part like friends;
No quarrels, murmurs, no delay;
A kiss, a sigh, and so away—
This rare one, reader, would'st thou see?
Hark hither reader, and *thyself be he.*"

THE word 'health' is Saxon, but in the mouths of our ancestors *hæleth* signified not a healthy man only, but a hale man, a brave man, a hero.

A definition of health must include the mind as well as the body; indeed, it has been asserted that the search after health is the search after happiness, and a perfect knowledge of the whole subject may almost be said to constitute philosophy or the search after wisdom.

Great authorities hold that moral obliquity is a condition of mental, or brain disease, and it is unquestionable that madness often takes the form of homicidal mania, which is an irresistible temptation to transgress the sixth commandment; or of kleptomania, an uncontrollable desire to break the eighth; or of dipsomania, which is an ungovernable tendency to get drunk.

There are mild or obscure forms of these and similar diseases, and persons afflicted with such ailments may be seen at Millbank or Pentonville, undergoing a treatment there which is seldom curative, though it may often be deterrent.

"A costive habit," says Kotzebue, "may extinguish the divine flame of genius."

Though we may doubt the intimate connection between the mental, moral, and physical parts of man which these opinions seem to imply, none will, at any rate, deny that few possessions are so valuable as mere bodily health: the want of it greatly limits our capacity for usefulness, and lessens the enjoyment of every pleasure, sometimes even rendering life a burden too heavy for us. Yet how seldom do we seriously reflect on the means of acquiring or retaining this great treasure, and how few act up to their convictions when, at last, they have been induced to think on the subject: "For it is not easy," said Cullen, the celebrated phy-

sician, "to engage men to break in upon established habits, or to renounce the pursuits of pleasure; and particularly to persuade men *that those practices are truly hurtful which they have often practised with seeming impunity.*" "Nature commonly allows us to go on violating her laws for years without any apparent retribution; she runs long accounts with her children, and, like a cheating attorney, seldom renders her bill until the whole subject of litigation is eaten up*."

Some of my readers will, perhaps, think that there is no very direct relation between the general subject of health and the rules of athletic training; and not a few recent writers of eminence have attempted to shew that increase of muscular strength in any great degree, by gymnastic exercises and athletic training, is absolutely prejudicial to health. Among these last is a contributor to one of our most popular magazines, who makes the following objection to physical training. "The muscular system," he asserts, "is forced into undue development, and this development has been at the expense of the general vitality;" and "the amount of general vitality which should be distributed among several organs has been so unequally apportioned, that some of them are starved" to over-feed the muscles. Now this writer assumes, in opposition to the teaching of science, that the muscular system can be developed by regular and continued exercise without a corresponding development of the other systems and organs. Physiology justifies an entirely different conclusion; we can-

* "Information for the People."—*Chambers.*

not increase our muscular power without, at the same time, proportionately invigorating the whole body. To carry out our resolutions an act of will is required; the command issued by the will is conveyed from the brain, through the nerves, to the muscles: the nerves stimulate the muscles to contract, and the strength of this contraction is probably due as much to the force of the nervous stimulus, as to the contractile power of the muscular system. Then, too, the heart and blood-vessels, in obedience to the physiological law of hypertrophy, increase in weight and power to meet the demand of the hungry muscles for blood, which, like Jack-the-Giant-killer's foe, is the food they crave. The blood-vessels are strengthened to convey, and the lungs to aërate, the fuller vital stream; the stomach, by increased appetite, proclaims itself able and anxious to prepare the large supplies of *chyme* required to replenish the blood, while the muscles still grow stronger in answer to the call for greater force, and it is thus that the whole frame is exercised and strengthened. The invariable sequence, or law, of hypertrophy, to which allusion has just been made, is somewhat similar to the political economist's "law of supply and demand." It may be stated thus:—

Increase of function in an organ leads to augmentation of power.

The conditions that give rise to hypertrophy are three, viz.—

1. The increased exercise of a part in its healthy function.
2. An increased accumulation in the blood of the