

EXERCISE AND TRAINING: THEIR EFFECTS UPON HEALTH

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THEIR EFFECTS UPON HEALTH

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PREFACE.

SINCE the publication a few months ago, in one of the weekly journals, of the remarks contained in these pages on Exercise and Training, the subject has been brought prominently before the medical profession in consequence of a discussion which took place quite recently at the Clinical Society, and which was fully reported in the 'British Medical Journal.' The results of the experience of several eminent physicians clearly stated upon this occasion have been sufficient to excite very general interest indeed in the whole subject of our athletic sports, and will undoubtedly lead to an impartial and careful examination into the question of the advantages and disadvantages which attach to them. Instances were mentioned of the serious consequences of violent muscular exertion, or 'over-

strain,' both where sudden effects were produced by it or the symptoms of disease were manifested after some lapse of time, and it was particularly interesting to observe how fairly and earnestly the discussion was supported by the Society. Not only were the usual athletic exercises most productive of injury brought under consideration, but the inquiry was extended to every kind of influence capable of exerting deleterious effects by mechanical means on the important organs of the body.

In order to make the following remarks as complete and practical as possible, I shall avail myself of the facts which were elicited on the occasion referred to and the general conclusions which may be drawn from them. It will be seen that the object in view is not to discourage a reasonable indulgence in those valuable and delightful sources of pleasure to which we are almost instinctively attached, but simply to point out how necessary it is to avoid every possibility of suffering from incaution or excess.

R. J. L.

EXERCISE AND TRAINING

CHAPTER I.

EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGICALLY CONSIDERED—ITS
PRACTICAL BENEFITS—THE INJURIES RE-
SULTING FROM OVER-EXERTION.

THE time is rapidly approaching when the value of exercise as one of the most important agents in the preservation of health and the prevention of disease will be more fully recognised than it is at present. Various active amusements, which occupy the hours of relaxation at our schools and Universities, instead of being regarded with doubt or suspicion, or looked upon more leniently as innocent pastimes, will probably before long obtain their due appreciation, and form a part of every system of rational education. Without casting any disparagement on the attention which for some years has been paid to

intellectual culture, one may raise the question whether the effects of over-care in that respect have not been quite as serious in the injuries they have produced as any which have resulted from too violent muscular exertion.

It would, however, deprive those popular amusements which demand much activity of the pleasure and advantage which may be derived from them if they were replaced by any regular gymnastic exercise; but there are certain principles which ought to be understood by all who indulge in them particularly when they submit to such rules as are in force amongst boating men at our Universities during the period of training.

It seems desirable that, instead of seizing upon opportunities for discouraging rowing and similar amusements, some attempt should be made to establish on a firm scientific basis a system of rules by which those who have not yet had experience may be guided, and the unfortunate accidents which sometimes occur to render such amusements unpopular may be avoided.

It will be seen in the course of the following remarks that every kind of movement has some particular influence on the muscles and organs of

the body, and as it makes very little difference which is selected for the purpose of illustrating the general principles on which exercise is to be regulated, we may take that which is the most popular as well as the most active.

Mr. Maclaren's work has already prepared the way for such a system as we desire to see established, and is much to be commended for its simplicity and good common sense. Every treatise on rowing necessarily includes the subject of training, and aims at a scheme or set of rules of universal application; but there is a good deal to be done before we can arrive at general laws where great varieties of physical constitution are to be considered. This principle of variation it is of the greatest importance to recognise if we wish to examine the subject of training in a scientific manner; and if it is fully appreciated and observed, we shall arrive at a far more satisfactory system than those which simply rest on dogmatic opinions.

To suppose that any injurious effects are produced on the constitution of a healthy man by the amount of training required for the performance of any of the exertions demanded by the sports in vogue at our Universities I have no hesitation in

asserting is an error. On the contrary, I believe that careful training is highly beneficial to health, and I think that regular boating exercise is one of the most powerful agents with which we are acquainted in preventing those serious diseases of the lungs which are liable to occur at this period of life; but it happens not unfrequently that men 'over-train,' as it is termed, and it ought to be an object of scientific enquiry to prevent the occurrence of such mistakes. Those who have had much experience in rowing will support me in the opinion that rarely, if ever, is the actual race a source of mischief to a man who has been prudent and attentive in his training. With these preliminary remarks we may enter upon our investigation.

The order in which Mr. Maclaren has taken the common agents of health—viz. exercise, diet, sleep, air, bathing, and clothing—is natural and convenient, and has been adopted by the earliest authorities on gymnastics.

'To the question, What is training, and what is it meant to do? I should answer,' says the author referred to, 'It is to put the body, with extreme and exceptional care, under the influence of all the