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AN ADDRESS

TO THE

MIDDLE CLASSES

UPON THE SUBJECT OF

GYMNASTIC EXERCISES.

BY

LORD DALMENY.

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AN ADDRESS,

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In this age of philanthropic theory and domestic reform, when nations, laying aside their mutual antipathies, apply to internal improvement those energies formerly devoted to ambition; at the present moment, especially, when while other states are constructing or remodelling their political institutions, England has embarked in the career of social regeneration, when the material and moral condition of her population not only attracts the speculations of her philosophers, but occupies the labours of her legislators, when the public health, and the public comfort are an object of the public concern, when not only sanitary schemes are proposed, but sanitary measures are adopted; no man ought to withhold any suggestions or ideas, which may be serviceable to his fellow citizens, or promote the welfare of society. It is on this ground, that I venture to address you upon the subject of physical and athletic exercise, a subject than which few are more important, and none more neglected. Numerous plans have been devised for improving the dwellings of the people, and for affording them the means of personal cleanliness. Where these plans have been carried into effect, they have been

attended with such advantage as to encourage their extension. But none have been proposed for providing the inhabitants of large towns with the means of physical recreation and vigorous exercise, without which the success of the best sanitary code will be but partial and incomplete.

It is a common belief that the sanitary measures, which are to unload the drains and purify the atmosphere of our large cities, will, of themselves, be sufficient to ensure the health and vigour of the whole community, to which their enactments may apply. No doubt these measures will, in many localities, be effectual in preventing the invasion of epidemics, in mitigating the ravages of disease, and in delaying the visitation of death. Legislation can do much to alleviate the afflictions and reduce the mortality of mankind. It may shield a whole nation from the breath of the pestilence. It may purge the air of noxious exhalations. It may proscribe and banish that hideous family of plagues, which have their origin in accumulations of filth, deleterious effluvia, and foul habitations. It may remove the miasma that corrupts the blood and offends the senses. Legislation can do much, but it cannot do all. I have stated what it *can* do, I will now state what it *cannot* do. It cannot protect any man against that state of debility and disease, which is the inevitable consequence of his own luxury and sloth. If it supplies him with a pure atmosphere, it cannot force him to practise that temperance, and adopt those habits of exercise, which are indis-

pensable to health. The law may preserve him from the attacks of malaria, but not from the stealthy inroads of dyspepsy or gout. In fact, health cannot be secured and guaranteed by Act of Parliament. Such are the habits of our middle classes, that they would be far from possessing it, if they enjoyed the air of the Grampians. It is not so much additional air, as additional exercise that they require. Their defective sanitary condition may be ascribed, less to the atmosphere that they breathe, than to the physical inaction in which they indulge. In this metropolis, the revenues of the physician and the profits of the druggist are not derived from any circumstances, which the law can control, but from the intemperance and indolence of its inhabitants. As this is a subject that has attracted less attention than it deserves, I trust that the few observations I am about to make, may be considered by those who read them as neither useless nor impertinent.

I address these remarks to the middle classes, because it is to the middle classes that they are peculiarly applicable. The lower classes are condemned by necessity to undergo the toil, to which the upper resort for the sake of exercise or diversion. Poverty compels the one, pleasure prompts the other to adopt the habits and enjoy the benefits of physical exertion. The daily labour for daily bread maintains the vigour of the labourer. The chase, the gun, the foil, preserve the health of the gentleman. Both these classes, no doubt, abound

in exceptions. There are a multitude of artisans, whose exertions are exclusively confined to their fingers, and whose constitutions are impaired by the sedentary nature of their occupations. There are, on the other hand, many gentlemen, whose sole exercise consists in crawling from their sofa to their dinner-table, from their dinner-table to their bed. But I wish to avoid addressing myself to cases, which are less the rule than the exception, and which would serve rather to perplex than to illustrate the observations I am about to make. Unfortunately, what is the exception in the extreme classes, is the rule of the middle class; and hence I venture to offer it a few words of warning and advice.

What is the daily life of a British tradesman? In a political and moral point of view, it is, no doubt, entitled to the highest commendation. It is a pattern of industry, punctuality, and good faith. But if we contemplate it under its sanitary aspect, we shall find that it deserves more censure than praise. What is his daily life? He rises early, and begins business at eight o'clock, having opened his shop before the majority of his customers have opened their eyes. At nine, he eats a hasty breakfast, and immediately returns to business. By business he is engrossed till two, when he swallows a beefsteak, and returns again to business. At five, he withdraws from business for a brief interval to tea, when having gulped down some cups of souchong, he returns again to business. He continues immersed

in business till eight or nine, when he begins to think that business may yield the place to relaxation or amusement. What is the nature of this relaxation or amusement? Does he brace his nerves, reanimate his spirits, or circulate his blood by any gymnastic exercise, any invigorating game? Nothing of the kind. If fond of literature or politics, he retires to read the last review, or study the leading article in the *Times*. If he be convivial, he strives with a few boon companions to relieve the pressure of anxiety, and escape the persecutions of care. If he be domestic, he seeks on the household hearth the solace of conversation and repose. Heaven forbid that I should denounce any one of these habits, that I should attempt to decry the pleasures derived from society, from home, from intellectual employment.

It is this blending of business and domestic habits, that has made England what she is, the mart and model of the world, the emporium of all trade, the asylum of freedom and order, the shrine of public and private virtue. I am not about to propose any plan, which will obstruct or interfere with business, with domestic enjoyments or intellectual pursuits. I would merely suggest certain descriptions of physical amusement, which might be harmoniously combined with other important avocations, which would restore the health which you have lost or impart a health which you have never experienced, which would infuse an energy and vigour previously unfelt and unknown; and would avert that impend-

ing degeneracy, whose immediate invasion is threatened by the progress of luxury and ease.

In other countries the tendency is, to think too much of diversion, and too little of work. Here the tendency is the reverse; to devote our whole attention to business and none to recreation. The free citizens of England are the voluntary slaves of toil, which is never, as is the case with those, who are the property of others, diversified by amusement. We are, indeed, rich in literary and scientific societies, mechanic reading clubs, schools of philosophy and art; rich in institutions for bewildering and oppressing the over-wrought brains of our middle and operative classes with crude speculations and ill-digested knowledge. But where are the institutions for gymnastics? Where are the associations for physical exercise? Where are the arenas, on which the limbs, the sinews, the spirits of our merchants may be recreated and refreshed by manly diversions? Where are the noble sports of our ancestors? Where are the rude but invigorating pastimes, which hardened their muscles, steeled their nerves, expanded their frames, exhilarated their spirits and gladdened their hearts? What sports are there now to smooth the brow of care, to dispel the vapours of spleen, to make poverty forget its wretchedness, or sorrow smile amidst its woe? We are the wisest, the greatest, but the saddest nation in the world. We throw the responsibility on the climate and abuse our fogs and murky skies. Yet the climate, in the days of

Elizabeth, was the same as it is now, and "merry" was *then* the chosen epithet of England. But in those days, when England was not only called "merry," but was merry, there were numerous popular festivals, where the yeomen and burgesses exercised themselves in manly sports. The Stuarts actually attached such importance to the due recreation of the people, that they ordered a proclamation to be read every Sunday in the Churches, permitting, nay enjoining, the use of pastimes and games. This proclamation and its injunctions were proscribed by the Puritans, who though they rescued our privileges and liberties from destruction, have left no slight taint of their fanaticism and gloom. The national character still displays strong traces of their ascendency. With their indomitable love of freedom, it has retained no small portion of their austerity. Since their days, the old sports of England have fallen into disuse, and with these has disappeared the ancient joyousness of its inhabitants.

Is this wonderful? Is this inexplicable? Is it not, on the contrary, the inevitable effect of a very obvious cause, an effect in accordance with that medical and metaphysical axiom, which was illustrated by Æsop in the fable of the bow, and has been embodied in the proverbs of every country and age? The vital spirits grow dull, the blood is thickened and baked, the brain is oppressed, the nerves are unstrung, even the social feelings are blunted by an incessant brooding over business, and a neglect of the requisite relaxation. Nor is it suffi-

cient that this relaxtion should be a mere suspension of toil. It must be of a kind, not merely to leave the mind vacant, but to keep it agreeably absorbed by some object of a nature totally different from that, which before had engrossed and fatigued it. It is by active bodily exercise, and by active bodily exercise alone, that this desirable result can be obtained. To send the man, who has stood some twelve hours behind a counter, to saunter slowly about the streets, to smoke cigars in a divan, to preside over a convivial club, to listen to lectures at an Athenæum, or to pore over the pages of a magazine, is only to superadd the languor of dissipation and the tediousness of study to the lassitude of business.

England has been termed by foreigners the "land of contradictions," and perhaps no country so much abounds in strange inconsistencies. In fact, it has been made the subject of the most conflicting opinions, and has called forth the most opposite judgments. Yet all these opinions and judgments have had some foundation in truth. For instance, it has been asserted, on the one side, that in no country is physical exercise so much practised as in England; on the other, that in none is it so utterly neglected. Both these contradictory assertions are correct. If we compare the upper classes of Great Britain with those of any other country, we shall find that they devote far more time and attention to bodily exercise; cricket, rowing, wrestling and foot-ball, impart to them that

vigour in boyhood, which in manhood is maintained by the sports of the field. Hence the aristocracy of these islands is superior to that of other countries in stature, in beauty, in activity and strength. If, on the other hand, we turn to our middle classes, we shall find that though they display surpassing mental energies and vigour, yet they are as remarkable for their indulgence in physical inaction. Morally active, they are physically supine. They possess a fiery soul enclosed in a torpid frame. The mind is in perpetual motion, the body sluggish and inert. Yet man was originally sentenced to live by the sweat of his brow and his functions as well as structure are framed in accordance with this irreversible decree. The vitality and vigour of these functions depend on his fulfilling this law in the shape of either exercise or toil. Disease is the penalty attached to its violation or neglect. You, however, whom I address are compelled to live, not by the sweat of your brow, but by the sweat of your brain, a process as injurious, as the other is conducive to health. If physical inaction alone is sufficient to breed disorders, the mischief is enormously aggravated by superadding the drudgery of the mind. To the man of incessant mental activity, physical recreation is even more indispensable than to him, whose intellect is as slothful as his limbs. The cerebral excitement requires to be soothed, the nervous agitation to be calmed by physical exercises calculated not only to restore the equilibrium of the circulation and refresh the

jaded nerves, but to divert the mind from the particular subjects, which had harassed and engrossed it.

This is peculiarly necessary in the case of the middle classes of Great Britain, who engaged in mercantile operations of stupendous magnitude, are exposed to the ceaseless apprehension and suspense, inseparable from the hazards of speculation and the vicissitudes of commerce. Theirs is a restless and feverish existence. Theirs is a desperate and perilous game. Theirs are the risks of adventurous enterprise with its brilliant prizes and golden rewards or its blasted prospects and withered hopes. Theirs is a career of agitation which convulses the brain and shatters the nerves, of care which gnaws the vitals, and anxiety which corrodes the heart. The brain and nervous system of men absorbed by such exciting pursuits peculiarly demand relaxation and diversion, not merely for the maintenance of their bodily, but for the preservation of their intellectual health. The labours of a gymnasium would, in a multitude of instances, not only restore the body but the intellect to vigour, would not only strengthen the limbs and harden the fibres, but would steel the mind to withstand the shocks of misfortune or the secret, silent march of imperceptible decay.

In the earlier ages of the world, these truths, neglected in modern times, met with universal assent. They were not only recognised in theory, but successfully embodied in practice. The an-

cients maintained, that a healthy state of the mind, could not exist apart from a healthy state of the body. Hence, among the Greeks, gymnastic exercises were not a mere amusement but an institution. They devoted as much care to physical as to intellectual education. Yet the one produced the most perfect of human compositions, as the other produced the most perfect of human forms. This attention to corporeal training, so far from interfering with the development of the mind, appears to have materially assisted it. In the art which stirs the emotions, moves the affections and touches the heart, in the art which invokes and fascinates the senses; in the art which records the national triumphs and national sorrows, in the art which sways the passions and subjugates the will, in the investigation of truth, in the daring flights of speculation, in the patient toil of analysis, in the delineation of the human form, in poetry, in history, in oratory, in philosophy, in sculpture, the Greeks were pre-eminent. They were the explorers of all mysteries, the discoverers of all science, the inventors of all arts, the pioneers of civilization, the light and glory of the human race. Various causes may be assigned for this wonderful intellectual superiority, of which, perhaps, the principal was their careful physical training of youth. They well understood the intimate connection, which subsists between the corporeal and mental organisation of man. It is remarkable that their literature, though rich in all the attributes of poetry and

thought, contains nothing of a morbid character. It has no nightmare phantoms, no ghastly images, no satanic conceptions, no frenzied anathemas, the spectral illusions of a distempered fancy or the fitful moans of hypochondriacal dejection. There are no ravings, no rage, no tortures, no writhing, neither the howl of frenzy, nor the wailing of despair. Its energy is the healthful vigour of the athlete, not the convulsive paroxysm of the maniac. All is natural, flowing, simple and pure, the vivid impulse, the spontaneous outpouring of an exuberant but chastened genius. Greek literature, like Greek sculpture, is characterised by a luminous repose. The health of the body was communicated to the mind. The Greeks knew, that when the vigour of the physical constitution is not only developed but maintained by appropriate exercise, the moral constitution will participate in its energy and health. Hence in Greece gymnastics were not only enforced by legislation, but were consecrated by religion, and the athletic contests, which, in other lands, were mere desultory pastimes, were here hallowed by the tradition, that they were founded or favoured by the gods. Institutions so serviceable to man could, according to the reverential illusions of ancient piety, derive their origin or their sanction from divine beneficence alone.

The art of sculpture derived inestimable advantages from these gymnastic performances. In this art, the Greeks would scarcely have attained their unrivalled pre-eminence, had not their athletic

exhibitions familiarized the artist with the various attitudes of the human form. No such opportunities are enjoyed by our sculptors, who are compelled to hire a professional model, and having fixed him in a posture, to make a servile copy of his figure. Thus the defects as well as excellencies of the original are transferred to the copy, because the faults are not corrected by the knowledge of the artist. But the Greek sculptor, accustomed from his earliest childhood to see the human form assume every conceivable variety of attitude, possessed an instinctive familiarity with its motions and structure. Intimately acquainted with its capabilities and proportions, he brought to his art a practical science, derived from daily experience, which neither the study of anatomy nor of individual examples would have been sufficient to impart. This will account for the perfection of Greek sculpture and the comparative failure of modern imitators. But it was not only in the departments of intellect and art, that this physical education was fruitful in such glorious results. It was productive not only of the beautiful, but of the useful. It not only developed the symmetry of the human frame, but invigorated its powers both of action and endurance. It produced soldiers as invincible by toil as by foreign foes. In the memorable retreat immortalized by Xenophon, ten thousand Greeks, surrounded by hostile nations, in an unexplored and barbarous country, ignorant of roads and defiles, destitute of charts, without baggage or magazines, marched

1155 leagues, crossed inhospitable wastes, swam the deepest torrents, scaled the loftiest peaks, at one time scorched by the sun, at another frozen by the snow, in daily conflict with the enemy, without incurring the loss of a single man by either sickness or fatigue.

Many persons unacquainted with the powerful influence of exercise, will attribute these wonderful exploits to some innate superiority of the ancient over the modern nations. According to them, the physical powers of man have gradually declined. Having thus settled to their own entire satisfaction, that man is doomed by the fiat of fate to a continual degeneracy, and having thus made Providence responsible for that inferiority, which is the offspring of their own sloth, they quietly resign themselves to what they regard as their inevitable destiny, or ensure its fulfilment by a life of sensuality and inaction. This notion of the degeneracy of man is an inveterate and antiquated superstition. But though superannuated and worn out, it still stubbornly retains a decrepit vitality. It had its origin in the earliest and will, probably, survive to the latest periods of the world. Men have displayed, and ever will display, a strange delight in exalting their predecessors, and disparaging their contemporaries. Homer set the fashion; it was adopted by his successors, is continued by ourselves and will be perpetuated by our posterity. But the visions of poets are no ground for the conclusions of physiologists. This idea of a continual physical degeneracy

is a delusion, which is supported by no evidence and illustrated by no facts. It belongs to the region of chimeras and dreams. There is a degeneracy of habits, but no degeneracy of Nature. That the artificial habits of a large portion of mankind may have enervated their frames may be true ; but the capabilities of the human frame, when skilfully trained, are equal to what they were in the earlier ages of society. Englishmen are born with all the materials of activity and strength possessed by the primitive nations. I have seen a few specimens of ancient cuirasses, and these were so narrow, that but few of my countrymen could wear them. The Greeks and Romans were, I suspect, smaller men than the inhabitants of northern countries. Their historians make constant allusions to the gigantic size of the Teutonic nations. Yet there is no ground for concluding that we have degenerated from the stature and bulk of our forefathers. At Lord Eglinton's tournament, scarcely a knight could squeeze himself into the corslets of the middle ages. A curious experiment was made by the late Sir Samuel Meyrick, who possessed the finest collection of armour in the world. In his gallery hung sixty complete suits, once the defensive arms of that heroic chivalry, of whom we are supposed to be the dwarfish and degenerate descendants. Two of his guests, Englishmen of average size, tried on the whole sixty in succession, and encountered failure in each case. The chests and shoulders of the effete moderns were found too

brawny and broad for the panoply of their ancestors.

An error of the same kind prevails as to the comparative physical powers of man in his savage and man in his civilized state. It is generally supposed, that the former has a great advantage in both agility and vigour. The reverse, however, has been proved by various experiments. In trials of strength between our soldiers and the North American Indians, the superiority of the British has been invariably displayed. This is the more remarkable, too, because our soldiers, owing to the indolence and intemperance of their life, are not the most athletic portion of our population. One of the fleetest of the North American Indians was recently beaten in a ten mile race at New York, by a second-rate Lancashire runner. In fact, civilization need not, necessarily, be the parent of either degeneracy or disease. If a man observe the rules of strict temperance and exercise, the enjoyment of a warm lodging, a regular, wholesome meal, the intercourse of society and moderate mental occupation will be more favourable than unpropitious to his physical powers. Starvation, exposure and filth, are pernicious to growth, and fatal to physical development. There is no inherent mischief in civilization. It is not like an epidemic, against whose baneful attacks no precaution can guard, no prudence afford protection. Its evils are incidental and contingent, and may be resisted or avoided by the exercise of resolution and self-control. It is true,

that it exposes men to the temptations of sensuality and sloth, and that indulgence in these is inimical to health. But if placed by poverty below these temptations, or by self-government above them, the civilized man will surpass the savage in both activity and strength. It was in the zenith of her civilization, that Greece produced her most vigorous athletes. It is, within the last few years, that the trained champions of England have accomplished their most extraordinary feats, feats exhibiting almost superhuman powers of endurance, activity and strength. In fact, it is only in a state of high civilization, that the physical powers of man, when disciplined by temperance, and invigorated by exercise, can attain their highest perfection.

But while some assert and lament the degeneracy of Englishmen, others, perhaps with more reason, take pride in our physical superiority over other nations. This pride is not entirely unwarranted by facts. It is my firm belief, that Englishmen possess the elements of greater physical power than the natives of other countries, and that when their physical education corresponds with the benevolent design of nature, they surpass foreigners in stature, in activity and strength. It is in England, as I have observed, that the boxer, the pedestrian, the wrestler, achieve those extraordinary performances unsurpassed, or even unequalled, in ancient or modern times. Were the Olympian victors to come again to life, it would be easy to find their match between the Thames and the Spey. The chronicles

of Bell's Life record feats, which would fill the champions of Elis with astonishment and despair. It is in England that are bred those sons of toil, whose herculean frame and stubborn energy, whose massive limbs and iron endurance, induce the jealous and parsimonious foreigner to bribe them into his service by the offer of an enormous recompense, a recompense more than repaid by their superiority in industry and strength. It is in England that, according to Waagen, the President of the Academy at Berlin, are now to be seen the most perfect models of the human form. It is in England, in short, that the strongest men and the most beautiful women are to be found. But yet it is England that most abounds in invalids and medicine, it is England that is the chosen seat of dyspepsy and catarrh, it is in England that the quack rises soonest to distinction and wealth, it is England, where amid the losses and fluctuations of other trades, that of the druggist alone is sure to defy either fashion or adversity.

In every foreign capital, nay, in every foreign village, the eye is at once greeted with the sight of one British establishment and one British manufacture. Our national pride is sure to be flattered by the spectacle of the never-failing blue and crimson bottles, the inscriptions, the advertisements, the phials, the apparatus of a transplanted British chemist. If we cannot import our political constitution, at least we import our physic into every region of the globe. Bye the bye, amid the late

crusade in France against English manufacturers and operatives, the English druggists there appear to have enjoyed a peculiar immunity from proscription. The French wisely conceived it conducive to the national interest to allow their rivals unfettered liberty to poison themselves without restraint.

I attach no blame to physicians, nor do I intend to conform to the vulgar and traditional practice of making them the objects of either satire or invective. At any rate, the joke and abuse are, by this time, somewhat hackneyed and trite. It seems, too, singular, that those who in every clime and age have been the victims of vituperation and ridicule, should still be those whose assistance is most incessantly courted and invoked. If they justify the satire, the constant appeal to their aid is absurd, if their utility is undeniable, the satire is pointless and unjust. The physicians of England are a body of men not more distinguished for their science than their virtues. No profession can boast of more eminent examples of learning and skill, combined with generosity and disinterestedness. It is not the physicians but the patients that are in fault. If men refuse to take exercise, they must inevitably take physic. Consult any leading medical professor, and he will invariably confess, that the universal practice of temperance and exercise would render his calling a sinecure. Every medical work is a panegyric upon the virtues of abstinence, upon the efficacy of frugal diet and bodily labour, not only as a preservative of health, but as a remedy for disease.

But where sloth and gluttony are rife, physicians will abound. Their art is indispensable, in a state of society, where men live in the daily violation of all the fundamental laws and common principles of nature. It is the triumph of the art of healing, that, in an age when men eat as much in a day as they ought in a week, and only walk in a week as much as they ought in a day, its resources should have extended human longevity beyond the limits it had reached in less civilized ages. But though human life is prolonged, its enjoyment is diminished, for the follies and vices of man have aggravated and multiplied his maladies.

Every age and clime has its peculiar and fashionable distempers, which, superseding others, establish their own vicious predominance. These have their origin far less in the climate, than in the diet and habits of that society in which they prevail. Every stage of society, from barbarism to civilisation, has its specific complaints, and a very slight acquaintance with medicine or medical history will enable the student to predicate, from the social condition of a nation, the diseases that torment it. In fact, all these successive stages are marked by characteristic disorders. In an uncivilised age the inflammatory, in a civilised, the nervous predominate. Our ancestors suffered from a class of ailments now comparatively rare, such as plethora and fevers, ailments produced by redundance of blood, or by violent excesses in gluttony and wine. In these days prevail complaints of the heart, complaints of the brain,

complaints of the stomach, and that innumerable catalogue of nervous disorders engendered by indolence, by luxury, by study, by disappointed passions, by intensity of thought, by excessive mental toil, by the incessant spurring of ambition, or the slow corrosion of care. Our ancestral maladies were the maladies of strength, our maladies are the maladies of debility. The country gentleman of the olden time, ignorant of those petty perturbations, which are the offspring of a morbid sensibility, spent his life in joyous conviviality and boisterous sports, hunting, hawking, carousing, jesting, taking abundant exercise, quaffing abundant potations, till some surfeit or Bacchanalian orgy abruptly closed his career. In his days, dyspepsy, ticdouloureux, the perpetual rebellion of stomach and nerves, were neither known nor experienced. He enjoyed rude health till cut off by sudden death. "If death had then more victims, the doctors have now more patients." The middle-class Englishman of the 19th century is, perhaps, more long-lived, but is far less robust than his counterpart in the 16th. He drags out under daily martyrdom a more protracted existence. Every meal has its remorse, every morning its penitence. Dr. James Johnson, the great oracle on modern digestive disorders, observes, "To the luxurious epicure, it may seem incredible, that within the boundaries of the British isles, there are millions among the opulent classes, who would give up half their wealth to be able to do

without their food altogether, who would gladly give up the pleasure of *eating*, for an immunity from the misery of *digesting*." Such is the torture to which multitudes are condemned, in some cases by their own laziness and luxury, in others by a too exclusive cultivation of the intellectual faculties. These sufferings may not be incompatible with longevity, but they are incompatible with happiness. We may plume ourselves on the statistics of the bills of mortality, or the reduced premiums of Insurance offices, but if the prolongation of life be unaccompanied by its enjoyment, the grave may be regarded less as a calamity than a refuge.

This is preeminently an age of intellectual activity and physical sloth. We over-educate the mind; we exhaust every process by which we can enlarge or strengthen its powers; we store it with facts, we exalt it by contemplation, we stimulate it with poetry, we enrich it with science, we invigorate it by logic; we wing it for ethereal flights, or nerve it for the slow labour of patient investigation, but we forget the demands of its humbler associate, the body, which we suffer to become the victim of languor, or the prey of disease. Men spare no pains to acquire or retain knowledge, but neglect all precautions to secure or preserve health. The mental faculties are cultivated, nursed, pampered into preternatural development, while the bodily powers are either never fostered into maturity, or are suffered to grow feeble from disuse. Yet these evils might be

obviated by the simplest precautions, precautions within the reach of every one possessing common sense or resolution.

If we devoted only a tithe of the care to the preservation of health, which we devote to its restoration, we might almost bid defiance to any serious disease. But ours is a foolish and mischievous policy. We omit all consideration of preventives and think only of remedies. It never occurs to us to anticipate the approach of distempers, but supinely awaiting their invasion, we begin to meditate their expulsion when they have effected their conquest. Then begins a desperate struggle, which generally ends in the triumph of the disease. The patient next becomes a confirmed valetudinarian, and he, who sneered at all precautions for the maintenance of health, is now incessantly engrossed by abortive projects for its recovery. Every nostrum is tried which officious ignorance can suggest, or empirical impudence proclaim. He becomes the slave of every fancy, the dupe of every quack. His health, or rather his complaint, becomes his sole occupation, his absorbing profession, or rather his tyrannous task-master, who exacts the unceasing employment of every moment, the unremitting devotion of every thought. This is the simple biography of one-third of the inhabitants of these islands.

But, perhaps, it may be said, "All is very well as it is, and where is the necessity for change? Every large community, every densely thronged city, must have its proportion of mortality and

sickness. This is the ordination of Providence and the lot of humanity, and why engage in a vain attempt to combat an established and immutable order of things?"

All is not well, and there is a necessity for change, when want of exercise consigns numbers to early disease and premature graves. All is not well, when, from the same cause, numbers labour in youth under the infirmities of age. All is not well, when from the perpetual pressure of business, and the absence of amusement, the soul of multitudes is darkened with the gloom of a melancholy, which fermenting into discontent, visits on family and friends, on every social relation and political institution, the effects of its own misery and spleen. All is not well, when an eminent physician can state, as he does, on the authority of experience, that in London there is scarcely a single individual who enjoys perfect health. All is not well, when we reflect on the vast sums annually lavished on the faculty and their drugs, for the cure of complaints, which might have been averted by a timely recourse to exercise. All is not well, when in Hannay's Catalogue, inserted at the end of his Almanack for 1846, "we find the names of 783 medicinal nostrums sold in Oxford Street alone, for human use."* This doctrine, that all is well that exists, is a dangerous delusion, and is, after all, the lazy excuse of those spurious philosophers, who avert their face from abuses, to escape the trouble of reforming them.

* See Lancet of 25th June, 1848.

Acquiescence in remediable evils is as irrational as discontent under unquestionable blessings. The one is a sign of a torpid, the other of a distempered mind. Impatience under ills, which it is in our power to remove, is as much a duty as resignation to those, which it is impossible to shun. It is as imperative to struggle manfully against curable mischiefs, as it is to submit meekly to inevitable misfortune. Excessive patience under grievances, and an extravagant optimism are certainly no features of the national character. The Englishman is more prone to indulge in murmurs than in praise. But yet ignorance, prejudice, or habit may cloud even the perception of the sensitive, may obstruct that conviction of the evil, which is necessary to excite the desire of amendment, and may, to the jaundiced eye of the indolent and timid, represent as a fantastic innovation what is an indispensable reform.

In modern times, the possession of physical strength is of less importance than in those less civilized periods, when the protection of individual property, or the gratification of individual ambition, depended upon individual hardihood and prowess alone. The supremacy of law, the efficiency of the police, the general softening of manners, have given to the weak the security, formerly enjoyed only by the strong. Eminence in the state is now confined to intellectual distinction. Still periods occasionally arise, even in the present day, when not merely the patriotism, but the physical powers of all ranks may

be summoned into action. A demand may be made not only on the purse, but on the muscles, of the opulent classes. They may be called on, not only to pay, but to fight, for their own protection, for the preservation of their property, and the vindication of the law. The 10th of April was a memorable day in the chronicles of Great Britain. This country, already immortalized by its military victories, on that day achieved its most glorious moral triumph. It was the triumph of patriotism over treason, of law over violence, of the principles of order over the foul hallucinations of anarchy. In the remarks I am about to make, I trust no one will imagine, that I intend, in the slightest degree, to disparage your energy, your zeal, the sacrifices you incurred, the courage you evinced, in the cause of order and the law. Posterity will ratify the applause, which contemporaries have lavished upon your conduct. The 10th of April will be remembered as a day, sacred not only in the history of England, but in the annals of mankind. But the efficiency of the 200,000 special constables would have been doubled, had each individual been inured to vigorous exercise. On that day, I saw many forms cast by Nature in an athletic mould, but wasted or bloated by luxury or inaction. There was, no doubt, abundance of courage, but there was also a lack of physical strength, of ability to strike a blow, or robustness to endure one. Had a conflict occurred, the heart would, in many a case, have been but inadequately seconded by the hand. Many a valorous consta-

ble would have been captured by his own prisoner. Many a blow, inflicted with languid intrepidity and nerveless good-will, would have served, rather to provoke than to disable, the disturber of the public peace. Had a collision taken place, I fear that many of our guardians would have been, not daunted but overthrown, and have succumbed to antagonists perhaps inferior in courage, but possessed of better trained muscles, and sinews more invigorated by use.

It is a curious fact, that most of the great generals, who have signalized themselves, not only by their genius for command, but by their endurance of privation and fatigue, have been men originally of feeble organisation, which they have hardened and invigorated by temperance and toil. Cæsar, who not only excelled all the commanders of his time in strategical science, but all the legionaries of his army in patience under hardship, had by nature a weak constitution, which he strengthened by the early practice of gymnastics. It may, indeed, be assumed as an axiom, that a man, naturally delicate but vigorously trained, will surpass in activity and strength, one vigorously organised but uninured to exertion. If this be disputed, compare the Asiatic palanquin bearer with the European tradesman. The one, with a feminine delicacy of frame, scales mountains under heavy burdens; the other, endowed, perhaps, with the proportions of a giant, totters oppressed and crushed by his own weight.

There are a number of well-meaning but inconside-

rate persons, who seriously recommend disbanding the army and relying on the patriotic efforts of volunteers for the defence of the country. The exploded clamour against standing armies has been most unseasonably revived. It is proposed by these persons to discharge, or, at any rate, greatly reduce the number of our professional soldiers, and on the first outbreak of hostilities to train the people to arms. I will not discuss the question, whether these raw levies, imperfectly disciplined as they would be, are likely to prove a very formidable antagonist to an army of veterans. I will even assume what, however, is somewhat difficult to believe, that the train-bands, composed of our citizens, would be as efficient, in the execution of military manœuvres, as a battalion of guards. But is it conceivable, that with their present inactive habits, our middle classes could bear the fatigue of the shortest period of service? It is not natural physical capability, it is not courage, it is not zeal; it is condition that they want. There is not one in a thousand of them, that is fit to undertake a campaign against the grouse, much less a campaign against the enemy. Would those who scarcely walk a mile in a fortnight, would those who deem it toil to creep from Fleet Street to the Exchange, would those, who since their childhood, have scarcely exerted a muscle of their limbs, be fit to endure continuous marches of some twenty miles a day, performed with a weight of 60 lbs. perhaps under a burning sun, or amid torrents of rain? Would they bear long exposure to heat and

cold, to the privations of hunger and thirst? Why the labours of a review would overtask frames, not only untrained to heavy toil, but unaccustomed to common exercise. The sinews, scarcely summoned since infancy into action, would fail to respond to the sudden call which would be made on them. It is a well known fact, that even young soldiers, though generally drawn from the agricultural classes, suffer severely from sickness in their first campaign, and that no army is thoroughly effective until seasoned by active service. Conceive, then, the condition of a force composed of men, snatched away from the counter and torn suddenly from the desk. The first bivouac, the first march, the first drill in the dog-days, would transfer the whole army from the field to the hospital. If our destinies are to be entrusted to the exclusive defence of an extemporised assemblage of half-disciplined tradesmen, the power, the glory, the grandeur, nay, the very existence of this empire, are irrevocably doomed. Were the middle classes, however, in the daily habit of taking vigorous exercise, they might constitute a force, which, when properly disciplined, might form, not a substitute for the regular army, but a valuable auxiliary. In that capacity, they might do good service to their country, by aiding either to preserve the public peace, or to resist a foreign foe. In their present condition, military service would but render them the victims, not of the sword of the invader, but of their own patriotic exertions.

It has been stated, on good authority, that we

are the most unwarlike of nations. If the statement be true with reference to our predilection, I trust that it is unfounded with reference to our fitness for war. I trust it only means, that we choose to labour, rather for the amelioration than the destruction of the human race, and that we prefer the benevolent triumphs of peace to the more glittering trophies of military success. But I hope it does not imply, that we are now unequal to the protection of that empire which we have won by our valour, and to the vindication of that honour which has remained hitherto unstained, that whilst enriching our country, we have lost the courage to defend it, and that whilst our swords hang up encumbered with no dishonourable rust, the spirit which should appeal to them and the arms that should wield them in the hour of necessity, are degenerate and effete. In this sense, a nation that is unwarlike is ripe for subjugation. If this be the correct sense, we are only living on the capital of our ancient reputation; the days of our power, nay of our independence, are numbered, and the first crisis that occurs, by disclosing the hollowness of our strength and the poverty of our spirit will ring the knell of our downfall, and be the signal of our perdition.

The peaceful pursuits of industry are not absolutely incompatible with that valour and energy, which are indispensable to success in war; but, though not irreconcileable with these essential qualities, it must be confessed that they are not favourable to them. The atmosphere of the counting-house and shop is

not propitious to the growth and bloom of the military virtues. These pacific occupations require something to counteract their depressing and debilitating tendencies. The entire bureaucracy and shopocracy of our large towns could, with difficulty, furnish one regiment of able-bodied volunteers, physically qualified to bear the fatigues, or perform the duties, of the lightest campaign. But if they devoted a portion of their leisure hours to proper training in gymnasia, they would scarcely be obnoxious to this reproach. This assertion is not the mere offspring of a theory, but is the result of experience. There is not one of Mr. Hamon's pupils, who is not, after some months regular attendance, corporeally capable of undergoing the fatigues of active military service. All that is required, to make him an efficient soldier, is routine instruction in the drill. In bodily condition, he is fit for a campaign. Yet the acquisition of this efficiency demands but an hour, or an hour and a half's daily practice, an amount of time, which but few would find themselves unable to bestow. The present moment is peculiarly propitious for a trial of the experiment. A wise determination exists, among the middle classes of our towns, to shorten the hours of work by the earlier closing of their shops. Why not devote the interval of time thus gained to physical recreation? Let every man thus released from the counter betake himself to the gymnasium, and brace his nerves, while he refreshes his mind, by invigorating exercise.

To excite a military spirit is no part of my design. The spirit of the age is happily directed rather to commerce than aggrandisement, to the arts of peace rather than the glories of war. Our mission is rather to reform than to conquer, to emancipate than to enslave, to improve than to despoil. At the same time, other nations may not be equally imbued with this pacific disposition, and may adopt more ambitious, though more impolitic, theories. We may answer for ourselves, but cannot answer for our neighbours. Hence, though abstaining from aggression, we should be prepared for defence. In these times of civil discord and revolutionary broils, every man may be called on to bear arms in defence of his country. He may be summoned to suppress a faction or repel an invader. It is, therefore, desirable, that every man should be able to bear the common duties of military service. This ability is, however, most seriously counteracted by our habits. The subjugation of the elements by man, his conquests over material power, his command over the resources of Nature, though a glorious moral achievement, may prove the pregnant cause of his future physical degeneracy. His inexhaustible ingenuity is incessantly employed in devising inventions, not only for economising toil, but for sparing even wholesome exertion. Machinery is gradually monopolising the office of both sinews and muscles. The very limbs of the opulent will soon become cumbrous superfluities. Every club is furnished with voluptuous ottomans and sofas, inviting the Sybarite languor of

the British youth to repose. Guardsmen are embosomed in the arm-chairs, formerly reserved for the solace of helpless decrepitude. The present standard of comfort is far above the ancestral standard of luxury. Travelling, which once was a fatigue, is now barely an exercise. All classes, except the poorest, are whirled from one end of the kingdom to the other without personal exertion or personal exposure. The most delicate woman can now perform with ease in a day, journeys which once demanded a week's incessant toil. The omnibus relieves the legs of the citizen from the trifling transit from his house to his office. Life is thus spent in an arm-chair or vehicle. All this may be a source of pride to the patriot, of congratulation to the statesman, of approbation to the philosopher. These may be the trophies and triumphs of civilisation. But if not met by counteracting influences, this excessive multiplication, this universal diffusion of the conveniences and luxuries of life may be the prolific parent of innumerable evils. It may increase the number and virulence of distempers, it may debilitate the body, above all, it may enervate and emasculate the mind. It may tame and subdue that indomitable energy, which has been the distinguishing feature of the Englishman's character, which has taught him by enterprise to command prosperity, by fortitude to conquer adversity, to bear his arts and his arms to every recess of the globe, to defy the frowns of Fate, and to maintain a stern and victorious struggle against the malice of Fortune.

When a whole nation is thus nursed in the lap of luxury, there is danger, lest not only its vigour but its spirit decay. It may still retain an unwearied activity in the accumulation of wealth. It may display unparalleled industry in a restless pursuit of gain. It may keep up a ceaseless irritation and fret, amid the sordid and selfish calculations of avarice. But the danger will arise, lest the lofty courage, the noble hardihood, the proud constancy, the enduring fortitude, the magnanimous patience, which have ever formed the peculiar characteristics of my countrymen, should sympathise with the decline of their physical powers, and lest the heroic soul should become lifeless when the frame that contains it is *effete*.

From what I have said, it will be seen, that, in my opinion, athletic exercises exert a moral as well as physical influence, and are of importance, not only to the national health, but to the national character. Ought not, then, gymnastics to form an indispensable part of the education of youth? Ought not every school to be supplied with the apparatus, which is requisite for their practice, and to be attended by a professor well qualified to direct them? So much of the moral and intellectual, as well as corporeal well-being of the man, depends upon the physical education of the boy, that no pains should be spared at an early age, to harden his constitution, to improve his vigour, to strengthen his stamina, and to perfect the development of his frame. Many an invalid with tremulous nerves, and vitiated digestion,

laments, with unavailing repentance, the early years devoted to lettered sloth and studious repose. Willingly would he barter the riches of premature knowledge, the prizes and honours of academic distinction, the fame of a prodigy, the treasures of an overladen memory, the trophies of a precocious intellect, for the peaceful slumber, the elastic sinews, the firm purpose, the resolute mind of that schoolfellow, the champion of the cricket-field and racket court, whom he once undervalued and despised, but now envies and admires. In fact, the fleeting reputation of learned precocity is, after all, a miserable compensation for a life of physical martyrdom, involving often the ruin of that intellect, for the nourishment and elevation of which, these tremendous sacrifices had been incurred.

In England, the people enjoy but few opportunities of studying the exquisite remains of ancient art. The most perfect productions of the Grecian chisel adorn the public galleries of Italy, or are buried in the private collections of our own aristocracy and gentry. England, however, abounds in models of these masterpieces, and with the majority of these, you are, in all probability, familiar. You have all, no doubt, seen some good copy of the Gladiator, one of the most celebrated statues of antiquity. Compare such a form with that of an Alderman. You will then see the human form in its perfection and its degradation. The one is the child of nature, the other the child of luxury. In the one we see the happiest combination of elegance and strength, an

admirable harmony of proportions, a faultless symmetry of shape; we see all the gifts and graces of nature developed into consummate excellence by temperance and exercise; the elastic yet vigorous frame, the expanded chest, the sinewy limbs, the swelling muscles; the whole, too, pervaded by an indescribable air of refinement. All the proportions of the other are precisely the reverse of those which nature had designed. His chest is narrow, nature intended it should be broad, his belly is protuberant, nature intended it should be flat, the calf of his leg is straight, nature intended it should be curved, his arm is fleshy and soft, nature intended it should be sinewy and hard, his complexion is muddy, nature intended it should be clear, his eye is dull, nature intended it should be bright. His gait, his glance, his general aspect perpetually remind us, that the wise purposes of nature have been thwarted, and her fundamental laws set at nought.

It may seem somewhat hazardous to assert, that the difference between these two forms is a difference, not so much established by nature as by education and habit. Had they exchanged their habits, they might have exchanged their forms. Had the Alderman, from his cradle, observed the rules of temperance and exercise, his physical symmetry might have vied with that of the Athlete, who now displays such a contrast. Had the Gladiator abandoned himself to sensuality and sloth, had he shunned all physical exertion, had he exercised nothing but his liver, and neglected every thing but his palate, had

his gastric juice been the only function not enjoying a sinecure, had he consumed turtle by hundred weights, and claret by hogsheads, had he, in short, overtasked his stomach, and undertasked his limbs, the gifts of nature would have been marred, his activity would have been palsied, his strength would have vanished, and that noble form, which represents the dignity and beauty of man, would have lost its proportions in a bloated mass of deformity and disease.

Why do I institute this comparison? Is it to gratify a disposition to satire? Is it to raise a laugh instead of inculcating a lesson? Quite the reverse. My object is to shew, that not only a man's health, but a man's figure, is very much within his own control. It is to shew, that although a man may be unable to add a cubit to his stature, he may prevent his frame from being stunted into dwarfishness, swollen into corpulence, or bent into distortion. It is to shew, not certainly that every man can secure all the advantages of beauty, but that he can, at least preserve, nay, improve, those endowments, which the generosity of nature has bestowed. To descant on evils, whose cure is desperate, is a task as unprofitable as invidious. But it is a duty imposed as well by charity as by wisdom, to call attention to those ills, which are susceptible of a remedy, especially when the remedy is, at the same time, pointed out.

The question will now not unnaturally arise, how is it possible for the middle classes, consistently with

their usual avocations, to take the exercise necessary for the preservation of their health, or development of their strength? They are confined all day by the paramount necessities of business, and this business is almost always of a sedentary nature. They cannot leave it without injury to their reputation and pocket, and when the hour of relaxation arrives, no opportunity presents itself for physical recreation. No athletic games can be practised after sunset, and if a citizen attempt a "constitutional," by the time he has reached the fresh air of Hampstead or Highgate, he is overtaken by midnight. Besides, who would ever think, by way of exercise, of doing, every evening, a certain number of miles by gaslight? Such an occupation would be somewhat of a penal character, and would afford, in return, neither benefit nor enjoyment. It is easy then to indulge in vague and profitless declamation about the necessity and advantage of exercise, and to deal in plausible theories; but the difficulty consists in embodying these theories in practice.

Those who make these not unreasonable objections, are not, perhaps, aware, that a room thirty feet square, a ladder, a few poles, a handful of ropes and a couple of dozen foils, are all that is necessary to maintain a whole community in both vigour and health. This statement, which sounds like a paradox in England, is an axiom on the Continent. It is there corroborated by the testimony of experience. Gymnasia, or places for the practice of athletic exercises, have long been established in

Germany, Switzerland and France, with the greatest benefit to the sanitary condition of the population. In this country they are comparatively rare, and, though open to all, are frequented by few; but the extraordinary advantage, which these few have derived from them, justify my speaking with some authority in their favour. It is astonishing, what wonderful effects can be produced by the skilful application, for a short period, during each day, of the resources of the gymnastic art. One short hour devoted daily to gymnastics, will suffice to preserve and often restore health, to quadruple a man's strength, to develop his bodily powers, and to qualify him for an amount of exertion, that he would have despaired of achieving at the commencement of his practice. I have frequently seen young men come to Mr. Hamon's gymnasium in such a state of debility, as scarcely to possess any command of their limbs, who, at the end of three months, have attained a fair degree of strength, and, at the end of six, have been equal to the performance of extraordinary physical feats. What, however, is most remarkable is the change of constitution, and even of aspect, in these persons, during the progress of their practice. The pallid hue is replaced by the bloom of health, the narrow hollow chest expands, the flaccid, shrunk and withered muscles grow large and firm, the languid eye becomes bright, the nerves braced, the step elastic, the spirits brisk. Gymnastics ought not to be regarded as a mere

diversion; they ought to form a part, and an important part, of medical science. Many diseases may be warded off, others radically cured, by a timely resort to them. They are, indeed, a certain remedy for many ailments, which perplex and baffle the skill of the physician. By the Greeks, they were considered essential to the preservation and restoration of health. It was just before the time of Hippocrates, as Plato tells us in his Politeia, that gymnastics were made a part of medicine, as a means of counteracting the effects of increasing indolence and luxury. They were gradually reduced into a complete system. In such estimation were they held for the cure of disease, that not only Plato, but Aristotle, thought no republic could be deemed perfect, in which gymnasia were neglected. Aristotle enumerates them, also, among the four essential branches of education. The ancient gymnasia were dedicated to Apollo the God of medicine, and the directors were regarded as physicians, on account of the skill, which they had derived from experience. Such were the opinions and practice of the ancients, such ought to be the opinions and practice of the moderns. It would, indeed, be desirable that medical men should study these exercises, with a view to recommend those to their patients, which are peculiarly adapted to the exigencies of each case. But the daily pill and daily draught are preferred, and the invalid continues to swallow prescription after prescription, in the vain

attempt to recover that health, which an hour's daily exercise in the gymnasium would effectually restore.

As every parish has its Church, its baths, its workhouse, its school, so ought it to have its gymnasium. In each parish an association should be formed, the members of which should subscribe for the erection or hire of a suitable room, for the putting up the requisite apparatus, and for the salary of a superintendent, who should take charge of the gymnasium, and direct the various exercises. Were the association as large, as I trust it will be, the amount of subscription for each member would be small, far less probably than is now spent in drugs to vitiate that health, which these exercises would preserve. It is said that 22 millions sterling, are annually spent by the inhabitants of Great Britain upon ardent spirits, and I know not how many more in the consumption of tobacco. Will the middle classes grudge, for the maintenance of their health, a fraction of the sum expended in the stimulants which destroy it? Surely they will devote to the practice of manly exercise an infinitesimal part of that, which is devoted to sensual indulgence. I have too high an opinion of my fellow-countrymen to entertain any doubts on the subject. I believe, that the inactivity of the British middle classes proceeds less from choice than from ignorance, and that the means of exercise need only be pointed out to be readily embraced. The middle classes have always displayed a singular promp-

titude in profiting by the opportunities of intellectual improvement, nor will they, when any practicable plan is suggested, exhibit a fainter zeal in the cause of physical amelioration.

There are numbers who imagine, that gymnastics mean certain exercises, in which persons perform the evolutions, without the aptitude, of monkeys. There are others who will conceive, that these pages are written to persuade elderly gentlemen to perform feats on the slack-rope, or agile antics on a pole. This notion will probably occasion a profuse expenditure of jokes, and a boundless prodigality of wit. I therefore request you will listen before you laugh, and not allow your common sense to be blinded by ridicule. Those who would thus describe gymnastics, have either never tried them, or have never obtained their experience under proper management. Every age has its peculiar exercises. Those taught to the young are totally different from those prescribed for the old. The dawn, the meridian, the decline of life has each its separate and appropriate system. What is the meaning of the word "gymnastics?" Webster defines it to mean "athletic exercises intended for the promotion of health and diversion." I accept that definition, but as there are many of these exercises from which the inhabitants of crowded cities must necessarily be debarred, I confine myself more especially to those which can be practised in a gymnasium.

It is not my intention to enter into a minute detail of the peculiar exercises which are used in a

modern gymnasium. The slightest inspection would be worth pages of description. In fact, any attempt at description would probably convey an inadequate or erroneous impression. The modern gymnastic system comprises an immense variety of exercises, which, by means of a simple apparatus of bars, ladders, and ropes, are eminently calculated to develop the muscles, augment the vigour, and improve the symmetry of the human frame. These exercises are peculiarly suited to large towns, because they require a comparatively small space, and occupy comparatively little time. Besides, unlike cricket or foot-ball, they can be practised in the evening, and they thus occasion no interruption to business. They are adapted to all the diversities of constitution and age. They may be varied, so as only to stimulate the languid circulation of the feeble, or to call forth and task all the hidden powers of the robust. They may be accommodated to all the varieties of temperament which range between these extremes. When applied with due discretion, old age and boyhood may derive from them equal benefit. I have known men take their first lesson at fifteen and fifty, before the down has roughened the lip, and after the head was blanched with white; in both cases with signal advantage to their health. If those exercises alone are employed, which are appropriate to the physical condition of those who use them, scarcely any person is too old or too young to begin. If any mischief ever arises, it is caused by the foolish adoption

of one uniform system, by which the same discipline is prescribed to the weak and robust, the delicate and the strong, the infirm and the healthy, to those in the imperfect development of youth, and those in the vigorous maturity of manhood.

In order to obviate the evil consequences of this error, every gymnasium ought to be provided with a superintendent, not only to take charge of the room and preserve order, but to direct the exercise which is appropriate for each pupil. He ought himself to have been previously trained under a competent professor, and have qualified himself, not only to practise, but to teach the various exercises. He should also possess some acquaintance with the structure and powers of the human frame, so as to be able to recommend the particular course of exercise most adapted to each case. It is impossible to deny that gymnastics, which, under proper guidance, are so advantageous, may, without it, become most injurious to health. Abuse may pervert them from a benefit into a mischief. That which ought to be a source of strength may become a source of weakness. If a man who has spent his life in an armchair suddenly attempts to run a mile, he will probably crack a sinew or burst a blood-vessel. Another who, habituated to sensual indulgence, incurs the hazards, without preparation, of a pugilistic encounter, may fall a victim to his rashness. In the same way, the novice in gymnastics, who at once attempts the feats of the proficient, runs the risk of serious and permanent injury. But it would be as

as absurd to make gymnastics responsible in the one case, as to condemn running or boxing in the other. It is unjust to visit on the system the perverse folly of the individual. With a view to guard against this abuse, I consider the appointment of a superintendent indispensable to every gymnasium. No exercises should be performed except under his sanction or tuition. Every person in the room should regard himself as placed under his command, to act and leave off in obedience to his directions. A voluntary discipline of this description is not only requisite to prevent all danger, and to extract the greatest amount of benefit from these exercises, but facilitates the preservation of decorum and order. Confusion and riot must inevitably prevail where a multitude is assembled without due subordination, where nothing like system is observed, and where the individual vagaries of fancy are the sole rule of conduct. Anarchy is no more to be tolerated in a gymnasium than in a state.

A gymnastic apparatus has been erected by the Board of Woods and Forests in the neighbourhood of Primrose Hill. Its erection evinces a laudable attention on the part of the Government to the health and amusement of the people. One omission, however, has been made, which may be attended by disastrous consequences. No superintendent has been appointed to undertake the management of the exercises. A man is very properly stationed there, with authority to preserve the peace and enforce the observance of decorum, but the exercises

are left to the untutored discretion of the performer. Now, I have generally remarked that, in such cases, ignorance is peculiarly characterised by presumption, and that the ambition to attempt is almost always in proportion to the inability to perform. He that knows least and can do least aspires the highest, and tries those feats which are most arduous, and which most severely task the trained powers of the experienced. If such efforts incurred nothing but failure, they might safely be left to the ridicule which greets them, but as they are attended with danger, they ought to be restrained. The fool-hardy experimentalist incurs hazard to his life or limbs. Although gymnastics are, in theory, denounced as most perilous, they are treated, in practice, as the most innocuous of diversions. Whilst calumniated in the abstract, they are dealt with in reality in a spirit of dangerous security. No youth is allowed to make his first trial of horsemanship on the high-mettled racer, and yet, in gymnastics, tyros are permitted to attempt performances, which are even hazardous to the expert. It may be here observed, that all the exercises which are most useful are, also, those which are most safe, that those which are most conducive to vigour and health, are those which are totally devoid of risk, and that those which most captivate the eye and tempt the ambition of the inexperienced, are those which are almost useless in developing or invigorating the physical powers.

But the exercises in a gymnasium need not neces-

sarily be restricted to those, which are connected with the apparatus. Fencing may be practised there, an exercise singularly favourable to amusement, to health, to the improvement of the figure. Economy of time may be ranked among the numerous advantages it presents. In half an hour, a fencing bout gives more exercise than a three hours' walk or ride. In this respect, it is admirably adapted to those, who, closely occupied by business, find but little time for recreation. No exercise is more suited to the inhabitants of large commercial cities, where every moment is of consequence and the opportunities of physical recreation are few. Its cost is very slight in proportion to the benefit it confers. It is so conducive to health, that I boldly affirm that no man, who can handle a foil and find an opponent ought to suffer from any serious indisposition. The beneficial influence it exercises on the intellect is almost equal to that which it exerts on the body. It braces the mind with new sinews and nerves. Whilst awakening and augmenting the corporeal energies, it stimulates and rouses the torpid faculties of the soul, it heightens the vividness of its sensations, it quickens its perceptions, it re-kindles a fresh life, it communicates an elasticity, an animation, a vigour, which not only resuscitates its dormant powers, but, as it were, inspires it with new. It calls forth and exercises in the adept invaluable mental qualities, prudence, caution, vigilance, enterprise; promptitude in profiting by his adversary's errors and skill in retrieving his own.

Consummate excellence in this art demands some of the peculiar endowments of the general and diplomatist. Let it not be supposed, that this exercise is not as wholesome as those which are pursued in the open air. I have brought down the heathcock in Braemar, I have stalked the deer on Ben M'dhui, I have trod the Alpine solitudes of Switzerland, but never have I felt greater exhilaration of spirits or a more genial glow of health, more buoyancy of mind, or greater vigour of body, than after an animated set-to with the foils at Messrs. Angelo's or Hamon's.

Wherever fencing is practised in a gymnasium, the superintendent ought to be able to give the necessary lessons in that art. The difficulty of finding well qualified superintendents is no insuperable obstacle. I know, at the present moment, several persons both fitted and ready to undertake the office. Nothing, in short, is wanting to establish a proper system and to ensure success, but a little resolution on the part of those for whose benefit it is designed.

I may here be permitted to observe, though it is not immediately pertinent to the subject, that great advantage would be derived from the introduction of this noble exercise into the army. In country quarters, and even in London, it would be an inestimable resource to the soldier, and would prevent much of that debauchery, which often has no other origin than the want of legitimate amusement. It is all very well to denounce the

intemperance of the British soldier. It is true, that in this respect, and in this respect alone, he is inferior to the continental soldier. But we must remember, that he has not, like his officers, hunting and shooting to divert him, and relieve the intolerable ennui which besets his leisure hours. It is true that he is addicted to intoxication, but let us remember, that though we punish the offence, we do nothing to lessen the temptation to its commission. We provide him with no useful or amusing employment, and he plunges into dissipation as a refuge from idleness. Occupation of some sort is absolutely indispensable to the Englishman. If he cannot employ his time usefully, he will be apt to employ it viciously. An invigorating, manly pastime, like fencing, if common in the army, would do more to reform its morals than a legion of tracts or a long catalogue of penalties. Among the fifty men of the guards, whom Mr. Hamon once trained in military gymnastics, scarcely one ever entered the hospital, or had his name recorded in the defaulter's book. Their physical and moral health were equally benefited. In France every regiment has its fencing-master, and all the men receive lessons in the science. It would be desirable to adopt the same system here, as it would be attended with the best effects. I have remarked, too, that the few English soldiers who have had any instruction in the art, have shewn a remarkable aptitude for its acquisition, and have soon attained proficiency. Were it once established in every regiment, and

encouraged by the officers, it would soon become popular with the men, would improve their carriage, augment their activity and strength, and by agreeably occupying their vacant hours, would diminish that propensity to intemperance, which at once necessitates and justifies the rigour of our military discipline.

I have endeavoured to set forth these truths in a plain and perspicuous manner, without exaggeration or embellishment, but with an earnestness proportioned to my conviction of their importance. These truths have hitherto been neglected, not because they are disputed, but because they are overlooked. I anticipate that they will excite neither controversy nor doubt. It will, probably, be deemed that I have demonstrated axioms rather than originated paradoxes. It has also been my object to offer a few suggestions in intelligible language. It too often happens, either that good thoughts are veiled in a cloudy mystery of expression, or that the transparent beauty of the diction only reveals the utter worthlessness of the idea. There are, in fact, two classes of writers, those who are unable to express their thoughts, and those whose thoughts are not worth expressing. I trust that the unambitious simplicity of my style will exempt me from being numbered in the one class, and that the noble aim of promoting your welfare will secure me from enrolment in the other. I have animadverted upon gross and palpable evils, and have ventured to indicate what I conceive to be a prompt and effectual

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THE END.

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