

Physical Training.

Under the new dispensation the physical health of women has become of as much importance as their mental vigor. Indeed, it is now conceded that the two should be inseparable. There are, of course, instances where bright minds have been imprisoned in ailing bodies, and that consummate energy has risen superior to disordered nerves and to disease, which, if indulged, would culminate in chronic invalidism. But nobody supposes that the work accomplished is better performed because of the difficulties that have been overcome in its performance. On the contrary, there is no one who does not know and believe that more could have been done, and in a more satisfactory manner, had mind and body worked in accord and without friction.

In the days when women were classified as females, and a great deal was written about "female" loveliness, and "female" delicacy, the accepted ideal was a clinging, namby-pamby creature who shrieked at the sight of a mouse, and whose life was a series of violent emotions and a succession of swoons. Clarissa Harlowe is a fair example, and what Clarissa could do, in this practical age, when intrigues have gone out of fashion with cross-stitch, it is difficult to understand. Fortunately there is no need of such women, and no place for them. Di Vernon, modified so that she is presentable in the drawing-room as well as among her dogs and horses, is infinitely preferred to Clarissa.

It is interesting to observe the things in which women nowadays are interesting themselves. One thing is very evident, and that is, they realize that more is demanded of them, in every direction, than was ever required of woman in any other age. Feeling this, they have set themselves to work to prepare themselves fully for what they must now do, and for the still greater demands the future is destined to make.

Their intellectual opportunities date back less than fifty years, and the broadening and widening of their opportunities, the educational facilities that have been provided, the gradual repeal of laws discriminating against them, the enactment of other laws protecting them in the enjoyment of inalienable rights, are all profoundly significant. Furthermore, these are only the beginnings that mark the first half century of legal and intellectual liberty.

It is equally interesting to see how women are utilizing their newly acquired advantages. First of all, in the home many mothers are now competent personally to superintend their children's studies, even to translating knotty passages in their Greek and Latin, and guiding them through the perplexities of higher mathematics. This means more than it appears, for the child of such a mother looks up to her with natural reverence mingled with that stronger feeling—respect for an intellectual superior.

Outside the home women are using their power and knowledge in compassing needed reforms. There is hardly a benevolent or penal institution that has not felt their humane and enlightened influence. Prisons, hospitals, asylums, have been reorganized, and behind every reform are the sympathy and wisdom of educated Christian women. In the larger cities they are beginning to look into sanitary regulations; with their natural instinct for house cleaning to demand the cleaning of streets, the unearthing and airing of dark places given over to filth and the breeding of pestilence.

Within the next twenty years it is not improbable that this department of city government will be taken entirely out of the hands of men who really know nothing about such affairs, careless, and will never learn, and will be entirely given over to women. Then it will be done, well done, and with no embezzlement or waste of the public funds. All the indications show that this revolution is coming; up to this time censures, criticism, and sneers have not retarded it for one day.

Consciously or unconsciously, women have been preparing themselves for their duty, and now, last of all, they are realizing the necessity of sound health. Feebleness and illness are deplored and guarded against, and mothers, beginning in the nursery, are anxious that the daughters shall be as rugged and vigorous as the sons. There is little talk about tanned complexions and rough hands; and the sacrifice of comeliness, if it be a sacrifice, is more than compensated for in the gain of nervous and vital forces.

The dress of women in the last ten years has changed hopefully. Short, light skirts, the abolishing of petticoats, thick boots, heavy flannels, the gradual decadence of corsets and hoops, and all other impediments of unhampered motion are full of meaning. It looks to a time when women will come and go, upon the affairs that take them outside of the home, defying wind and weather, as men defy them.

Never has there been a time when there was such interest manifested in correct living, which includes diet, dress, exercise, proper rest, and the best physical training that gymnasiums everywhere afford. The woman of the future will have a strong mind and a sound body, and she will be ready to do cheerfully and readily whatever may be asked of her.