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## PHYSICAL TRAINING.

## A NATIONAL DUTY.

THUCYDIDES, that first of historians, wrote: "Men make a city, not walls, or ships without men": yet numbers alone will not make a city—or a nation—it is not merely a question of quantity but of quality that shall eventually determine the relative position of a nation amongst nations. It is still, as ever, the physical and mental condition of a people that shall decide its place in the world, and the higher that place the greater the need for the preservation and conservation of these faculties. This country, situated geographically as it is, numerically far behind all the other great Powers, with rich, immense, and world-wide possessions to guard, still requires, and must have when the need arises, the strong right arm for defence.

Although modern methods of warfare do not apparently lend themselves to individual acts of prowess, though the modern battle would seem at first sight not to require the same bodily strength that was once so necessary, a little thought will show that "tough and sinews" are still as important a factor as ever to the ultimate result. For example: Mobility, perhaps one of the principal and most-to-be-desired items in the conduct of present-day warfare, is only to be had where men can perform, often for days at a time, long and fatiguing marches, frequently existing on short rations, by day under a scorching sun, at night half-frozen and uncovered. To accomplish this, muscular force, resistance to fatigue, and all the concomitants of a thorough physical training are as necessary to-day as two thousand years ago. If this be true with regard to the militant aspect of the question, it is equally true of the commercial aspect. The more luxurious and artificial conditions of modern existence do not tend to create a healthy body, though it must be admitted that sanitary science nowadays does tend to do so in more or less degree, and, indeed, is absolutely necessary to counteract the inevitable evils civilisation brings in its train. The very conveniences and labour-saving appliances of business life would appear to enervate those whose duty it is to constantly use them; whilst the stress and hurry, and the increasing high pressure in all branches of business entail on one an exhaustion of energy and of

nerve force, and a general strain of mind and body unknown in times past.

For these reasons, therefore, it is necessary that both mind and body should be, more than ever, fitted for the increased strains to which they are put. It is not only necessary that each part of that intricate machine, the human body, should fulfil its precise duty, but that the machine as a whole should be made fit to perform the work in life allotted to it.

If, then, we are to maintain, both from a military and commercial standpoint, our present position amongst the powerful nations of the world, numbers alone are not sufficient. As a nation we are not what we might be physically—nor perhaps mentally—and certainly not what we ought to be. Is proof required that our present physical status is not all it ought to be, that though “the spirit is willing the flesh is weak,” a glance at the record of recruiting, or rather the record of rejections, during the past few years will help to convince the most sceptical. In the Report on Recruiting for 1902 the following passage occurs: “The one subject which causes anxiety in the future as regards recruiting is the gradual deterioration of the physique of the working classes, from whom the bulk of the recruits must always be drawn.”

It has been stated on high authority that out of every five men who offer themselves for enlistment, at the end of two years only two are found to be on the effective strength. In the 1902 Report we find a higher percentage of rejections than in 1901, an evident proof of the statement as regards deterioration, and the following figures will doubtless prove interesting, though somewhat alarming, to the thoughtful reader. During last year the number of men who were *medically inspected* was 87,609, out of whom 28,221 were rejected as unfit. Over 8000 of these rejections were on account of a “want of physical development.” Serious as are these figures, a little search into matters will disclose an even worse view of the probable physical condition of the nation. The words “*medically inspected*” have been placed in italics for a special reason. Every man who “offers himself for enlistment” to the recruiting sergeant does not reach the doctor’s hands, and consequently does not appear, to swell the percentage of rejections.

The Inspector-General of Recruiting very wisely draws attention to this point when he says: “When it is remembered that recruiters are instructed not to submit for medical examination candidates for enlistment unless they are reasonably expected to be passed as fit, one cannot but be struck by the percentage considered by the medical officers to be unfit for the service.” The total number rejected as unfit, in the first place by the recruiting sergeants and in the second by the doctors, can never be known, but must be an “alarming proportion.” To go a step further; if this “alarming

our poorer brethren." This article has been called "Physical Training— National Duty." That is the point; it is a national system of physical training that is wanted. The noble inheritance to which we are heirs imposes a duty upon us, the duty of defence at all hazards, by right and by might, with body and with brains, and it is, therefore, the duty of every man and every woman to maintain, as far as in them lies, a healthy body for the sake of their country. It is the duty of every parent, and of every authority controlling the education of the young, to see that, under medical guidance, proper and adequate physical training is provided for them, both to fit them for their ultimate duty in life and that they may be able, as they *are* willing, to take up the cudgels if occasion arise in defence of their country and their home. It is, too, the personal duty of every young man, no longer under parental control, to improve his physique, and that he may be able to do so cheaply to himself the State should maintain gymnasias and shooting ranges, or any other means of culture which may suggest itself. Though drill and shooting have been mentioned as two most desirable items in a complete curriculum of physical training, let us not connect them with "militarism" in its sense as military dominancy, or with "conscription."

The military authorities have for many years been aware of the great advantages accruing from the use of a rational system of physical training, and are to be congratulated on having brought their system to a very high pitch of perfection. A semi-military system, too, is in use in many of our schools, and—though primarily perhaps of use as a disciplinary measure—the drill certainly tends to render the pupils more alert, obedient, and generally smarter in their movements; but it is very evident that insufficient time is yet devoted to this training, and in many places this branch of education is greatly neglected, if not entirely overlooked.

Military drill, up to a certain point, would seem to form a natural foundation for any system of physical training as applied to the young, and has proved, where carefully taught and results observed, to have been of the greatest use both to teachers and pupils. The teaching of military drill in schools, as a foundation for a system of physical training, need not, therefore, awaken any fear either of "conscription" or "militarism" in the mind of the nation. Let a thorough course of physical training so endow every possible child with a good physique that the nation in time of need shall know that it has within call, willing and ready, the necessary material for defence.

But one thing more is necessary to create a citizen army, "ready to go anywhere and do anything," according to present methods of warfare, viz., the ability to shoot straight and the opportunities for practice, and this problem must be solved sooner or later. The

physical development of every pupil, and the subsequent training of every boy of sixteen and upwards capable of bearing arms, in the art of shooting, is the surest safeguard against conscription. With a willing, voluntary, citizen army, *mens sana in corpore sano*, a keen eye, and a steady finger on the trigger, the nation may then cry with truth, "I fear no foe."

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