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NO. 6, FOR SEPTEMBER, 1856.

NO. 2, VOLUME II.

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X. HEALTH OF TEACHERS AND PUPILS.

BY CATHARINE E. BEECHER.

[The following communication was addressed by Miss C. E. Beecher to the American Association for the Advancement of Education, and read before that body, at its last annual meeting, at Detroit, on the 13th of August. The subject is of the highest practical importance, and we hope to see it discussed thoroughly in the pages of this Journal, from time to time.—Ed.]

Having received the kind assurances of your late President that an article from my pen should be communicated to you, allow me first to express my regret that for years I have been precluded by the state of my health from personal attendance at your annual meetings, and chiefly because they are so interesting that the excitement would prove injurious.

This very statement introduces the subject to which I ask your attention, and that is, the Health of Teachers and Pupils in our country.

In the statements that follow, I shall not attempt to prove what I offer. All I shall do will be to ask your attention, with the hope that what is offered will at least induce inquiries on your part, and that the prosecution of such inquiries will result in future efficient action. Permit me first to state some results of my own investigations on the subject of national health, which, if not to others, at least to my own mind, are facts.

The Anglo-American race in the United States, when developed under the most favorable circumstances, are the model race,—the highest specimen of humanity yet known. The facts from which this is deduced have been accumulating for years in the hands of a scientific gentleman, and, in due time, will be published. As a specimen, the inhabitants of the mountain districts in Kentucky and Tennessee,—where men, women, and children, live in pure air, both night and day, eat simple food, and exercise abundantly,—grow up to a stature and strength which seem prodigious. When Dr. Caldwell, of Kentucky, and two or three others, thus born and reared, went to England and France, as medical students, they were annoyed in the streets by admiring crowds, who deemed their well-developed and towering forms as specimen giants. But, their native states could show mul-
tudes of such. Now, history shows us that it is the best physically developed races that are the conquering races, and that degenerated and enfeebled races become the conquered. It was the athletic training of the Greeks that, under Alexander, enabled them to bear such protracted and astonishing fatigue and exertions,—and thus they conquered the world.

It was when the Roman armies were at the height of their physical development that their sturdy cohorts conquered the world. And, when that nation sunk to an effeminate race, though highly cultivated in mind, they become the slaves of the sturdy, well-developed, though ignorant barbarians.

It is a fact that the home-reared Englishman, like his cattle, has been constantly an improving stock, so that the armors preserved, and once worn by the Norman conquerors, are too small for their improved descendants.

But, in our own land, the reverse is becoming true. General Washington and his staff were not men picked for size or strength, and their average weight was two hundred, and their physical developments were such as are but rarely seen at this day.

Instead of the physical advance witnessed in our father land, there is evidence of such degeneration,—and mainly too within the last century,—that, should the ratio continue, a few more generations would show the result in a race of sickly and deformed pigmies.

As evidence of this deterioration, may be mentioned the universal impression made upon foreigners when they first arrive here, and observe the proportion of sallow, thin, and unhealthful countenances, and the directly opposite impression when our countrymen first encounter the ruddy, healthful countenances to be met in England.

Returned missionaries, who compare the present generation with the one they left thirty years ago, testify to a great change in respect to the unhealthful appearance of this generation, when compared with the one they left.

Physicians all over the land testify to the increase of physical debility and nervous diseases, that all show the deterioration of the whole physical organism. And, our blood, that vital current which nourishes all parts, has become so corrupt that medical men declare that nearly half our population have a scrofulous taint.

The reasons for all this are perfectly apparent. There has been an entire change in the habits of the nation within thirty years. In the first place, we have changed from open fire-places, that secured a constant flow of pure and cool air, to close stoves, that allow neither. Even furnace heating is so managed as to give lungs and skin
overheated air, deprived of part of its oxygen, and thus the system is debilitated. Beside this, our houses are made tighter than they used to be, so as to exclude the pure air, both by day and night.

Then the abundance of our prosperity, extending to all classes, has resulted in pernicious habits of diet. We not only eat, ourselves, but we give to children such quantities of candies, condiments, and confectionery, as never were heard of in former generations. The amount of sugar, molasses, and sweet cooking given to children in this country, is such as is never seen in any other.

Then we eat hot food, and greasy food, and high-seasoned food, and indigestible food, and food hastily masticated, and food at irregular hours,—as was never done by our ancestors. Thus, the air and the food, by which the body is built up, both become causes of debility and disease.

Next comes the increased stimulation of the brain and nerves in all possible ways. First, the use of tea, coffee, tobacco, alcohol, and pernicious medical drugs, have increased at a prodigious rate in fifty years. Men, women, and children drink tea and coffee with a frequency and a degree of strength never known among our ancestors. Then the men and boys are stimulating the brain and nerves with the poisonous tobacco as was never done before, while alcohol, though somewhat restrained, still exerts its debilitating influence over multitudes that never pass for hard drinkers.

A meat diet, too, is more stimulating than any other, and no other nation devours such quantities as ours.

To all this physical stimulation is added an amount of intellectual and business excitement for adults, such as was never imagined in former days, while the mental taxation to children in schools is fifty-fold what it was in a former generation.

Fifty years ago, to read, write, and cypher was about all that was expected of the masses, and all that was taught to those not going to college. No daily drilling in crowded and hot school-rooms, in all manner of sciences, with evening lessons at home. No Sunday lessons, no books for children at every turn. Such intellectual stimulus for children was never known in a former generation, while the cares, business, and excitement of all kinds for men and women have increased at an equal ratio. Everything is going on at high steam pressure. Now, the more the brain is exercised, the greater the need there is for pure air and exercise. This presents another great change in our habits from those of our ancestors.

In former days, children worked with their parents, during the whole period of their growth almost universally. But, in these days,
the greater portion of parents, when they send their children to school, require little or no labor from them.

Now, to balance this great increase of intellectual stimulation, there should be a corresponding increase of physical exercise. The nerves of motion are the balance power to the system, so that exercise must always increase as mental excitement increases. But, this law of our nature has been exactly reversed. Just as all kinds of stimulation have increased, the habits of physical exercise have decreased.

To this has been added frightful abuses in the fashions of female dress, that lead to debility, distortion, and diseases, by which the mothers of the present and coming generation are entailing debility on their offspring.

These are the changes in our habits and customs that are deteriorating the noblest physical race the sun ever looked upon, and which are scattering debility, decay, misery, and sickness all over the land.

These are the practices that are debilitating the constitutions of the teachers and the pupils all over the nations.

Is there any remedy?

It is the object of this article to show that there is a remedy; that it is a sure and speedy one; and, that this remedy is in the hands of the teachers of this nation, more than of any other class of persons.

What then is to be done? The first thing is to make the teachers, the children, and the parents understand the case. They need not merely to learn the construction and physiology of the human frame. They need this only so far as is needful, in order to comprehend the laws of health; but, for the end aimed at, they need no more.

For this purpose, they need a short, simple course of practical instruction on the laws of health, as the laws of God, which they commit sin in violating as really as when they steal or lie. And they need to have the consequences of violating these laws urged on their attention as often and as earnestly as are their religious duties, and the penalties of another world.

A school-book that is so simple that children, with a little help from teachers, can understand it, and so popular in form that parents will read it at home, this is the first desideratum.

Could this be secured, then the teacher, and parents, and pupils would have a constant monitor of their danger and duties. A weekly or tri-weekly lesson in such a book would have the same effect on teachers and pupils in leading to a consideration of and obedience to the laws of health, as is secured by Sunday and weekly sermons and lectures in keeping up an attention to strictly religious duties.

With this should be combined a daily course of physical training
PHYSICAL TRAINING.

in school, in which teachers and pupils should unite. This should be scientific, designed to exercise every muscle of the body, and to be proportioned to the amount of intellectual excitement connected with schools. There is no other way in which both the teachers and the children of this nation can be led to a regular and systematic course of exercise.

Any such system never will be practised by individuals alone. The assembling of pupils and scholars gives a daily opportunity to unite social excitement, rhythm, and harmony of motion, and a regular and effective course of physical training.

This was the course adopted by the Greeks with such wonderful success as made them at once the strongest, wisest, and most beautiful nation on earth. This is the course which is extensively adopted in European schools, with like beneficial results.

Could such a system of instruction in the laws of health, and such a course of physical training, be instantly enforced in all the schools of this nation, there would be an immediate remedy for the evils and dangers, so far as the rising generation and their teachers are concerned.

But, this speedy action can not be effected. For the last thirty or forty years, all the energies of parents, children, teachers, school-committees, philanthropists, and legislatures, has been directed to the intellectual training of the children. All this pressure has been put on the brain and nerves, while the body has been entirely neglected, and has staggered and wilted under the pressure.

The American people never do any thing moderately. They go by steam pressure in every thing. They have been working on the brain and nerves of childhood for thirty years or more, till the whole physical condition of our nation is falling to decay.

Now, if we can only start them as energetically in the direction of a healthy and thorough physical training, they will be as speedy and efficient in this as in every thing else.

But, how can they be thus moved? The first step must be to convince them of the evils that have resulted from the neglect of physical training in our schools. We need to have investigations made, as to the health of the teachers and pupils all over the land, and then to have the results scattered all over the nation. That such investigations are practicable, if teachers can be induced to lend their aid for the purpose, a few experiments of the writer have proved.

In order to do this, teachers need first to learn to understand the signs and causes of debility and deformity.

For example, when there is a debility of constitution, owing to all
the causes that have been set forth, especially where there has been little pure air and exercise to invigorate it, then all the muscles of the body become flabby and weak.

The most dangerous result of this is on the abdominal muscles, by which the whole interior of the body is held up in its proper form, and firm packing.

When these muscles become debilitated, the whole organism sinks downward, enlarging the lower part, while the chest becomes flattened, and the shoulders consequently bent forward.

Thus, also, the erect position of the body, (which is secured, to a great extent, by the close and tight packing of the intestines, and sustained mainly by these abdominal muscles,) begins to fail. The falling of the lower portion makes a hollow and weak feeling in the center of the body, and gradually it bends forward. Thus comes so many flat chests, and crooked backs, and projecting necks.

Again, by neglect of exercise, bad food, and bad air, the whole body is debilitated. Then, in young girls, the tight dresses, and monstrous weight and heat of the clothing around the lower part of the body, with unhealthful positions in bed and in school, produce another deformity called lateral curvature of the spine. This is indicated by one shoulder, or one hip, or both, being higher than the other, or by the projection of one shoulder-blade more than the other.

Again, when children breathe the contaminated air of crowded or ill-ventilated school-rooms, or bed-rooms, and when, too, their brains are overtaxed with too much intellectual effort, without counterbalancing exercise, a headache is the ordinary index of approaching greater evils.

These three items furnish data for one species of investigation, in which teachers can lend their aid. As a specimen, the writer visited one city school for young ladies, for this purpose, and found that of 148 pupils, who were examined, three-fourths had more or less headache; and, thirty-five, or nearly one-quarter of the 148, had lateral curvature of the spine in different stages.

In another large country boarding-school, where the pupils were chiefly from the industrial classes, of 109 examined, fifty or nearly one-half had more or less curvature of the spine. Of the flat chests, round shoulders, and bent bodies, produced by debility, no account was at that time taken, but they abounded on every side.

Now, may it not be practicable, by influences and measures that shall emanate from your honorable body, to engage the teachers of this country in investigations of this sort, which eventually shall be published to the nation at large? Would not such measures tend,
more than anything else could do, to direct the attention of parents, teachers, and pupils to the evils and dangers that threaten us, as well as to induce measures for the remedy? And, what other body could so appropriately suggest and promote this investigation as the one I have now addressed?

This, then is the first practical point, to which I beg leave to direct your attention, viz.: the institution of some method for ascertaining the state of health of the teachers and children of this nation, with reference to introducing a system of physical training in all the schools of the land.

The second point to which I would ask attention, is the course of instructions contained in a work entitled, *Physiology and Calisthenics for Families and Schools*, the copy-right interest of the author being wholly given to the cause of education. In this work, the desideratum in most school-books in Physiology is aimed at. No more of the science and teachers of physiology are introduced than is needful to make the laws of health appear intelligible and reasonable, while the great aim is to make parents, teachers, and pupils feel that the laws of health are the laws of God, and to lead them to understand and obey them. With this is connected a course of scientific calisthenic training.

The copy-right of this work is given to a benevolent educational association, and their agents, in five of our chief cities, offer it for sale, so that, when purchased of them, neither the publisher or author shall have one cent of the profit; but, the whole goes to promote the interests of physical education, by the endowment of institutions where a teacher shall be sustained by these funds for the express purpose of attending to the health of the pupils. It is this fact which makes it proper to ask your attention to this work when all other authors and publishers must be excluded from your attention.

Another work, entitled *Letters to the People on Health and Happiness*, is also given to the same benevolent association. The first portion of this work is very similar to the other, but the latter portion contains statistics in regard to the destruction of female health and of dangers to the health and morals of young children at school, to which also your attention is sought. The changes in the healthful habits of this nation; and, especially the great increase of intellectual stimulation in the education of girls, have produced results in regard to the women of this nation that are destructive alike to health and to domestic happiness, while young children are exposed to sufferings and temptations that were never known in former days.

There is no class of women who are so great sufferers from want of
pure air and exercise, and over-excitement of the brain, as female teachers. There are statistics of female health in the Letters to the People, which every teacher and every parent should obtain and deeply ponder. It is the deep conviction of the writer that four out of five of the female teachers of this country lose their health, in most cases, in less than five years service. The destruction of female health in the chief and only liberal profession open to woman, is one of the most melancholy developments of the day.

As before mentioned, both these works are similar in presenting a short and popular account of the construction of the human body and the laws of health in the first part. It is the last portion that, in the one, contains a system of physical training adapted to common schools, and, in the other, the statistics of health, and the dangers to the young above referred to.

Permit me again to call your attention to a third point, with which the preceding is intimately connected, viz.: the benevolent association referred to.

It is now thirty years since I first entered your honorable profession. In my earliest published work, in 1829," was first presented to the public the main idea on which that association rests; and that is, that woman has a profession, embracing the three departments of teaching, health, and domestic economy, and that society have done her a wrong in withholding from her such advantages in preparing for it, and such honorable and remunerative employment in it as man secures for his most important professions.

Every person must allow that woman's calling is to educate children, to be the nurse of infancy and of the sick, and to superintend the domestic economy of the family state. These are the three departments of woman's profession, as distinct and as important as those of law, medicine, and theology for man.

To sustain and render honorable their three professions, men invest large sums in buildings, libraries, and apparatus, and then supply endowments to support the highest class of teachers. This secures to men the highest style of education for their professions, while it supports a large class of educators of the male sex in honor, and literary ease and success.

Now, it is well-known that the wrongs of women have been urged on the attention of the public by an organization of talented and energetic men and women, who command a wide and increasing sympathy. To remedy the wrongs set forth, they urge, "Give us the professions of man, and access to his institutions for preparation."

The American Woman's Educational Association, on the contrary,
urges,—Give us institutions that shall prepare us for our own distinctive profession, and give us honorable and remunerative employment in it.

In carrying out the aim of this Association, the attempt is made to secure endowed institutions for women, in which the three departments of woman's profession shall have teachers sustained to give their whole attention to these departments,—just as the other sex supports teachers to train young men for law, medicine, and divinity.

The Managers of this Association are some of the most distinguished educators and authoresses in the nation, while gentlemen of high character are incorporated to hold and administer funds under the direction of these ladies, and for the purposes above specified. It is this Association which will receive all the profits that may be made on the works offered to your attention.

Should the work on Physiology prove to be such a work on health as should be introduced into schools, in preference to those that are more scientific and less practical, and should the system of Calisthenics, appended to this Physiology, be generally adopted, two objects would be accomplished. The knowledge and practice that are essential to national health would be extended, and the income thus raised would be secured to those interests of woman and her profession which have been most neglected.

It is to the most liberal, cultivated, and enlightened portion of the community that we must look for aid in this effort to advance the true and best interests of woman, by methods that even the most conservative approve. And, where can we hope to find higher specimens of them than in your honorable body.

And now, as the period approaches in which I am to forsake all active efforts in the profession which I love, and which I have served so long, and as those forebodings of a final parting, that always attend the first crossing of the ocean and an absence, it may be of years, gather around, I seem to be addressing words of parting and bequest to my brethren and sisters, who have labored with me in the same noble and as yet unappreciated profession.

Permit me, then, to resign to your sympathy and care that department of the great field for which I have toiled so long, and now can toil no more. It is the professional interests of my own sex; that department of woman's training that prepares her for her special duties as educator, nurse, and housekeeper, and aims to provide her honorable and remunerative employment in those duties.

My life's history, embracing the establishment of institutions for intellectual training to fit women to teach, the preparation of works
on Physiology and Health, to fit her to be a nurse of infancy and the sick, and of works on Domestic Economy, to train her to be a good housekeeper; the enterprise to provide honorable employment for her in her profession, so successfully conducted by Gov. Slade; and, finally, the American Woman's Educational Association, which embraces all these objects—has been one systematic and comprehensive effort, that have absorbed all my thoughts, my time, and my income, for more than thirty years.

At the commencement of that career, I was among the earliest pioneers in advancing woman's claim to higher intellectual culture. So far as I knew then, the institution at Hartford, Conn., under my care, was the first to introduce Geometry, and Algebra, and several other branches, never before studied by woman. And, I stimulated my own brain, and the brains of my pupils, without fear or stint, as thousands are now doing; when, suddenly and unwarned, at the end of ten years, my whole nervous fountain gave out, and my physical system was irretrievably ruined. And, doubtless, many of my pupils were equal sufferers from my ignorance. The last twenty years has been one of incessant debility and prostration, while, as I journeyed or visited health establishments all over the land, I discovered the dreadful havoc that a similar course is effecting among teachers and pupils all over the land.

Permit me, then to close, by committing to your sympathy and benediction the great interests which have absorbed my life, and will hold my deepest regards to life's final hour. Permit me to remind you, too, that this cause which we are reviving, is the noblest that can engage the thoughts and efforts of man.

All efforts and plans that terminate in earthly prosperity and enjoyment will fade and pass away as eternal years pass by. But, they who on earth educate even one child to become the parent of a family, educate a race. The children, the children's children, and so on for generations, will reproduce your labors. And, every one of these educated minds will live forever, and will turn back to you as that benefactor whose labors have thus brought forth, not an hundred, but a thousand, thousand fold.

[The foregoing communication was referred to the Standing Committee of the Association, to be assigned by them to a Special Committee, to be reported on at the next annual meeting, at Albany.]