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PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN CHINA

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Physical Education in the modern sense is a comparatively new growth. But there is very little new under the sun, and in China there is a rich inheritance historically in this line. The reading of ancient books shows that China has much the same background as ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. In the misty past China's warlike leaders evolved a physical system, the parent of the present Japanese Jiu jitsu, which had for its purpose the development of the warrior, enabling him to conquer in battle. This "Wushu," or military art, has been handed down for thousands of years, being adulterated from generation to generation by those who thought to embellish it, but who had no wars for which to standardize it, to eliminate the flourishes, and distinguish between the good and the simply good-to-watch; and it is still cherished as the one uniquely Chinese physical training --- the only true son of the soil. It has in it much that is excellent, and much that is only a relic of the past, an anachronism from the days when men fought with spears and axes and quarterstaves. But it is still an art with a great appeal to the patriotic.

In the ancient literature China's heroes were those mighty both with sword and with pen. China's classic division of the population into "Shih, nung, kung, shang," or "Scholar, farmer, laborer, and merchant," has no place for the professional soldier --- in those days he was not needed, for all, as in Europe in the time of chivalry, were trained and able.

With the advent -- some 1000 years ago --- of the literary examinations as the basis for preferment, and with the further

elaboration of the "eight legged essay" as the model --- an art which demanded such close application to study as has rarely been seen in Europe and America --- the ideals regarding the physical changed, and for the last 800 years the scholar lengthened his nails and gowns, and in other ways pointedly declared his contempt for all that was of the body. All wants were met by servants, who in turn, if well enough to do had other servants, " and so on, ad infinitum."

The hygiene of ancient China was reflected in the boiling of everything, even of the water. But the proverbs of the people, "What you do not see is clean," and "What touchesinter is cleansed," are to-day taking the place, among the great masses, of modern hygiene and sanitation --- with the inevitable results.

The beginnings of modern physical education came with the training of the Chinese army by the Germans several tens of years ago, and the introduction at that time of German gymnastics in the army, even among the officers. This was followed with a type of Swedish gymnastics --- diluted by passing through Japan --- which came with the introduction of the Japanese military system following the Russo-Japanese war. Both have stuck in the army, though in somewhat emasculated shape, ever since, and one still sees dignified army officers in uniform and boots mount the high bar and do the giant swing and a somersault. It has all taken on some of the flavor of the "Military Art" with the resulting deterioration of form and posture.

About twenty years ago came the establishment of professional schools of physical training, largely for the training of drill-masters for the army. The teachers were students returned from Japan, with the characteristic militaristic outlook and training in military drill and gymnastics. They did a splendid pioneer work, and have staffed the army and the schools with such as they have had until very recently. There are among these, several schools for women --- all teaching a rather masculine type of work.

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About ten years ago there began a great revival in the ancient Chinese "Military Art." Schools and clubs for the propaganda of this art were organized in many parts of China. As in most revivals of the ancient, much is prized very highly that is only a relic of the past --- much as is the case with the excessive emphasis on Latin in the schools in many parts of Europe. Of these advocates of the

Military Art, the Ching Wu Athletic Association and the Chinese general, Ma Liang, of Shantung, have been the leading factors. The influence of this work has been great, and is by no means on the wane. Its main need is for a scientific study in the light of modern knowledge of physiology and psychology and a weeding out of those elements that are purely anachronisms in the light of the civilization of to-day.

With the advent of the modern missionary and the Young Men's Christian Association into China, a new note began to creep in. The missionary of the present athletic college generation in America introduced into the mission school in China that factor of his college life which had meant so much in his *alma mater*. Since the days of China's military heroes the gowns had grown long, and it was a large order to move the young generation, but it began. At the Nanyang Industrial Exposition in Nanking twelve years ago was held the first national athletic meet, and with a success that made a great impression on young China.

The organizer of that meet --- Dr. Max Exner of the Young Men's Christian Association then began to train up Chinese young men as leaders in physical education of the modern type, and the modern development in this field owes its origin largely to Dr. Exner and his successors.

Sporadically, athletic games began in this school and that. Then came the introduction of intercollegiate meets, then more general and popularized athletics through the Young Men's Christian Association, and the whole culminated with the organization eleven years ago of the Far Eastern

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Athletic Association with the biannual games between China, the Philippines and Japan.

At the present time, although there is a great depression owing to the unsettled political conditions throughout the country, there are everywhere athletic games and meets between colleges, middle schools and primary schools. Clubs are being organized, and the movement is spreading.

With this athletic development there is the spread of a new interest in hygiene and sanitation. It is being taught in all schools of the modern type of

organization, and several movements have been organized to push it and develop a program.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

Among the epoch-making events in physical and health education one would have to first list the visit of the Chinese Educational Commission to America in 1914-15. Of this Commission, Mr. Hwang Yen-Pei of the Kiangsu Educational Association took a keen interest in playgrounds and the development of play life in America. Upon his return his first act was to start something in his native province. An institute was started and a course of four months given to 132 physical directors who had been trained by the older type of schools. These men are still the nucleus 'of the modern movement in East China.

Riding on the wave of enthusiasm that attended the success of this institute the first step towards the establishment of a high grade of training for physical education was made at the NATIONAL SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY --- then the Nanking Teachers College with the beginnings of the professional course for teachers. This first course was one of two years. It has been extended first to three years and now to four, and is at present the only place where a satisfactory grade of work is being done. This was followed by the establishment of a similar course in the Peking Teachers College, where owing to the governmental difficulties it has

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been difficult to efficiently carry on the work. Later the Young Men's Christian Association organized a school of much promise but before graduating a class it had to be given up and has not been started again.

At about the same time the Young Women's Christian Association started a school with a two year's course for women. This school has revolutionized the physical work for women in China and is doing a splendid piece of work, even with such a short and somewhat incomplete course.

The interest of educators has been turning more and more towards physical

education, and provincial institutes, summer schools and playgrounds --- in Kiangsu province over fifty have attested the concrete steps they have taken to promote this work.

The establishment of the Peking Union Medical College and the Council on Health Education have been two large steps in the promoting of health education. Both of these institutions are yet in their infancy, so far as concrete results are concerned, but are of vital importance to the future.

The Chinese Health Association, organized by Dr. S. M. Woo, is another organization which has, as yet, done but little in a concrete way but which is sure to be a great factor in future development.

PRESENT SITUATION

The present political situation, with the financial instability and the daily uncertainty regarding the future, is retarding progress in no uncertain manner. Educationally, China is hard put to it to hold her own --- yet with all this, progress is being made. With an express train vision and a Wheelbarrow income, educational institutions are in a position of discouragement such as few Western institutions can appreciate.

Physical education in China, as has been the case in the West and still is in many places, has not yet been established

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as a dignified profession drawing to its fold the best men in education. Its reputation in the past few centuries as a profession of the circus and the ring is a tremendous; handicap to its present development. Native physical educators who are of the first water in intelligence and native ability can yet be counted on the fingers of one hand, and the increase in recruits of that class is slow indeed, but its "soul goes marching on."

To counteract the above the educators of the largest vision and influence are solidly behind the movement. At the present, political stability and the resulting easing of the financial stress would mean more advancement in the next, five years than in the last five hundred.

In the larger number of schools physical education is at least universal, everyone is taking it. The nature of the teaching may be questionable, but it is being taught, and in the best manner that the teacher is able to teach. The handicap of a scanty literature in the subject is a large obstacle to rapid progress. Within the last two years a national association of the physical directors has been formed and is producing a magazine of merit. This will, in the near future, have a powerful effect upon the advance in teaching material and technique in the schools.

The organization one year ago of the *Chinese National Association for the Advancement of Education* carried with it the assistance in educational research which, in the physical education section, has been a great stimulus to progress. The results are already visible, and the plan for a national physical survey this year are under way.

PRESENT TENDENCIES

At present there is a tendency to consolidate what is already in the field rather than to make advances that would involve too much financial outlay. Hence the present schools are doing more of an intensive rather than an extensive work. Much stress is being put on the securing

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of men of a higher caliber for the physical directorship, and on the training of such men as can take over the work in organizing and supervising the work in large centers.

The biggest single advance is the development of definite standards for physical work in schools. These standards are just being put into effect and will inevitably improve the teaching and the motivation of the work manifold.

At this stage little can be done in national promotion. Hence there is the tendency to limit the work to local centers where a real piece of demonstration can be carried on. This will eventually be of more value than any extensive work that could be organized at this time.

THE FUTURE

The first flush of faddism is past, the dew of the first enthusiasm has evaporated, and the hard facts are the only things ahead. This is, on the whole, a good thing for a movement cannot ride forever on the tide. The future in physical education in China is, as is the case in all other phases of Chinese life, a piece of hard work. Problems are pressing rather too fast for the best development of the science. The new developments in health education press for a reorganization before organization has really taken place. Seemingly solid ground sinks beneath the feet. But these are only challenges for a stronger effort.

The coming national survey of physical education and health education will bring out the facts in a way to leave no doubt of the need, and probably will point the way to the next step. With definite records and standards, progress should be certain and definite, if not rapid.

Before the situation in education is crystalized, the development of modern industry is beginning to challenge, with the health problems connected therewith. On the whole, the problem is too large for the present forces available for their solution.

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With all the problems the ice has been broken. Physical and health education is a recognized profession, and its contribution is a valued one. As in starting a carriage, the first few steps are the hardest; and when the momentum is accumulated, it goes easier. This is the time for intensive development of a *demonstration* and of a *concrete program*. The project must be thoroughly told to the people, and the content of the work must be stabilized and standardized --- then, and only then, can extensive work be undertaken with any success.

China is a large problem for the educator. The coupling of a twentieth century educational system onto a medieval industrial development, and a chaotic political situation offer to the educator in China problems greater than those faced by the educator in the West. China has a large load. It will take mighty strength to start it in motion. It must, in the nature of the case, accumulate momentum slowly. It will take several years for education of any form to permeate Chinese society. Yet when the nation is stabilized and the force that

now is used to raise one percent of young China one hundred feet, educationally, is applied to raise one hundred per cent of young China one foot, and another foot and another foot, then will the result be as mighty as the problem is now.

In this process physical education must play a tremendous part. Not only must health be conserved and developed but the stagnation of the centuries with no play life, with the inevitable emasculation of the personality of the great mass, must be wiped out. A NEW YOUNG CHINA with not only modern knowledge and modern training and modern industry and government but with a positive personality, with initiative, self-reliance, aggressiveness and fight must be developed. And only through that laboratory for the development of social ethics and personality afforded by the playground and the athletic field can this come to pass. China is on her way I