

SCHOOL GYMNASTICS

WITH LIGHT APPARATUS

BY

JESSIE H. BANCROFT

DIRECTOR OF PHYSICAL TRAINING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OF NEW YORK CITY, BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN

D. C. HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS

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COURSE OF INSTRUCTION

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS :

First series, first school year, second half, dumb-bells, $\frac{1}{4}$ pound	25
Second series, second school year, second half, wands, 3 feet	57
Third series, third school year, second half, dumb-bells, $\frac{1}{2}$ pound	91
Fourth series, fourth school year, second half, wands, $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet	133

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Fifth series, fifth year, boys and girls, Indian clubs, $\frac{3}{4}$ pound .	179
Sixth series, fifth or sixth year, boys and girls, double series, wands, 4 feet	215
Seventh series, sixth year, boys, bar-bells, 4 feet	253
Eighth series, sixth year, girls, iron grace hoops, $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds .	297
Ninth series, seventh year, boys and girls, Indian clubs, 1 pound	335
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Publisher's Note

THE course of lessons herewith presented for public school use is in two divisions—free hand and light apparatus exercise respectively. Each of these divisions is a complete course in itself, covering eight grades of work from the lowest primary to the highest grammar. The free hand work can be used in the regular classroom, though a special room is obviously desirable. The apparatus work necessitates free floor space.

Each grade of work is arranged in eighteen lessons, extending over half of the school year. This does not cover the entire term of most school sessions, as it is considered best to use review work during times of examination and promotion, rather than to tax pupils with new exercises at such times.

While each course is complete in itself, the two kinds of work are designed to be interchanged—half of the school year to be devoted to free hand exercise and the succeeding half to the apparatus.

In grading the exercises each free hand series is used as the foundation for the movements of the apparatus work for the same year, which in turn, in the greater variety and freedom of its exercises, forms an advance upon the last series of free work.

Both courses prepare for the heavier work of the gymnasium.

Introduction

THE course of school gymnastics with light apparatus here presented supplements the course of free gymnastics contained in *School Gymnastics, Free Hand*. The course of free work comprises eight series or grades of lessons, each covering one half of the school year. The completed plan uses apparatus for the second half of each school year. In the full course, therefore, the free work alternates with the apparatus work throughout the eight years of the elementary school.

The reasons for this alternation lie in the superiority of free work for the correction of posture, which is the main object of school gymnastics, and in the superiority of apparatus work for physiological results, for the cultivation of skill, and for the holding of interest and attention.

In free gymnastics the concentration of attention upon the muscular sense, and especially upon the strong resistance of antagonistic muscular groups, results in greater expansion of the chest, and better carriage of the shoulders, head, spine, etc., than is apt to come from apparatus work alone. Too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the question of posture in any exercise intended for schools. The constant conditions of school life are such as tend to cultivate and fix what has been called the fatigue position, — a position in which the chest is contracted and flattened, the shoulders rounded forward, and the head and hips protruded forward. This is the typical school attitude where corrective gymnastics are not taken. The habit of incorrect position implies in the child a distorted muscular sense — the habitual feeling of a dispro-

portionate contraction and relaxation in opposing groups of muscles. A new adjustment of the muscles, and its maintenance until correct posture becomes a habit, cannot be accomplished without a conscious effort on the part of the pupil. This effort is better concentrated in free gymnastics. The limitations of free work are reached, however, when the pupil's interest flags because the work seems to him "too easy." The motor powers want instinctively some outlet requiring greater skill, more muscular strength, and greater range of movement than is possible without apparatus. By accustoming the body to correct form in typical movements without apparatus, the power of correct position may be used as a foundation for apparatus exercise without danger of cultivating incorrect positions.

Apparatus work is advisable because it is more stimulating to the circulation, respiration, and other physiological processes, than free work. This effect comes partly through the resistance of the weight to muscular action, which induces a greater activity in the processes of waste and repair, and partly through the greater range and more vigorous character of the movements. Apparatus work is also advantageous because of the greater control of the bodily powers gained in the skill required to handle the apparatus itself. All of these factors tend to increase the pleasure and the interest in exercise — features of the work that are of great importance.

Fixed and heavy apparatus is not practicable for elementary public schools, where there are forty or fifty pupils in a class, only fifteen or twenty minutes for the entire lesson, and where special gymnastic dress is impossible. This reduces the available apparatus to the lighter, movable pieces, such as dumbbells, Indian clubs, wands, etc., etc. The course here presented differs radically from some features characteristic of most apparatus exercise. Excessive arm work is usually found in such exercise. In this course all-over work is a cardinal principle. Every exercise for the arms is combined with work

for the legs or trunk. The "series" form of exercise, used in a slighter degree in the free hand course, is used exclusively in this apparatus course. In this series work three exercises, as for the arms and trunk and their combination, are taken in rapid succession, without a pause for commands between them, so that a maximum of exercise is possible in a given period. By breaking the work into these series, instead of putting it into a longer, continuous drill, as is customary in apparatus exercise, the automatic element, which leads to poor posture, and the strain upon the memory to recall "what comes next," are done away with. By this series method progressive work from week to week is also possible, at least one new series being introduced into each lesson in place of the simpler one which prepared the way for it. The same general lesson plan is pursued as in the free work, the first series being for the extremities, the arms, legs, and their combination, the next for balance work, and the third trunk work. Provision is also made for running and for breathing exercises. The table thus forms a gradual progression to the work that makes a maximum demand upon the physiological powers.

Gymnastic exercise of any description should never be considered a substitute for a recess period. Active games in a recess period should be part of the physical training of every school child.

In the sixth and eighth years of the course here presented, different series of work are given for boys and girls. An alternative, suitable for mixed classes, is also given. There is no reason why girls should not take the exercise designated for boys, if properly dressed for it. Many of the exercises, however, call for greater freedom of movement than is possible in the usual school dress of girls of the age implied.

Explanatory Notes

1. Period for Exercise.—The lessons are designed to occupy at least fifteen minutes daily. This period includes the time required for passing to and from the gymnasium.

The most advantageous time for the lesson is in the middle of the afternoon session. Next to this in desirability is a period between the morning recess and the noon intermission.

2. Each Lesson is to be used one week, that of the previous week being discontinued. When the continuance of an exercise is deemed necessary for physiological reasons, it is included in the new lesson. No effort should be made to have the children keep in mind any exercises not so indicated.

In conducting the lesson, the order in which the exercises are arranged should be strictly adhered to.

The work will be greatly facilitated if the teacher will memorize the lessons. This is much less formidable than at first appears, as the general order in which the exercises are arranged is the same in all lessons, and generally only one new series is introduced each week. The teacher will then be free to observe her class, and the rapid succession of the exercises will be more nearly assured.

3. Place for Exercise.—The gymnastics with light apparatus are designed to be taken on free floor space. In primary grades each pupil should have at least sixteen square feet of space, or an area measuring four feet square; in grammar grades each pupil should have at least thirty six square feet, or an area

six feet square. While a gymnasium is highly desirable, the exercise can be taken in corridors, assembly, and playrooms, where light, ventilation, and floor space are sufficient. In mild weather work in the open air is desirable.

4. Floor Formation.—The manner of taking places on the free floor space is of much importance, as much time may be lost. Several modes are possible. A choice will depend largely upon the age of the pupils, the shape of the room, and the convenience with which the apparatus can be procured while passing to place. Floor marks should never be depended upon. The first lesson should be devoted entirely to drill upon floor formation. From the time the pupils stand in the class-room until they return to it again, all facings and marching should be according to the military tactics hereinafter described.

The simplest method of floor formation is that in which the pupils march into the room in single file, each taking apparatus while passing to place. One line of pupils, still in single file, should march across the rear of the room and turn toward the front on the farther side. Each pupil in the line should pause at his own place, which should be more than arm's length from the pupil next in front, or according to the spacing indicated in the third note. This first line should serve as a guide for spacing to all other lines. The leaders of the successive lines should turn and march to the front at proper intervals from the lines preceding them. All should mark time at their places until the command to halt is given to the entire class. This is the simplest method of taking places upon the floor, and it is particularly adapted to the youngest pupils, though they can also be taught other formations.

Another method of formation is for the leaders of each line to march across the rear of the room, face toward the front at the proper places for their lines, mark time until all of the leaders are in line, and then all march forward in rank to the front. Those whose places are next behind them in their

respective lines should march in rank to their places in the same way, and so on until all are in place.

By yet another method all pupils should march to the front in solid ranks of four or more, according to the number of lines. The different ranks should pause at the proper distance from the rank next in front. All should stop marking time at command, and orders should then be given for spacing sideways. For example, if pupils are in ranks of fours, the commands would be, "Inside lines one step, outside lines three steps, outward — March!" The teacher should then count for the marching, two counts for each step — one to place the foot, the second to put the heels together.

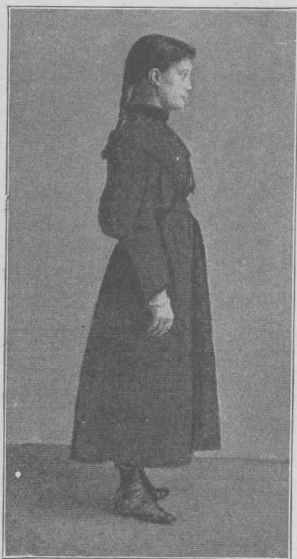
Many other methods of formation are possible. None should be used which requires unnecessary time, such as those in which pupils have to number before marching to place.

Classes should never face the light. The best position is with the side to the light.

5. Position. Stretching. — A good standing position from which to take the exercises is essential for effective work. To assist the chest and spine to this position, every lesson begins with a preliminary stretching of the arms upward and sideways, and it is repeated again at the close of the lesson after putting away the apparatus. This stretching is better for the purpose in many ways than the usual admonitions to throw the shoulders back and draw the chin in. Such directions make the child self-conscious; they do not, in the youngest children at least, produce the desired result, for such children are not capable of the isolated control of the parts named, and other faults of posture are produced — such as a sway-back attitude with protruding abdomen, etc. The stretching, by its straight pull in a line with the vertical and lateral diameters of the body, lifts and expands the chest and erects the spine without this painfully self-conscious effort. Moreover, such a general muscular tension, taking in both the flexors and extensors, is

apt to have a more lasting effect than a spasmodic effort of the will can produce. The one specific direction that can be given in this and in nearly all other exercises is to hold the head up.

For the stretching, formal commands are omitted to save time. Upon being told to stretch the arms upward, pupils should rise on tiptoe and reach up with both arms as high as



INCORRECT STANDING POSITION



CORRECT STANDING POSITION

possible. The teacher is particularly requested to urge them *higher, farther, etc., etc.* The position should not be long sustained, and the arms should be dropped at the command *down* or *position*, following soon after the first direction. The upward stretching should be taken two or three times, and then the arms should be stretched sideways in the same manner. Avoid bending the body backward or the head forward

when the arms are up. *Never stretch the arms forward in this preliminary exercise.* This stretching has been used in some

departments after every lesson throughout the day. It requires but a few seconds and is an admirable corrective of the injurious positions acquired in the seats.



PRELIMINARY STRETCHING,
UPWARD

It should not be inferred that the stretching does away entirely with the necessity for calling for, or consciously assuming, an erect attitude. The teacher will have frequently to use the command *position*. When this command is heard, pupils should stand with heels together, toes turned out, chest and head erect, face to the front, and arms hanging easily at the sides. The direction "face to the front" does not mean that the gaze shall be fastened upon the head of the pupil next in front, or upon any other one spot. Such a practice is reprehensible in the extreme. The eye is an exceed-

ingly restless organ, and should not be altogether deprived of its natural activity. The weight should be borne upon the forward part of the foot. A good test for correct poise, which should be frequently employed by the teachers, is the ability to rise on the toes without having first to sway forward. In primary classes attention may have to be frequently called to keeping the heels together and the head erect. The class should be called to position before marching from the classroom, again after the march before beginning the exercises, and at any time during the lesson when the attitudes become careless.



PRELIMINARY STRETCHING, SIDEWAYS

6. Tactics

a. *Left—Face!*

Right—Face!

Raise the left toe, and face to the left, turning on the left heel.

The facings to the right are also executed upon the left heel.

The heel is lifted in response to the word *right* (or *left*); the turning is executed in response to the command *face*.

Make clear to the children that four turns in the same direction complete a circle, and when that is understood, vary the directions to make them alert and independent. This is an excellent means of rousing a sleepy class, and may be introduced briefly anywhere if the lesson is lagging.

b. *About—Face!*

Raise slightly the right toe, face to the rear, turning to the right on the right heel and the ball of the left foot; replace the left foot beside the right.

The heel is lifted in response to the word *about*; the turning and replacing of the foot are executed in response to the command *face*.

c. *Mark time—March!*

As soon as *mark time* is heard, throw the weight on the right foot, being careful not to exaggerate the swing of the body to that side; upon hearing *march*, lift the left foot forward, toe pointing downward, as though to step, but draw it back immediately to position, all in one count; repeat with the right foot. Continue the movement with one foot and then the other alternately in the rhythm of walking, but without gaining ground. The feet should be placed firmly but without undue noise. The body will sway slightly from side to side, but should be held as steadily as possible, with no bending at the waist.

d. *Mark time—March! (during the march).*

On the executive command stop gaining ground and mark time in place.

e. *Class—Halt!*

The marking time ceases and the heels remain together on *halt*, which command may be given as either foot strikes the ground.

To halt while marching, on the command *halt*, stop gaining ground and bring the rear foot up, placing heels together.

f. *Forward—March!*

When taken from a halt, in response to *forward*, throw the weight on the right foot as in marking time, but keep the heels firmly together until the executive command is heard; in response to *march*, step out promptly with the left foot.

When taken from marking time, the words *forward* and *march* are given as the right foot strikes the ground; pupils start forward with the left foot.

7. Running. — All running should be done on the toes. The fists should be closed and the arms bent at the elbow, and allowed to work freely. The extent of the run must be gov-