

A Manual of Corrective Gymnastics

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PREFACE

With the increasing demand for corrective gymnastics in the schools as well as in the colleges, it has become necessary to stress more and more this branch of physical education in the training of instructors for this work. Many excellent books have been written giving methods of examination, descriptions of symptoms, and some directions for the treatment of the different types of cases usually found in a corrective gymnasium. Each of these books, however, gives only a few exercises, and each of those, as a rule, for one special type of case.

In my own work, as director of corrective gymnastics for girls in the University of Wisconsin, I have felt the need of a book which would give exercises for the many types that are treated in a corrective gymnasium and which could be used both as a textbook and as a reference book. It was for this reason that I first planned this book. During the months in which I have worked over it, I have learned to think not only of the students in schools of physical education but also of the many instructors who, trained before the demand for corrective gymnastics was so universal as at present, are now forced to add to their other work one or more classes in this subject.

I have had many letters and visits from graduates, not only of the University of Wisconsin, but from other

schools of physical education, who have wanted advice as to the best methods of handling corrective work with large groups. Many of these have told me of the great need of a book in which could be found a number and variety of suitable exercises.

It is to meet these two needs that I offer this book. I have tried to describe the exercises as simply as possible, so that they may be used for quick reference. I have called attention to the errors that are generally made in taking them, and have offered suggestions as to the method of presenting the exercises in order to prevent these errors.

It has been suggested to me that as my chapters on organization are written about classes of girls and as, for convenience, I have, in referring to students, used the feminine pronoun, I should include in the title of this book the words "for women and children." I have not thought this advisable for several reasons. In the first place some of the methods of organization used are the results of my experience in giving corrective gymnastics to soldiers in France during the late war. I have also used these methods in instructing men in my normal therapeutic classes, and they have assured me that they found them practicable in their classes for men. And, finally, the majority of exercises given can be used in the treatment of the conditions indicated whether these are found among women or men.

I wish to express my appreciation to my friends at the University of Wisconsin for their interest, and for the encouragement they have given me during the preparation of this book: to Miss Leila Bascom and

Miss Catherine Hall for assistance in the construction of the book, to Miss Katherine Loose for several of the photographs I am using in the chapter on feet, and to the seniors and freshmen of the Physical Education Department of the University of Wisconsin for helping me efficiently and willingly as models for other of the photographs.

I especially wish to acknowledge the great assistance given me by Miss Esther Klein in planning for the illustrations, some of which she drew, and for the chapter on the treatment of subnormal cases, which she wrote.

LOUISA C. LIPPITT.

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**A MANUAL OF CORRECTIVE
GYMNASTICS**

CHAPTER I

CORRECTIVE, OR THERAPEUTIC, GYMNASTICS AS A PART OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Changes in physical education in recent years.
The addition to courses in physical education of a branch termed *corrective, or therapeutic, gymnastics* is of rather recent date, and in many schools corrective work has not yet become a required subject. It may be considered a new science, which has developed as the field of physical education has broadened. It results from the realization on the part of instructors in physical education of the benefit to be derived from properly directed individual exercises.

Introduction into England of exercises for women.
The history of the many changes which have taken place in physical education, particularly for women, is as quaint and interesting as is the history of the changes in the style of dress considered correct for women in the gymnasium. "Female Gymnastics" was introduced into England in the year 1826 by Signor Voarino, an Italian. The book which he wrote as an appeal to the "aristocracy" to permit and encourage this form of exercise among the "young ladies" of England, with the arguments which he used, is most interesting and amusing to us of this present day of strenuous sports and apparatus work for girls.

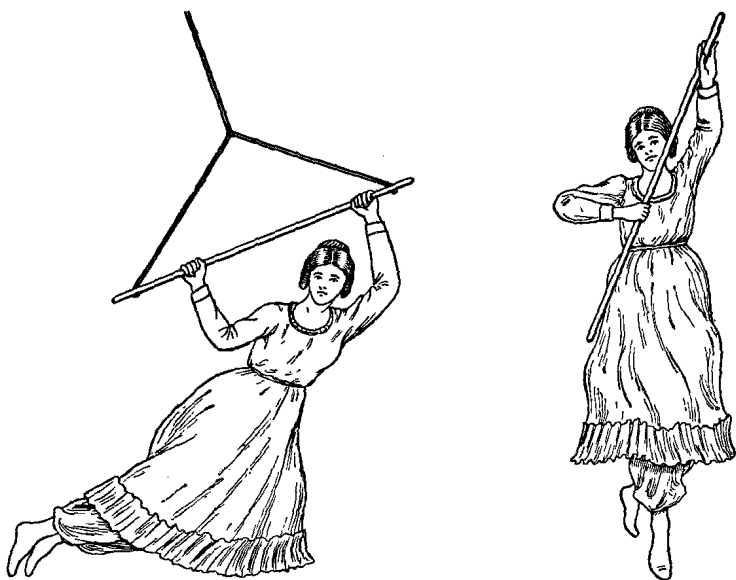
After stating that "the introduction of gymnastic exercises into the system of education will constitute a remarkable epoch in the annals of history," he goes on to say, "Exercise is universally acknowledged to be essential to the preservation of health. It is invariably recommended by physicians, who in their daily practice have occasion to witness the melancholy effects of those habits of inaction which so generally prevail among the female portion of society, more especially in large cities and towns."

Voarino's method. His method, which was developed "to restore health to persons who have long suffered under bodily infirmities, to check incipient deformities, and to lay the foundation of health and vigor in those who are yet in the earlier stages of life," has, he says, already been practiced in the most "respectable seminaries" of Great Britain. He describes it thus: "It consists of a regular and gentle course of gymnastic exercises, tending to correct deviations of the spine, to increase the strength and flexibility, and to impart a degree of energy to feeble constitutions." Later he says, "In the composition of my work I have, I hope, paid so strict an attention to decorum as to remove the objection of the most delicate and fastidious."

If one may judge by the two exercises given below, he has indeed done so.

"At the word *Attention* the pupil must lay the left hand on the chest, the thumb and forefinger spread, the other three shut; the right arm is first to be turned behind the back, then brought forward and extended to the height of the shoulder."

"Standing with arms akimbo, rise to tiptoes then gently lower the body, bend the knees and body, and extend the arms forward, nails up. Place the elbows on the knees and let the whole body weight rest on the toes. Then rise with great lightness and return to the first position."



STYLE OF WOMAN'S GYMNASIUM SUIT WORN IN ENGLAND IN 1827

Copies of illustrations in Voarino's *Female Gymnastics*.

Whether the "Wall Exercise" is quite so "decorous" is a question that inspires interested speculation. Here it is: "Face down, on the hands and feet, creep up the wall with the feet, keeping the weight on the hands. Go up until you can kiss the wall between the arms."

Changes in gymnasium dress for women. The changes in "gymnasium dress" are no less interesting. As pantalettes were the style at the time of Signor Voarino's activities (1827), pantalettes must be worn in the gymnasium, the skirt must come down well



WOMAN'S GYMNASTIC COSTUME IN 1842

Copied from an old picture.

to the ankles, and neck and arms must be covered. When Signor Voarino tells us that "it will be absolutely necessary for the pupil to wear the calisthenic dress, as the usual female dress will impede her movements," we are curious as to how she could decorously do the "Wall Exercise" described above.

In the year 1842 came a change in the "gymnasium dress" for women, and another in 1864, neither of which seems to us of the twentieth century to have produced a dress allowing freedom of movement. And even after gymnastics for women had been introduced into some schools in the United States, the dress was most discreet, and girls engaged in active sports only out of sight of the ordinary man. But as the years passed and the world became accustomed to the fact that gymnastics were as essential for women as for men, great changes began to take place, not only in the type of sports, gymnastics, and gymnasium dress for women, but also in the attitude of the world toward public demonstrations of their work. Possibly the world began to see the truth of Signor Voarino's words: "The advantages of exercises which have hitherto belonged too exclusively to gentlemen are of equal, if not superior, importance to females, as they impart that elasticity and grace which give an indescribable charm to the female form and carriage."



WOMAN'S GYMNASIUM SUIT
IN 1864

Copied from an old picture.

Value of exercises for women recognized. Certain it is that, when physical education for women became better known, its value as a means to health was soon

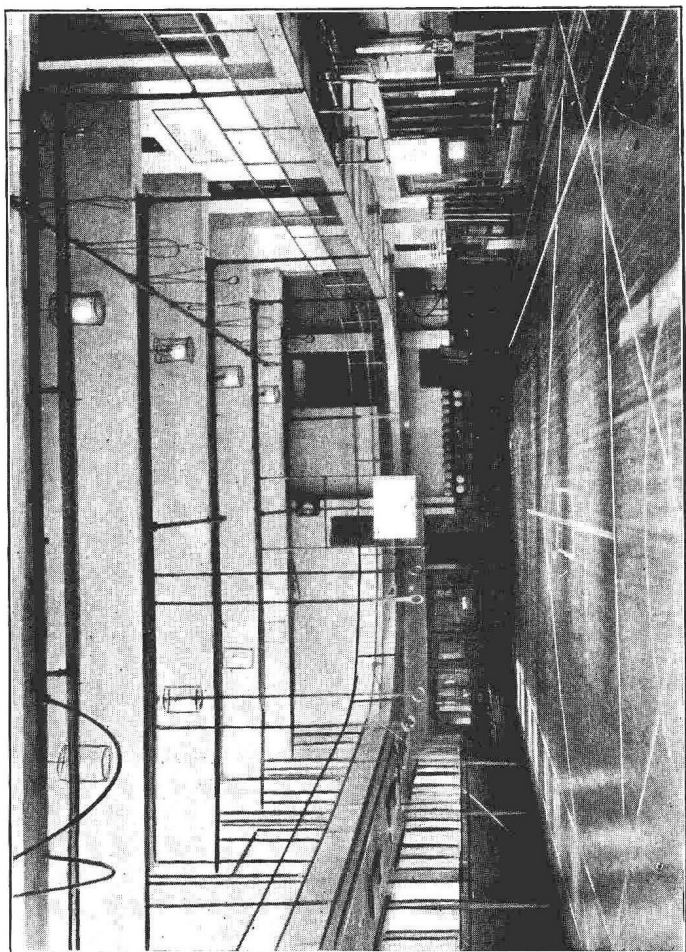
recognized. The exercise provided, causing, as it did, improved circulation, better coördination, quickness of movement, improved posture, and many other benefits both to mind and body, was of unending



THE CALISTHENIC HALL

From *Vassar College and Its Founder*, by Benson J. Lossing, New York, 1867.

value to those taking part in it. And gradually, as gymnasium equipment improved and shower baths were added, the instructors began to realize how much good could be done through informing the members of their classes in matters of general hygiene. This



A MODERN GYMNASIUM

instruction came to include lessons in regard to bathing, sleeping, eating, the importance of fresh air, and many other matters pertaining to right living.

Special corrective classes introduced. At first, when these classes were small, individual oversight and assistance could be given; but, as the classes increased in size, it became more and more difficult for the instructor to give close attention to each member of the class. To meet this situation, those individuals who needed more careful supervision than the majority were selected from the groups and formed into separate classes. Such special classes were first organized to take care of faulty postural conditions, but it soon became apparent that there were many other conditions which could be benefited by this type of work.

Corrective exercises should be given by trained instructors. Naturally, corrective gymnastics, whether for men, women, or children, ought to be in the hands of persons trained for that special work. As few school systems, however, are either able or willing to pay for an instructor in physical education and a specialist in corrective gymnastics as well, it has become necessary to train all students preparing to teach physical education in this special branch of the work. In a large school or college an instructor should not, of course, be expected to take charge of both branches, but a knowledge of corrective work ought to be of use to any instructor in his or her general work, for there are many opportunities during the hours of sports and gymnastics when a helpful word regarding health and posture may be given to the students.