VARIOUS

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THE NEW GYMNASTICS

Physical culture is on the top of the wave. But the movement is as yet in the talk stage. Millions praise the gymnasium; hundreds seek its blessings. Similar incongruities make up the story of human life. But in this case inconsistency is consistent.

Evidences of physical deterioration crowd upon us. Fathers and mothers regard their children with painful solicitude. Not even parental partiality can close the eye to decaying teeth, distorted forms, pallid faces, and the unseemly gait. The husband would gladly give his fortune to purchase roses for the cheeks of the loved one, while thousands dare not venture upon marriage, for they see in it only protracted invalidism. Brothers look into the languishing eyes of sisters with sad forebodings, and sisters tenderly watch for the return of brothers, once the strength and hope of the fatherless group, now waiting for death. The evil is immense. *What can be done?* Few questions have been repeated with such intense anxiety.

My object is to submit, for the consideration of the readers of the "Atlantic," a new system of physical training, adapted to both sexes, and to persons of all ages and degrees of strength. I have an ardent faith that in it many will find an answer to the important question.

The common remark, that parents are too much absorbed in the *accomplishments* of their daughters to give any attention to their health, is absurd. Mothers know that the happiness of their girls, as well as the character of their settlement in life, turns more upon health and exuberance of spirits than upon French and music. To suppose, that, while thousands are freely given for accomplishments, hundreds would be refused for bodily health and bloom, is to doubt the parents' sanity. If the father were fully satisfied that Miss Mary could exchange her stooping form, pale face, and lassitude for erectness, freshness, and elasticity, does anybody suppose he would hesitate? Fathers give their daughters Italian and drawing, not because they regard these as the best of the good things of life, but because they form a part of the established course of education. Only let the means for a complete physical development be organized, and announced as an integral part of our system of education, and parents would be filled with grateful satisfaction. The people are ready and waiting. No want is so universal, none so deeply felt. But how shall symmetry and vigor be reached? What are the means? Where is the school? During the heat of the summer our city-girls go into the country, perhaps to the mountains: this is good. When in town, they skate or walk or visit the riding-school: all good. But still they are stooping and weak. The father, conscious that their bodies, like their minds, are susceptible of indefinite development, in his anxiety takes them to the gymnasium. They find a large room furnished with bars, ladders, and swings. They witness the wonderful performances of accomplished gymnasts and acrobates, admire the brilliant feats; but the girls see no opportunity for themselves. They are nearly right. The ordinary gymnasium offers little chance for *girls*, none for *old* people, but little for *fat* people of any age, and very little for small children of either sex.

Are not these the classes which most require artificial training? It is claimed that the common gymnasium is admirable for young men. I think there are other modes of training far more fascinating and profitable; but suppose it were true that for young men it is the best of all possible modes. These young men we need in the gymnasium where young women exercise. If young women are left by

themselves, they will soon lose interest. A gymnasium with either sex alone is like a ball-room with one sex excluded. To earn a living, men and women will labor when separated; but in the department of recreation, if there be lack of social stimulus, they will soon fall off. No gymnasium, however well managed, with either sex excluded, has ever achieved a large and enduring success. I know some of them have long lists of subscribers; but the daily attendance is very small. Indeed, the only gymnasium which never lacks patronage is the ball-room. Dancing is undeniably one of the most fascinating exercises; but the places where even this is practised would soon be forsaken, were the sexes separated.

Some lady-reader suggests that ladies of delicate sensibilities would scarcely be willing to join gentlemen in climbing about on ladders. I presume not; but are such exercises the best, even for men?

I do not doubt that walking with the hands, on a ladder, or upon the floor, head down, is a good exercise; but I think the common prejudice in favor of the feet as a means of locomotion is well founded. Man's anatomy contemplates the use of the legs in supporting the weight of the body. His physical powers are most naturally and advantageously brought into play while using the feet as the point of support. It is around and from this centre of support that the upper part of the body achieves its free and vigorous performances.

The deformities of gymnasts, to which Dr. Dixon and many others have called attention, are produced in great part by substituting arms for legs. I need scarcely say that ring, dumb-bell, club, and many other similar exercises, with cane and sword practice, boxing, etc., are all infinitely superior to the ladder and bar performances. In the new system there is opportunity for all the strength, flexibility, and skill which the most advanced gymnasts possess, with the priceless advantage that the two sexes may mingle in the scene with equal pleasure and profit.

I can but regard the common gymnasium as an institution of organized selfishness. In its very structure it practically ignores woman. As I have intimated, it provides for young men alone, who of all classes least need a gymnasium. They have most out-door life; the active games and sports are theirs; the instinct for motion compels them to a great variety of active exercises, which no other class enjoys. Is it not a strange mistake to provide a gymnasium for these alone?

But it is said, if you introduce women into the gymnasium, men will have no opportunity for those difficult, daring feats which constitute the charm of the place. If by this is meant that there can be no competition between the sexes in lifting heavy weights, or turning somersets, the objection holds good. But are not games of skill as attractive as lifting kegs of nails? Women need not fall behind men in those exercises which require grace, flexibility, and skill. In the Normal Institute for Physical Education, where we are preparing teachers of the new gymnastics, females succeed better than males. Although not so strong, they are more flexible. There are in my gymnasium at this time a good many ladies with whom the most ambitious young man need not be ashamed to compete, unless the shame come from his being defeated. Gentlemen will sacrifice nothing by joining their lady-friends in the gymnasium. But suppose it costs them something; I greatly mistake the meaning of their protestations of devotion, if they are not quite willing to make the sacrifice.

Before proceeding farther, I desire to answer a question which wise educators have asked:–"Do children require special gymnastic training?" An eminent writer has recently declared his conviction that boys need no studied muscle-culture. "Give them," he says, "the unrestrained use of the grove, the field, the yard, the street, with the various sorts of apparatus for boys' games and sports, and they can well dispense with the scientific gymnasium."

With all our lectures, conversations, newspapers, and other similar means of mental culture, we are not willing to trust the intellect without scientific training. The poorest man in the State demands for his children the culture of the organized school; and he is right. An education left to chance and the street would be but a disjointed product. To insure strength, patience, and consistency, there must be methodical cultivation and symmetrical growth. But there is no need of argument on this point. In regard to mental training, there is, fortunately, among Americans, no difference of

opinion. Discriminating, systematic, scientific culture is our demand. No man doubts that chess and the newspaper furnish exercise and growth; but we hold that exercise and growth without qualification are not our desire. We require that the growth shall be of a peculiar kind,–what we call scientific and symmetrical. This is vital. The education of chance would prove unbalanced, morbid, profitless.

Is not this equally true of the body? Is the body one single organ, which, if exercised, is sure to grow in the right way? On the contrary, is it not an exceedingly complicated machine, the symmetrical development of which requires discriminating, studied management? With the thoughtful mind, argument and illustration are scarcely necessary; but I may perhaps be excused by the intelligent reader for one simple illustration. A boy has round or stooping shoulders: hereby the organs of the chest and abdomen are all displaced. Give him the freedom of the yard and street,–give him marbles, a ball, the skates! Does anybody suppose he will become erect? Must he not, for this, and a hundred other defects, have special training?

Before our system of education can claim an approach to perfection, we must have attached to each school a professor who thoroughly comprehends the wants of the body, and knows practically the means by which it may be made symmetrical, flexible, vigorous, and enduring.

Since we have, unhappily, become a military people, the soldier's special training has been much considered as a means of general physical culture. Numberless schools, public and private, have already introduced the drill, and make it a part of each day's exercises.

But this mode of exercise can never furnish the muscle-culture which we Americans so much need. Nearly all our exercise is of the lower half of the body: we walk, we run up and down stairs, and thus cultivate hips and legs, which, as compared with the upper half of the body, are muscular. But our arms, shoulders, and chests are ill-formed and weak. Whatever artificial muscular training is employed should be specially adapted to the development of the upper half of the body.

Need I say that the military drill fails to bring into varied and vigorous play the chest and shoulders? Indeed, in almost the entire drill, are not these parts held immovably in one constrained position? In all but the cultivation of erectness, the military drill is singularly deficient in the requisites of a system of muscle-training adapted to a weak-chested people.

Dancing, to say nothing of its almost inevitably mischievous concomitants, brings into play chiefly that part of the body which is already in comparative vigor, and which, besides, has little to do directly with the size, position, and vigor of the vital organs.

Horseback exercise is admirable, and has many peculiar advantages which can be claimed for no other training; but may it not be much indulged while the chest and shoulders are left drooping and weak?

Skating is graceful and exhilarating; but, to say nothing of the injury which not unfrequently attends the sudden change from the stagnant heat of our furnaced dwellings to the bleak winds of the icy lake, is it not true that the chest-muscles are so little moved that the finest skating may be done with the arms folded?

I should be sorry to have any of these exercises abandoned. While some of them demand reform, they are all, on the whole, exceedingly useful.

What I would urge is this: As bodily *symmetry* is vital to the highest physiological conditions, and as departure from symmetry is the rule among all classes, but especially with Young America, we must, to secure this symmetry, introduce into our system of physical education a variety of special, studied means.

The new gymnastics are all adapted to music. A party may dance without music. I have seen it done. But the exercise is a little dull.

Exercises with the upper extremities are as much improved by music as those with the lower extremities. Indeed, with the former there is much more need of music, as the arms make no noise, such as might secure concert in exercises with the lower extremities.

A small drum, costing perhaps five dollars, which may be used as a bass-drum, with one beating-stick, with which any one may keep time, is, I suppose, the sort of music most classes in gymnastics will use at first. And it has advantages. While it is less pleasing than some other instruments, it secures more perfect concert than any other. The violin and piano are excellent, but on some accounts the hand-organ is the best of all.

Feeble and apathetic people, who have little courage to undertake gymnastic training, accomplish wonders under the inspiration of music. I believe three times as much muscle can be coaxed out, with this delightful stimulus, as without it.

DUMB-BELL EXERCISES

I have selected the dumb-bell as perhaps the happiest means by which to illustrate the mischievous consequences of "heavy weights." Thoughtful physiologists deeply regret the *lifting* mania. In every possible case, *lifting* is an inferior means of physical training, and for women and children, in short for nine-tenths of the people, it is positively mischievous. I introduce the dumb-bell exercises to illustrate and enforce this doctrine.

Heretofore dumb-bells have been made of metal. The weight in this country has usually been considerable. The general policy at present is to employ those as heavy as the health-seeker can "put up." In the great German gymnastic institutes dumb-bells were formerly employed weighing from fifty to one hundred pounds; but now Kloss and other distinguished authors condemn such weights, and advocate those weighing from two to five pounds. I think those weighing two pounds are heavy enough for any man; and as it is important that they be of considerable size, I introduced, some years ago, dumb-bells made of wood. Every year my faith grows stronger in their superiority.

Some years since, before I had seen the work of Professor Kloss on the Dumb-Bell, I published a paper upon the use of this piece of apparatus, in which I stated the best weight for men as from two to five pounds, and gave at length the reasons for the employment of such light weights, and the objections to heavy ones. I was filled, not with pride, but with profound satisfaction, while engaged in translating Kloss's work recently, to find, as fundamental with this great author, identically the same weights and reasons.

In my early experience as a teacher of gymnastics I advocated the use of heavy dumb-bells, prescribing those weighing one hundred pounds for persons who could put up that weight. As my success had always been with heavy weights, pride led me to continue their use long after I had begun to doubt the wisdom of such a course.

I know it will be said that dumb-bells of two pounds' weight will do for women and children, but cannot answer the requirements of strong men.

The weight of the dumb-bell is to be determined entirely by the manner in which it is used. If only lifted over the head, one or two pounds would be absurdly light; but if used as we employ them, then one weighing ten pounds is beyond the strength of the strongest. No man can enter one of my classes of little girls even, and go through the exercises with dumb-bells weighing ten pounds each.

We had a good opportunity to laugh at a class of young men, last year, who, upon entering the gymnasium, organized an insurrection against the wooden dumb-bells, and through a committee asked me to procure iron ones; I ordered a quantity, weighing three pounds each; they used them part of one evening, and when asked the following evening which they would have, replied, "The wooden ones will do."

A just statement of the issue is this: If you only lift the dumb-bell from the floor, put it up, and then put it down again, of course it should be heavy, or there is no exercise; but if you would use it in a great variety of ways, assuming a hundred graceful attitudes, and bringing the muscles into exercise in every direction, requiring skill and followed by an harmonious development, the dumb-bell must be light.

There need be no controversy between the light-weight and the heavy-weight party on this point. We of the light-weight party agree, that, if the dumb-bell is to be used as the heavy-weight party uses it, it must be heavy; but if as we use it, then it must be light. If they of the heavy-weight party think not, we ask them to try it.

The only remaining question is that which lies between all heavy and light gymnastics, namely, whether strength or flexibility is to be preferred. Without entering upon a discussion of the physiological principles underlying this subject, I will simply say that I prefer the latter. The Hanlon brothers and Heenan are, physiologically considered, greatly superior to heavy-lifters.

But here I ought to say that no man can be flexible without a good degree of strength. It is not, however, the kind of strength involved in heavy-lifting. Heenan is a very strong man, can strike a blow twice as hard as Windship, but cannot lift seven hundred pounds nor put up a ninety-pound dumb-bell. William Hanlon, who is probably the finest gymnast, with the exception of Blondin, ever seen on this continent, cannot lift six hundred pounds. Such men have a great fear of lifting. They know, almost by instinct, that it spoils the muscles.

One of the finest gymnasts in the country told me that in several attempts to lift five hundred pounds he failed, and that he should never try it again. This same gymnast owns a fine horse. Ask him to lend that horse to draw before a cart and he will refuse, because such labor would make the animal stiff, and unfit him for light, graceful movements before the carriage.

The same physiological law holds true of man: lifting great weights affects him as drawing heavy loads affects the horse. So far from man's body being an exception to this law, it bears with peculiar force upon him. Moving great weights through small spaces produces a slow, inelastic, inflexible man. No matter how flexible a young man may be, let him join a circus-company, and lift the cannon twice a day for two or three years, and he will become as inflexible as a cart-horse. No matter how elastic the colt is when first harnessed to the cart, he will soon become so inelastic as to be unfit to serve before the carriage.

If it be suspected that I have any personal feeling against Dr. Windship or other heavy-lifters, I will say that I regard all personal motives in a work of such magnitude and beneficence as simply contemptible. On the contrary, I am exceedingly grateful to this class of gymnasts for their noble illustration of the possibilities in one department of physical development.

Men, women, and children should be strong, but it should be the strength of grace, flexibility, agility, and endurance; it should not be the strength of a great lifter. I have alluded to the gymnastics of the circus. Let all who are curious in regard to the point I am discussing visit it. Permit me to call special attention to three performers,–to the man who lifts the cannon, to the India-rubber man, and to the general performer. The lifter and the India-rubber man constitute the two mischievous extremes. It is impossible that in either there should be the highest physiological conditions; but in the persons of the Hanlon brothers, who are general performers, are found the model gymnasts. They can neither lift great weights nor tie themselves into knots, but they occupy a position between these two extremes. They possess both strength and flexibility, and resemble fine, active, agile, vigorous carriage-horses, which stand intermediate between the slow cart-horse and the long-legged, loose-jointed animal.

"Strength is health" has become a favorite phrase. But, like many common saws, it is an error. Visit the first half-dozen circuses that may come to town, and ask the managers whether the cannon-lifter or the general performer has the better health. You will find in every case it is the latter. Ask the doctors whether the cartmen, who are the strongest men in the city, have better health than other classes, who, like them, work in the open air, but with light and varied labor. You will not find that the measure of strength is the measure of health. Flexibility has far more to do with it.

Suppose we undertake the training of two persons, of average condition. They have equal strength,–can lift four hundred pounds. Each has the usual stiff shoulders, back, and limbs. One lifts heavy weights until he can raise eight hundred pounds. Inevitably he has become still more inflexible.

The other engages in such exercises as will remove all stiffness from every part of the body, attaining not only the greatest flexibility, but the most complete activity. Does any intelligent physiologist doubt that the latter will have done most for the promotion of his health? that he will have secured the most equable and complete circulation of the fluids, which is essentially what we mean by health, and have added most to the beauty and effectiveness of his physical action?

With heavy dumb-bells the extent of motion is very limited, and of course the range and freedom of action will be correspondingly so. This is a point of great importance. The limbs, and indeed the entire body, should have the widest and freest range of motion. It is only thus that our performances in the business or pleasures of life become most effective.

A complete, equable circulation of the blood is thereby most perfectly secured. And this, I may remark, is in one aspect the physiological purpose of all exercise. The race-horse has a much more vigorous circulation than the cart-horse. It is a fact not unfamiliar to horsemen, that, when a horse is transferred from slow, heavy work to the carriage, the surface-veins about the neck and legs begin at once to enlarge; when the change is made from the carriage to the cart, the reverse is the result.

And when we consider that the principal object of all physical training is an elastic, vigorous condition of the nervous system, the superiority of light gymnastics becomes still more obvious. The nervous system is the fundamental fact of our earthly life. All other parts of the organism exist and work for it. It controls all, and is the seat of pain and pleasure. The impressions upon the stomach, for example, resulting in a better or worse digestion, must be made through the nerves. This supreme control of the nervous system is forcibly illustrated in the change made by joyful or sad tidings. The overdue ship is believed to have gone down with her valuable, uninsured cargo. Her owner paces the wharf, sallow and wan,–appetite and digestion gone. She heaves in sight! She lies at the wharf! The happy man goes aboard, hears all is safe, and, taking the officers to a hotel, devours with them a dozen monstrous compounds, with the keenest appetite, and without a subsequent pang.

I am confident that the loyal people of this country have eaten and digested, since Roanoke and Donelson, as they had not before since Sumter.

Could we have an unbroken succession of good news, we should all have good digestion without a gymnasium. But in a world of vexation and disappointment, we are driven to the necessity of studied and unusual muscle-culture, and other hygienic expedients, to give the nervous system that support and vitality which our fitful surroundings deny.

If we would make our muscle-training contributive in the highest degree to the healthful elasticity of our nerves, the exercises must be such as will bring into varied combinations and play all our muscles and nerves. Those exercises which require great accuracy, skill, and dash are just those which secure this happy and complete intermarriage of nerve and muscle. If any one doubts that boxing and small-sword will do more to give elasticity and tone to the nervous system than lifting kegs of nails, then I will give him over to the heavy-lifters.

Another point I take the liberty to urge. Without *accuracy* in the performance of the feats, the interest must be transient. This principle is strikingly exemplified in military training. Those who have studied our infantry drill have been struck with its simplicity, and have wondered that men could go through with its details every day for years without disgust. If the drill-master permit carelessness, then, authority alone can force the men through the evolutions; but if he insist on the greatest precision, they return to their task every morning, for twenty years, with fresh and increasing interest.

What precision, permit me to ask, is possible in "putting up" a heavy dumb-bell? But in the new dumb-bell exercises there is opportunity and necessity for all the accuracy and skill which are found in the most elaborate military drills.

I have had experience in boxing and fencing, and I say with confidence, that in neither nor both is there such a field for fine posturing, wide, graceful action, and studied accuracy, as is to be found in the new series of dumb-bell exercises.

But, it is said, if you use dumb-bells weighing only two pounds, you must work an hour to obtain the exercise which the heavy ones would furnish in five minutes. I need not inform those who have practised the new series with the light dumb-bells that this objection is made in ignorance. If you simply "put up" the light implement, it is true; but if you use it as in the new system, it is not true. On the contrary, in less than five minutes, legs, hips, back, arms, shoulders, neck, lungs, and heart will each and all make the most emphatic remonstrance against even a quarter of an hour's practice of such feats.

At this point it may be urged that those exercises which quicken the action of the thoracic viscera, to any considerable degree, are simply exhaustive. This is another blunder of the "big-muscle" men. They seem to think you can determine every man's constitution and health by the tape-line; and that all exercises whose results are not determinable by measurement are worthless.

I need scarcely say, there are certain conditions of brain, muscle, and every other tissue, far more important than size; but what I desire to urge more particularly in this connection is the importance, the great physiological advantages, of just those exercises in which the lungs and heart are brought into active play. These organs are no exceptions to the law that exercise is the principal condition of development. Their vigorous training adds more to the stock of vitality than that of other organs. A man may stand still and lift kegs of nails and heavy dumb-bells until his shoulders and arms are Samsonian, it will contribute far less to his health and longevity than a daily run of a mile or two.

Speaking in a general way, those exercises in which the lungs and heart are made to go at a vigorous pace are to be ranked among the most useful. The "double-quick" of the soldier contributes more in five minutes to his digestion and endurance than the ordinary drill in two hours.

I have said an elastic tone of the nervous system is the physiological purpose of all physical training. If one may be allowed such an analysis, I would add that we exercise our muscles to invigorate the thoracic and abdominal viscera. These in their turn support and invigorate the nervous system. All exercises which operate more directly upon these internal organs–as, for example, laughing, deep breathing, and running–contribute most effectively to the stamina of the brain and nerves. It is only the popular mania for monstrous arms and shoulders that could have misled the intelligent gymnast on this point.

But finally, it is said, you certainly cannot deny that rapid motions with great sweep exhaust more than slow motions through limited spaces. A great lifter said to me the other day,–

"Do you pretend to deny that a locomotive with a light train, flying at the rate of forty miles an hour, consumes more fuel than one with a heavy train, moving at the rate of five miles?"

I did not attempt to deny it.

"Well, then," he added, with an air of triumph, "what have you to say now about these great sweeping feats with your light dumb-bells, as compared with the slow putting up of heavy ones?"

I replied by asking him another question.

"Do you pretend to deny, that, when you drive your horse ten miles within an hour, before a light carriage, he is more exhausted than by drawing a load two miles an hour?"

"That's my doctrine exactly," he said.

Then I asked,–

"Why don't you always drive two miles an hour?"

"But my patients would all die," replied my friend.

I did not say aloud what was passing in my mind,–that the danger to his patients might be less than he imagined; but I suggested, that most men, as well as most horses, had duties in this life which involved the necessity of rapid and vigorous motions,–and that, were this slow movement generally adopted, every phase of human life would be stripped of progress, success, and glory.

As our artificial training is designed to fit us for the more successful performance of the duties of life, I suggest that the training should be, in character, somewhat assimilated to those duties. If you would train a horse for the carriage, you would not prepare him for this work by driving at a slow

pace before a heavy load. If you did, the first fast drive would go hard with him. Just so with a man. If he is to lift hogsheads of sugar, or kegs of nails, as a business, he may be trained by heavy-lifting; but if his business requires the average activity and free motions of human occupations, then, upon the basis of his heavy, slow training, he will find himself in actual life in the condition of the dray-horse who is pushed before the light carriage at a high speed.

Perhaps it is not improper to add that all this talk about expenditure of vitality is full of sophistry. Lecturers and writers speak of our stock of vitality as if it were a vault of gold, upon which you cannot draw without lessening the quantity. Whereas, it is rather like the mind or heart, enlarging by action, gaining by expenditure.

When Daniel Boone was living alone in Kentucky, his intellectual exercises were doubtless of the quiet, slow, heavy character. Other white men joined him. Under the social stimulus, his thinking became more sprightly. Suppose that in time he had come to write vigorously, and to speak in the most eloquent, brilliant manner, does any one imagine that he would have lost in mental vigor by the process? Would not the brain, which had only slow exercise in his isolated life, become bold, brilliant, and dashing, by bold, brilliant, and dashing efforts?

A farm-boy has slow, heavy muscles. He has been accustomed to heavy exercises. He is transferred to the circus, and performs, after a few years' training, a hundred beautiful, splendid feats. He at length reaches the matchless Zampillacrostation of William Hanlon. Does any one think that his body has lost power in this brilliant education?

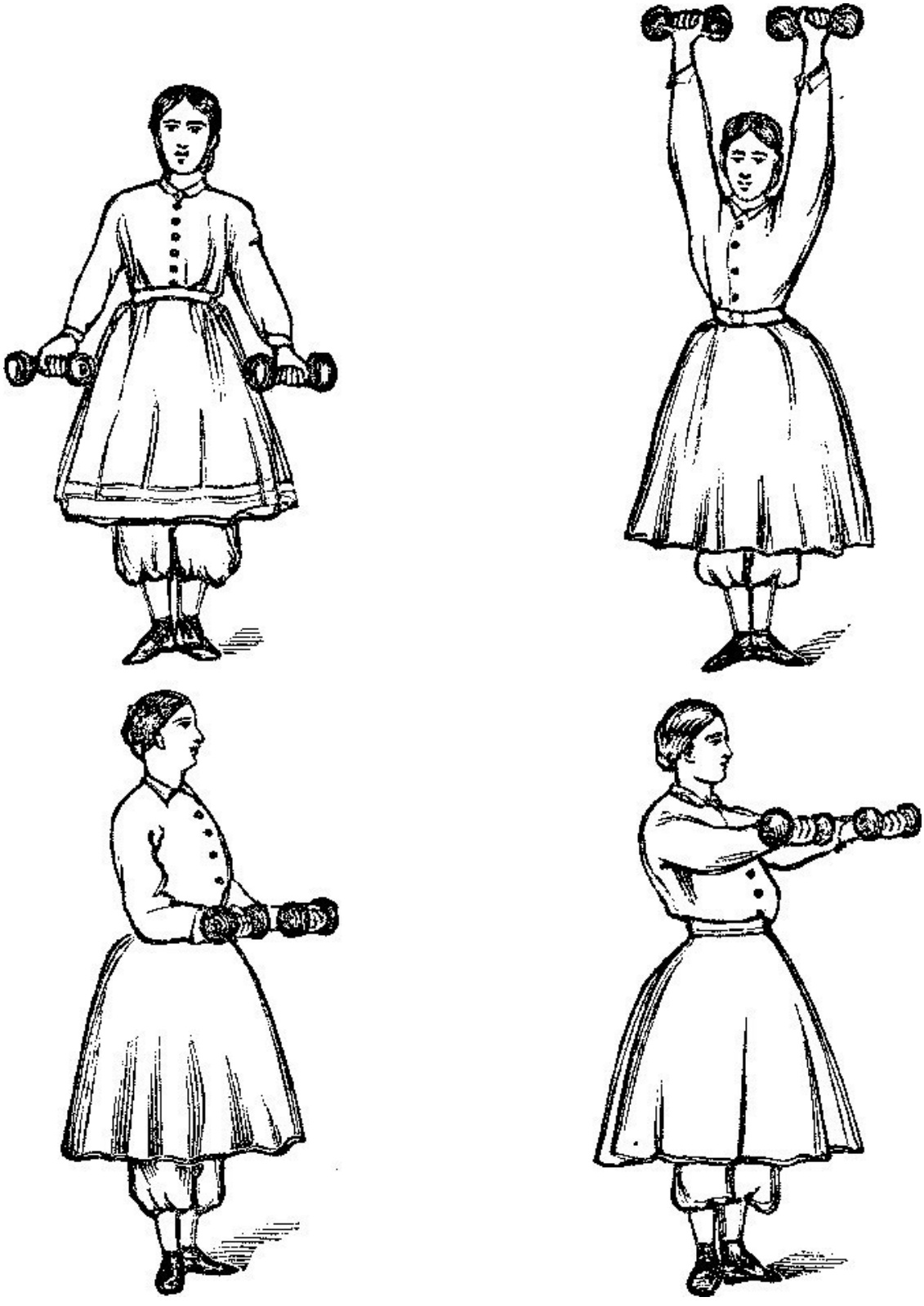
Is it true, either in intellectual or physical training, that great exertions, under proper conditions and limitations, exhaust the powers of life? On the contrary, is it not true that we find in vigorous, bold, dashing, brilliant efforts the only source of vigorous, bold, dashing, and brilliant powers?

In this discussion I have not considered the treatment of invalids. The principles presented are applicable to the training of children and adults of average vitality.

I will rest upon the general statement, that all persons, of both sexes, and of every age, who are possessed of average vitality, should, in the department of physical education, employ light apparatus, and execute a great variety of feats which require skill, accuracy, courage, presence of mind, quickness of eye and hand,–in brief, which demand a vigorous and complete exercise of all the powers and faculties with which the Creator has endowed us; while deformed and diseased persons should be treated in consonance with the philosophy of the *Swedish Movement-Cure*, in which the movements are slow and limited.

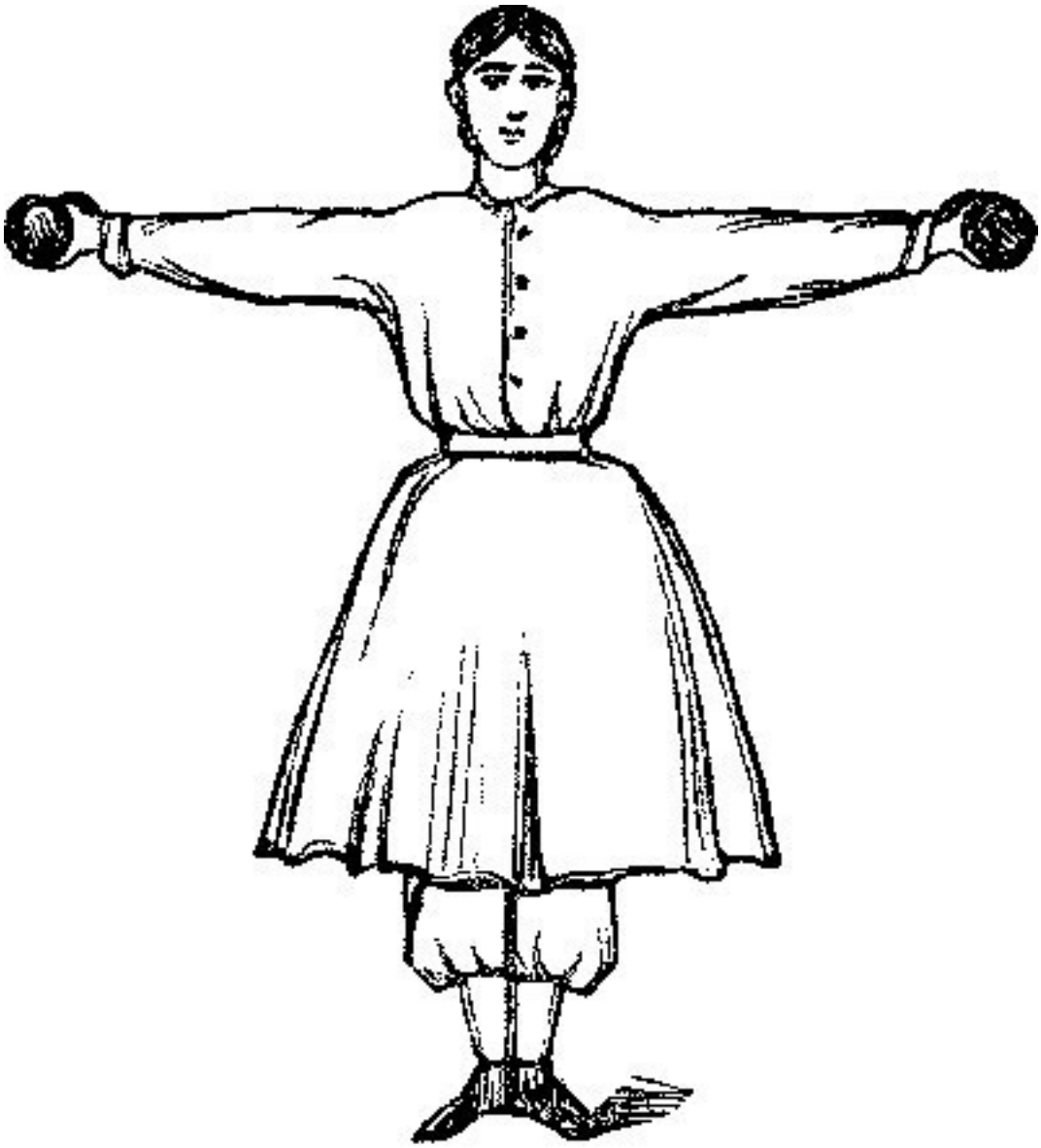
It is but justice to the following series of exercises with dumb-bells to state that not only are they, with two or three exceptions, the writer's own invention, but the wisdom of the precise arrangement given, as well as the balance of exercise in all the muscles of the body and limbs, has been well proved by an extensive use during several years.

By way of illustrating the new system of dumb-bell exercises, I subjoin a few cuts. The entire series contains more than fifty exercises.

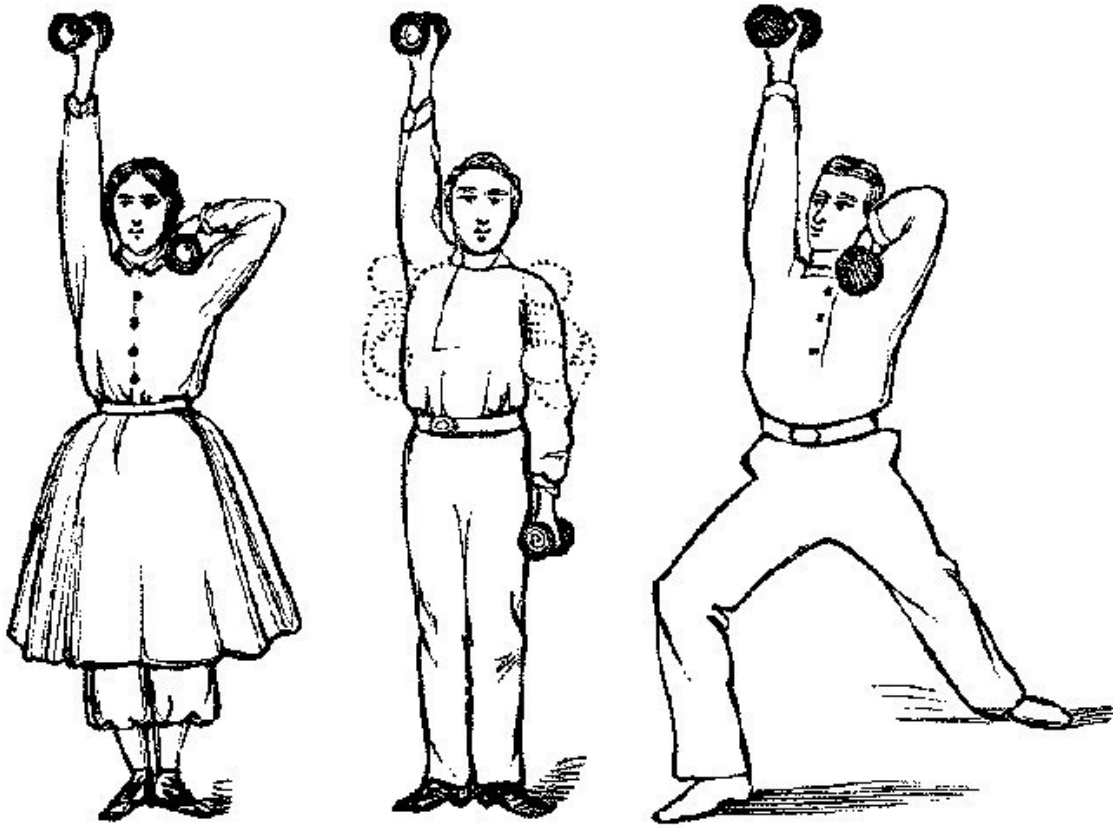


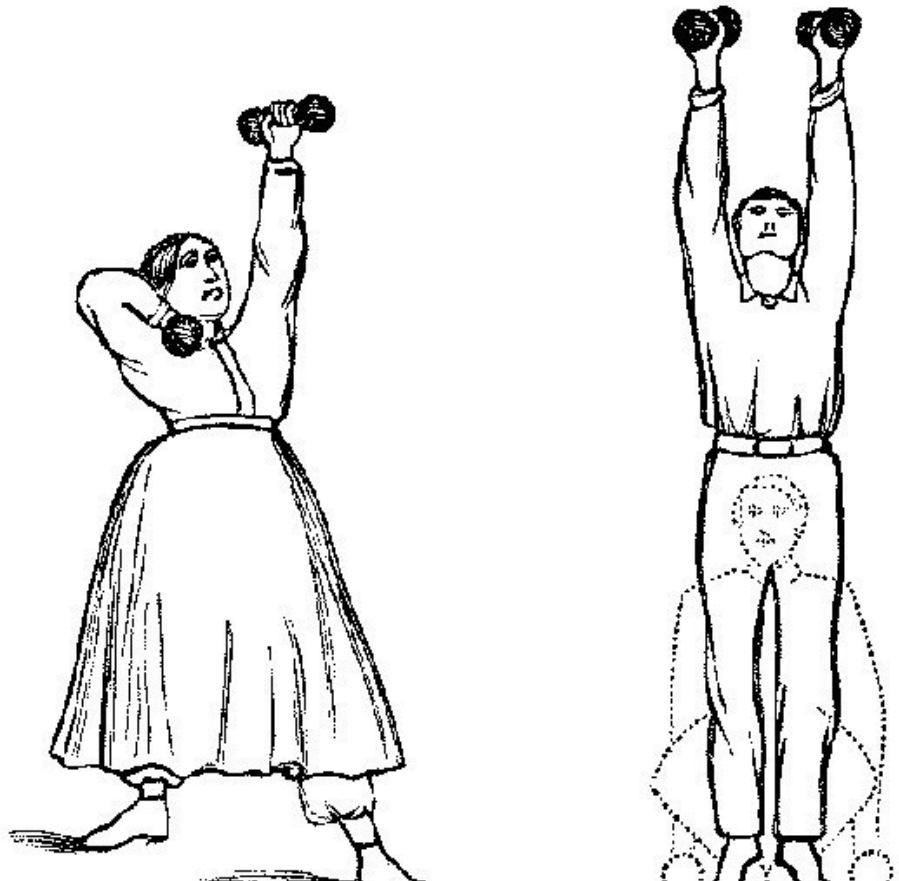
The pupil, assuming these five positions, in the order presented, twists the arms. In each twisting, the ends of the dumb-bells should, if possible, be exactly reversed. Great precision will sustain the interest through a thousand repetitions of this or any other exercise. The object in these twisting exercises is to break up all rigidity of the muscles and ligaments about the shoulder-joint. To remove this should be the primary object in gymnastic training. No one can have examined the muscles of the upper half of the body without being struck with the fact that nearly all of them

diverge from the shoulder like a fan. Exercise of the muscles of the upper part of the back and chest is dependent upon the shoulder. It is the centre from which their motions are derived. As every one not in full training has inflexibility of the parts about the shoulder-joint, this should be the first object of attack. These twistings are well calculated to effect the desired result. While practising them, the position should be a good one,–head, shoulders, and hips drawn far back.

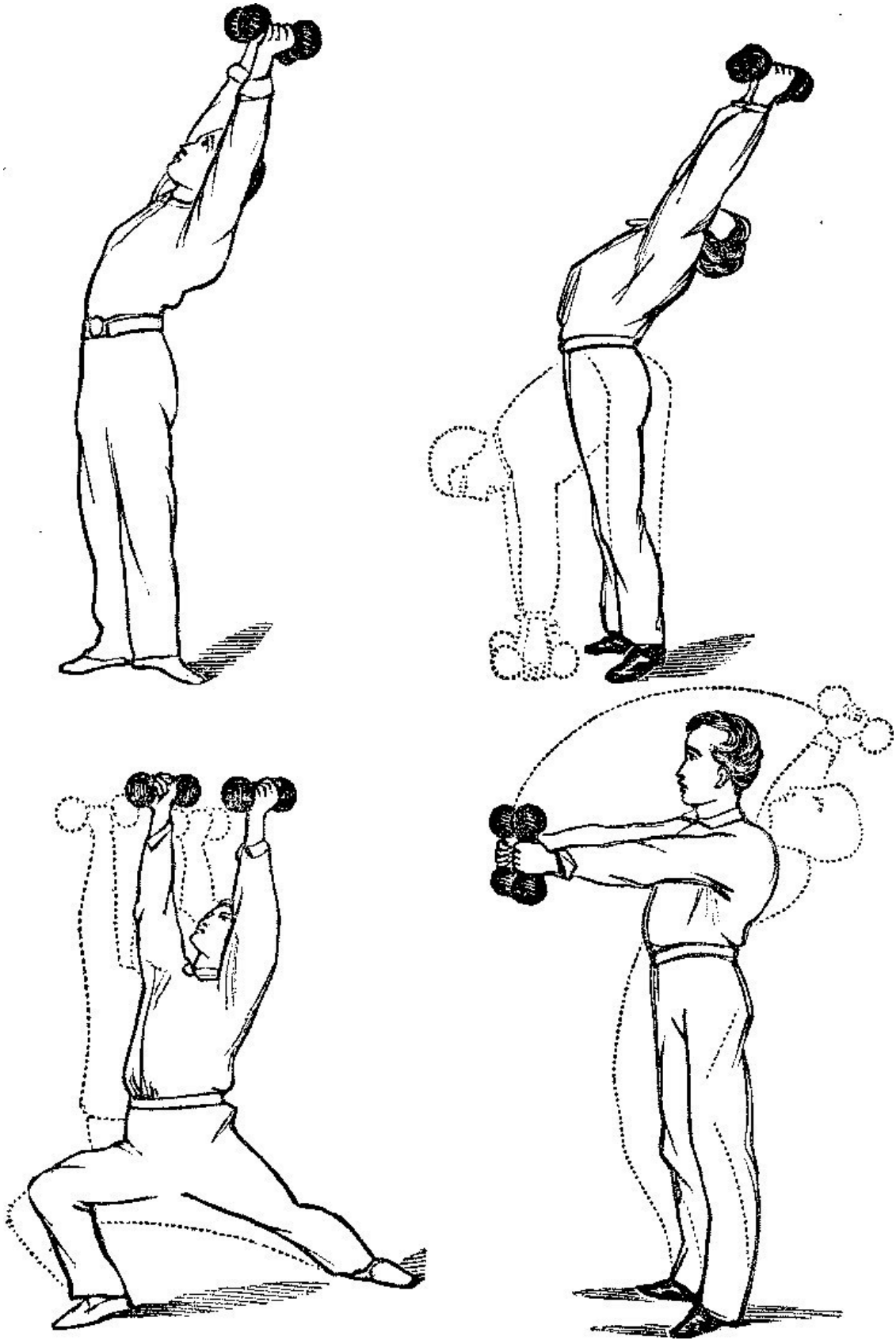


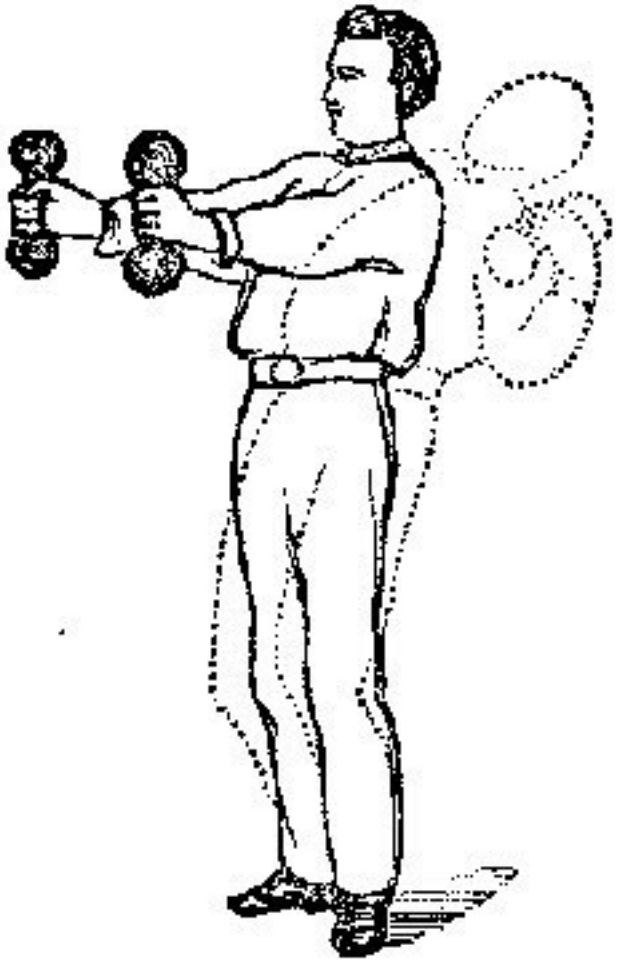
In our attempts to correct stooping shoulders, one good series of exercises is found in thrusting the dumb-bells directly upwards. While performing this the positions must be varied. A few illustrations are offered.

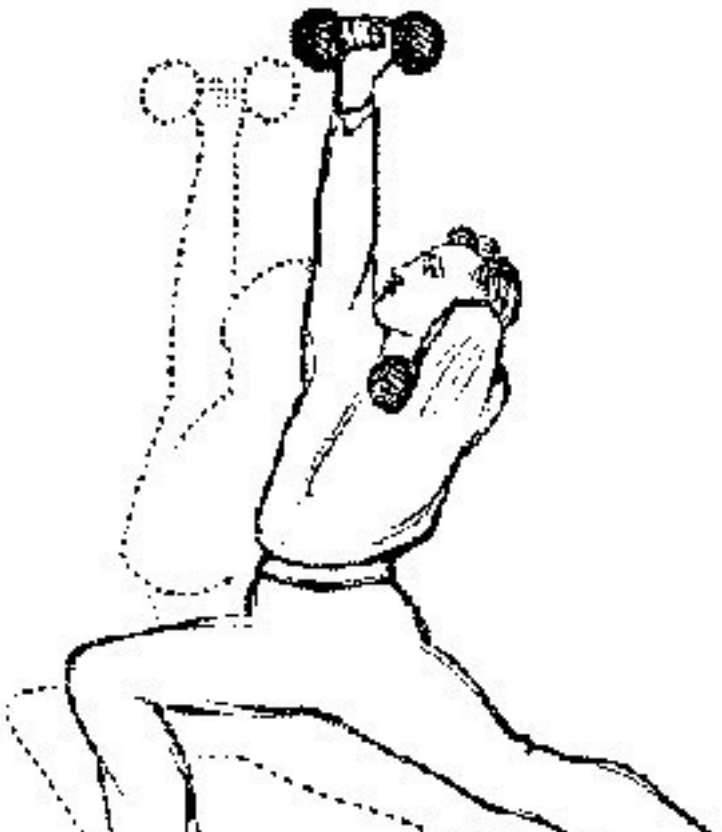




As effective means by which to call into vigorous play neck, shoulders, back, hips, arms, and legs, I submit the following exercises.







THE GYMNASTIC CROWN

Bearing burdens on the head results in an erect spine and well-balanced gait. Observing persons, who have visited Switzerland, Italy, or the Gulf States, have noticed a thousand verifications of this physiological law.

Cognizant of the value of this feature of gymnastic training, I have employed, within the last twelve years, various sorts of weights, but have recently invented an iron crown, which I think completely satisfactory. I have it made to weigh from five to thirty pounds. It is so padded within that it rests pleasantly on the head, and yet so arranged that it requires skill to balance it.

The skull-cap, which is fitted to the top of the head, must have an opening of two inches in diameter at the crown, so that that part of the head shall receive no pressure. If this be neglected, many persons will suffer headache. The skull-cap should be made of strong cotton, and supported with a sliding cord about the centre. With such an arrangement, a feeble girl can easily carry a crown, weighing ten or fifteen pounds, sufficiently long, morning and evening, to secure an erect spine in a few months.

The crown which I employ is so constructed as to admit within itself two others, whereby it may be made to weigh nine, eighteen, or twenty-seven pounds, at the pleasure of the wearer. This is a profitable arrangement, as in the first use nine pounds might be as heavy as could be well borne, while twenty-seven pounds could be as easily borne after a few weeks.

The crown may be used at home. It has been introduced into schools with excellent results.

Instead of this iron crown, a simple board, with an oblong rim on one side so padded with hair that the crown of the head entirely escapes pressure, may prove a very good substitute. The upholsterer should so fill the pad that the wearer will have difficulty in balancing it. It may be loaded with bags of beans.

RULES FOR WEARING THE CROWN OR OTHER WEIGHT ON THE HEAD

Wear it five to fifteen minutes morning and evening. Hold the body erect, hips and shoulders thrown far back, and the crown rather on the front of the head.

Walk up and down stairs, keeping the body very erect. While walking through the hall or parlors, first turn the toes inward as far as possible; second, outward; third, walk on the tips of the toes; fourth, on the heels; fifth, on the right heel and left toe; sixth, on the left heel and right toe; seventh, walk without bending the knees; eighth, bend the knees, so that you are nearly sitting on the heels while walking; ninth, walk with the right leg bent at the knee, rising at each step on the straight left leg; tenth, walk with the left leg bent, rising at each step on the straight right leg.

With these ten different modes of walking, the various muscles of the back will receive the most invigorating exercise.

Wearing the crown is the most valuable of all exercises for young people. If perseveringly practised, it would make them quite erect, give them a noble carriage of the head, and save them from those maladies of the chest which so frequently take their rise in drooping shoulders.

EXERCISES WITH RINGS

After the exercises with the crown, those with the new gymnastic ring are the best ever devised. Physiologists and gymnasts have everywhere bestowed upon them the most unqualified commendation. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive any other series so complete in a physiological point of view, and so happily adapted to family, school, and general use.

If a man were as strong as Samson, he would find in the use of these rings, with another man of equal muscle, the fullest opportunity to exert his utmost strength; while the frailest child, engaged with one of equal strength, would never be injured.

There is not a muscle in the entire body which may not be brought into direct play through the medium of the rings. And if one particular muscle or set of muscles is especially deficient or weak, the exercise may be concentrated upon that muscle or set of muscles.

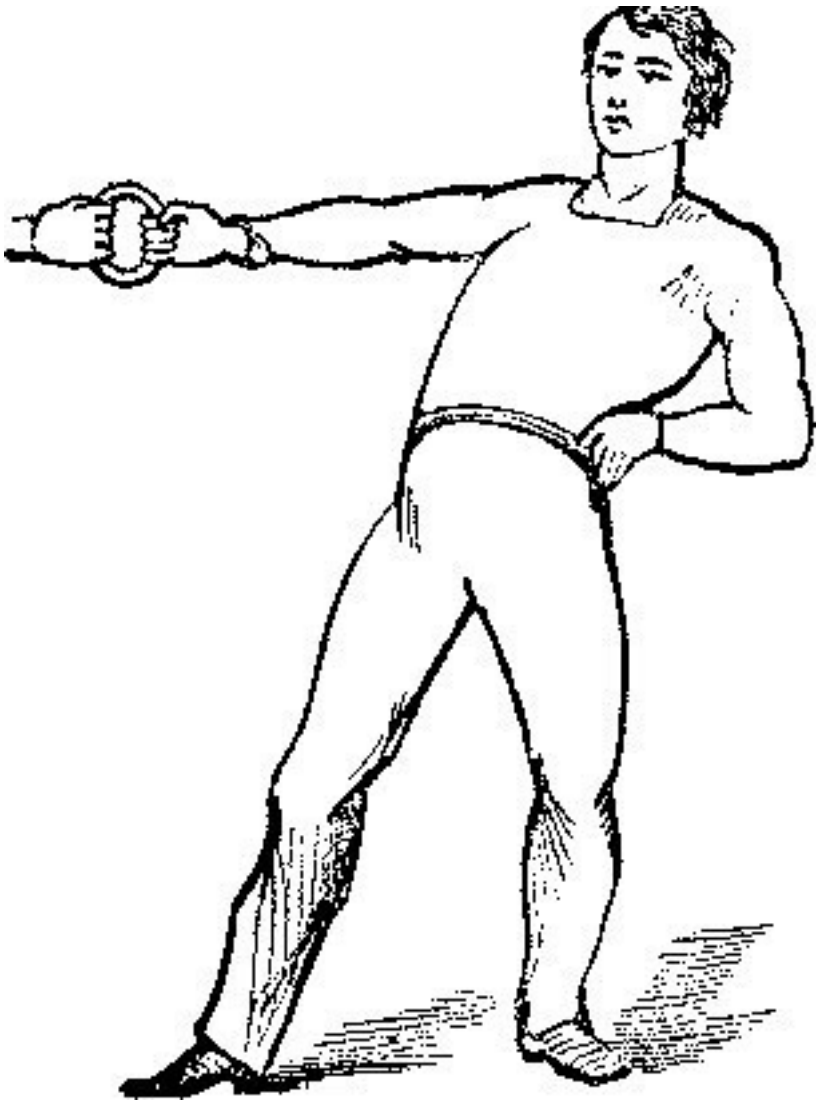
Wherever these rings are introduced, they will obtain favor and awaken enthusiasm.

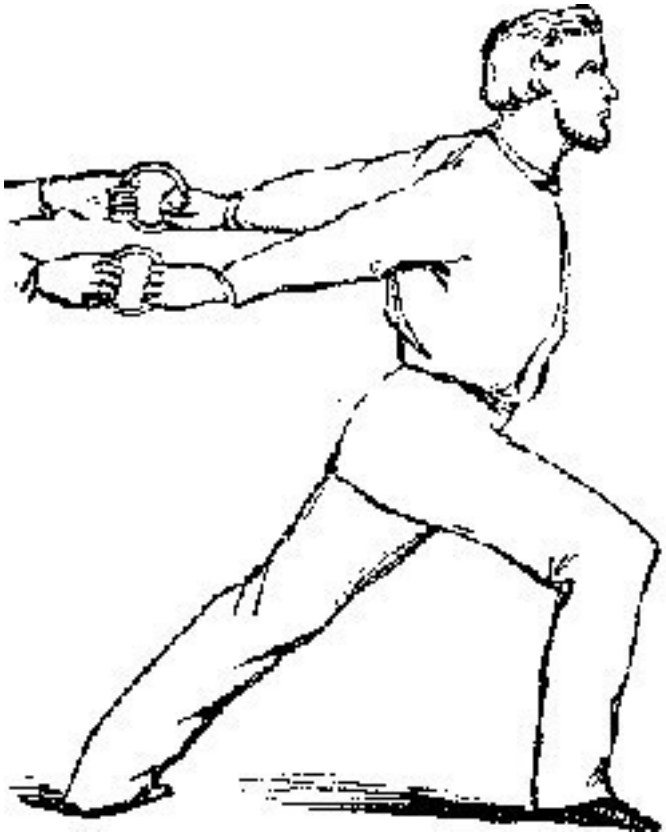
The rings are made of three pieces of wood, glued together with the grain running in opposite directions. They are round, six inches in diameter with body one inch thick, and finished with a hard, smooth polish.

The first series with the rings consists of a number of twisting exercises with the arms. Not only are these valuable in producing freedom about the shoulder-joint, which, as has been explained, is a great desideratum, but twisting motions of the limbs contribute more to a rounded, symmetrical development than any other exercises. If the flexors and extensors are exercised in simple, direct lines, the muscular outlines will be too marked.

In twisting with the rings, the arms may be drawn into twenty positions, thus producing an almost infinite variety of action in the arm and shoulder.

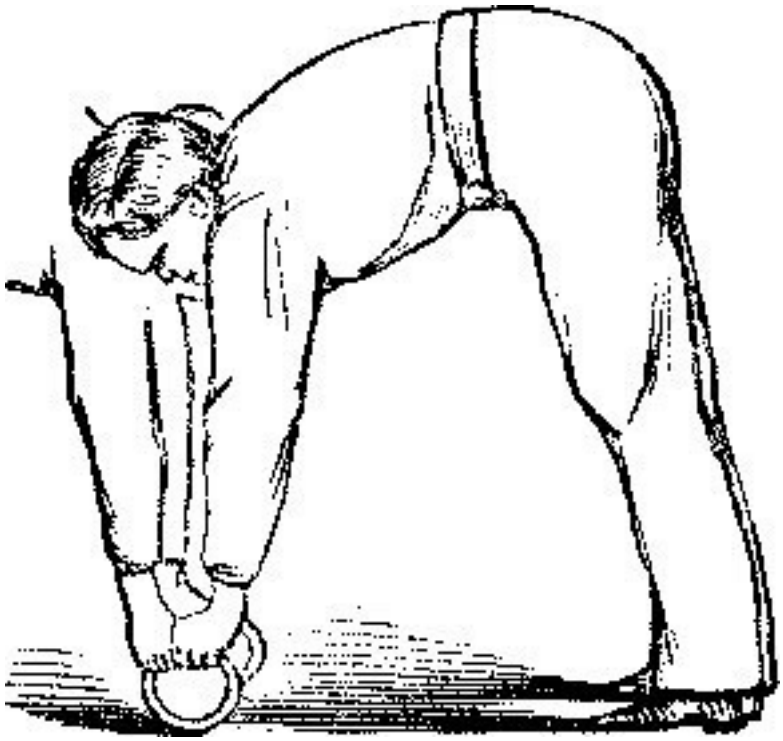
Two of the positions assumed in this series are shown in the cuts.



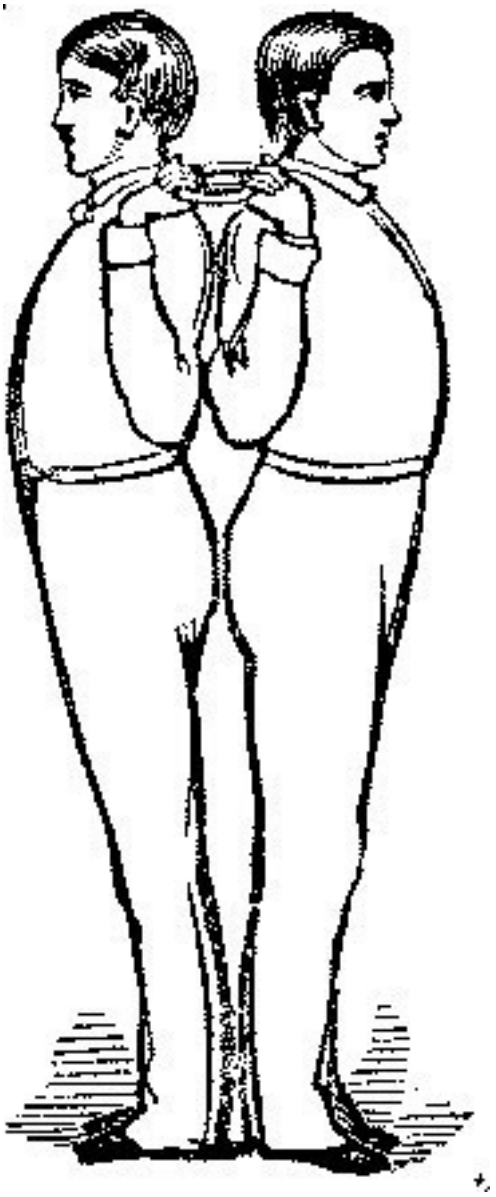


It is our policy in these exercises to pull with a force of from five to fifty pounds, and thus add indefinitely to the effectiveness of the movements.

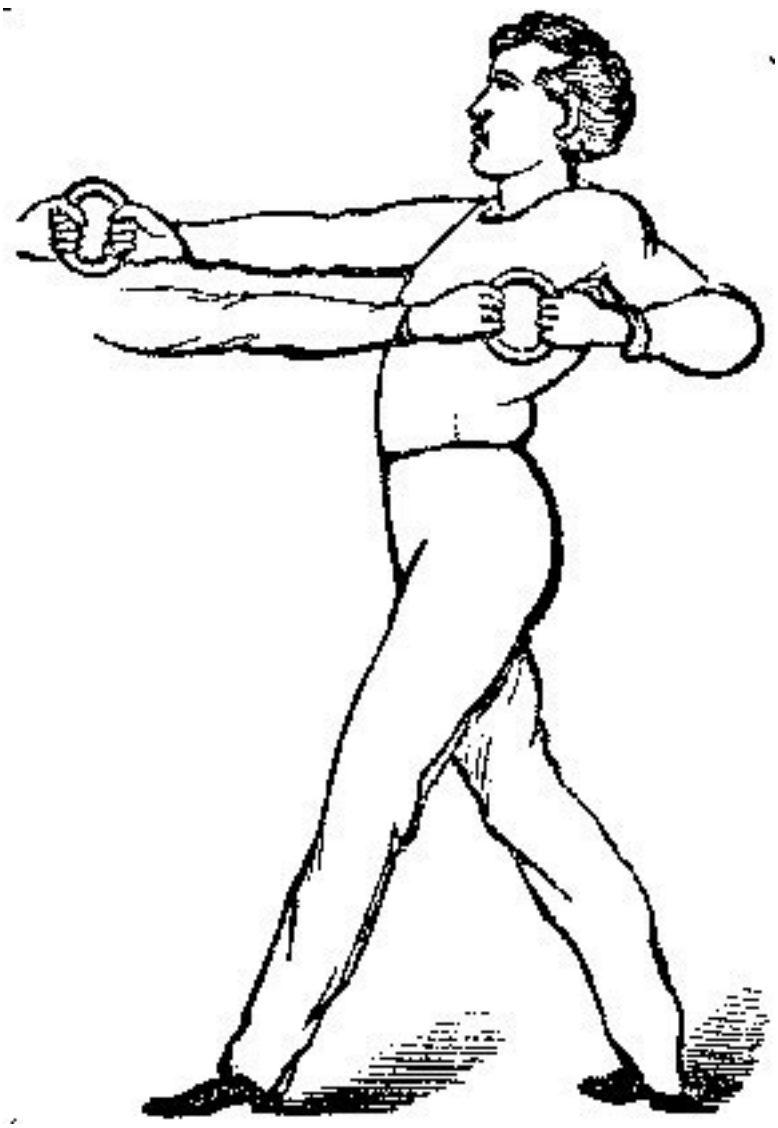
To illustrate a few of the many hundred exercises possible with rings, the subjoined cuts are introduced.



In this exercise, the rings are made to touch the floor, as shown, in alternation with the highest point they can be made to reach, all without bending the knees or elbows.

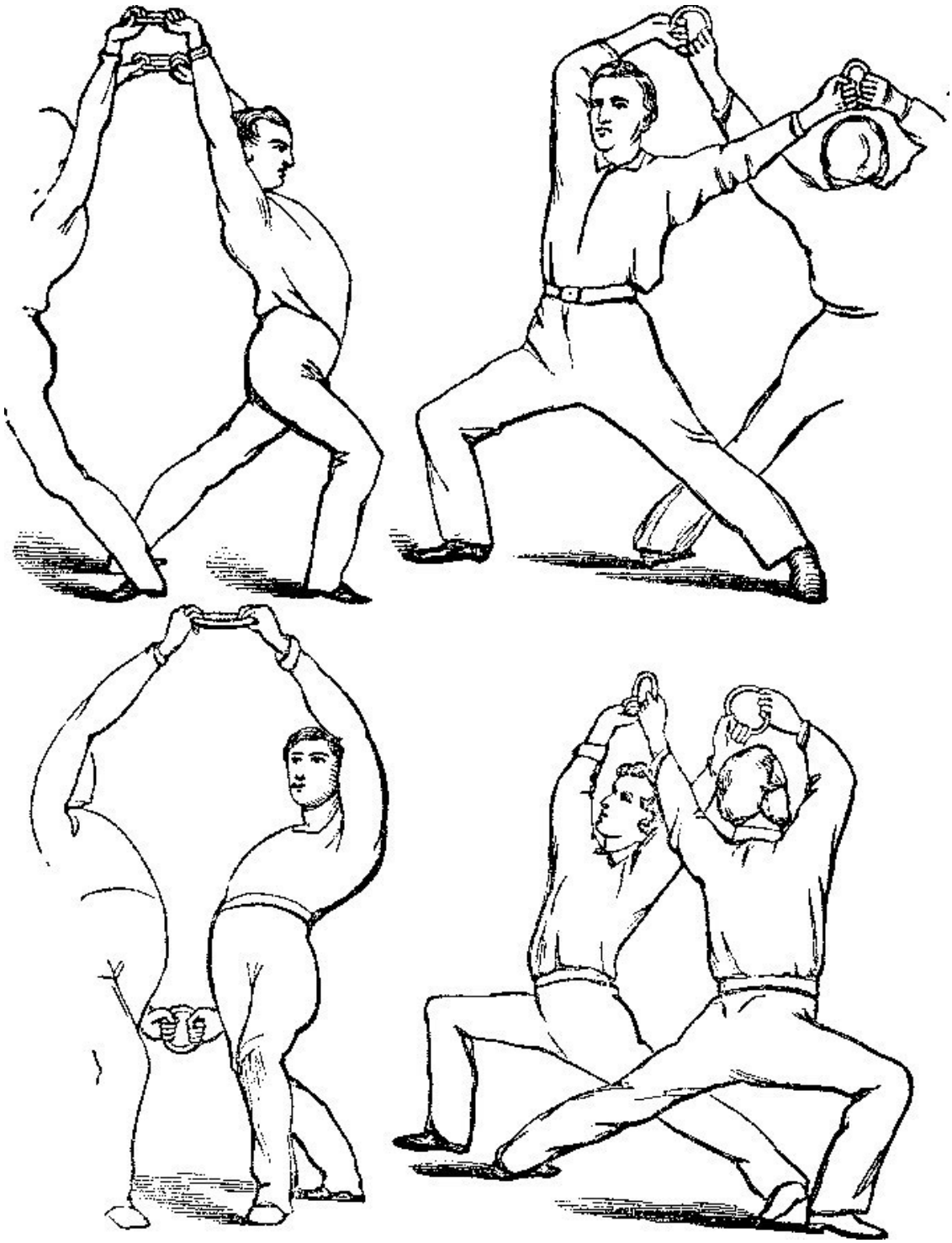


The hands are thrust upward, outward, and downward with force.

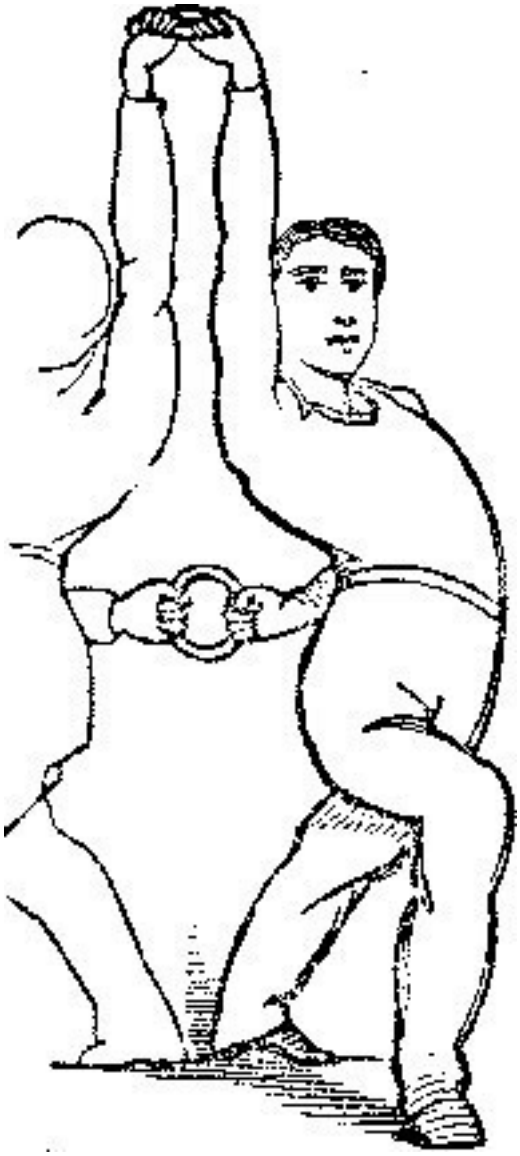


The hands are thrust forward and drawn backward in alternation as far as the performers can reach.

It will be understood that in none of these exercises are the performers to maintain the illustrated positions for a single moment. As in dancing, there is constant motion and change, while the music secures concert. When, by marks on the floor, the performers are kept in linear rank and file, the scene is most exhilarating to participants and spectators.



[Illustration: *No Caption]



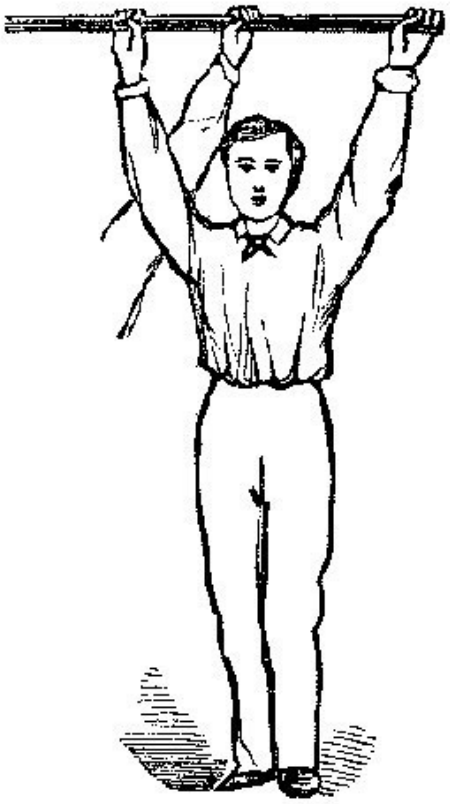
The above are specimens of the many *charges* with the rings. Shoulders, arms, back, and legs receive an incomparable training. In constant alternation with the charges, the pupils rise to the upright position; and when the company move simultaneously to the music, few scenes are so brilliant.

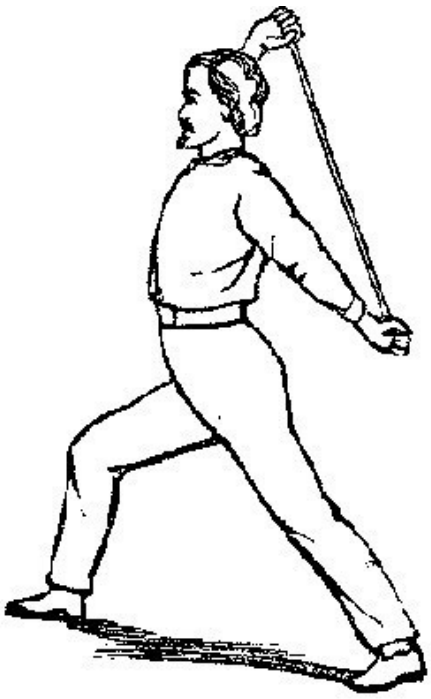
In most exercises there must be some resistance. How much better that this should be another human being, rather than a pole, ladder, or bar! It is social, and constantly changing.

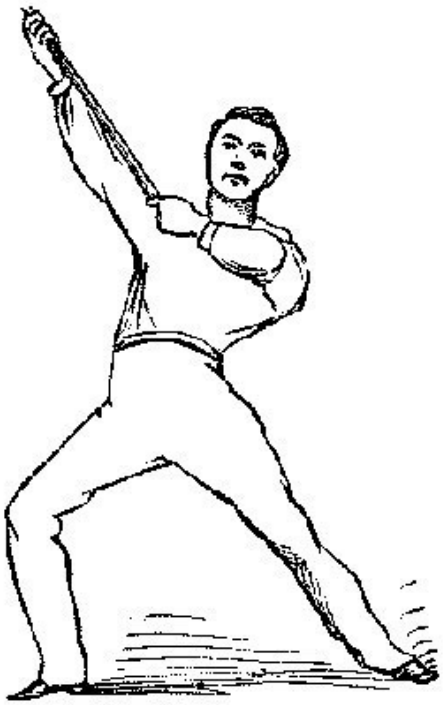
EXERCISES WITH WANDS

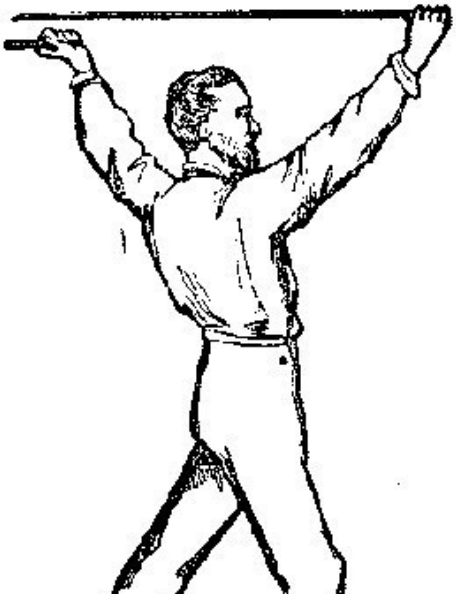
A straight, smooth stick, four feet long, (three feet for children,) is known in the gymnasium as a *wand*. It is employed to cultivate flexibility, and is useful to persons of all ages and degrees of strength.

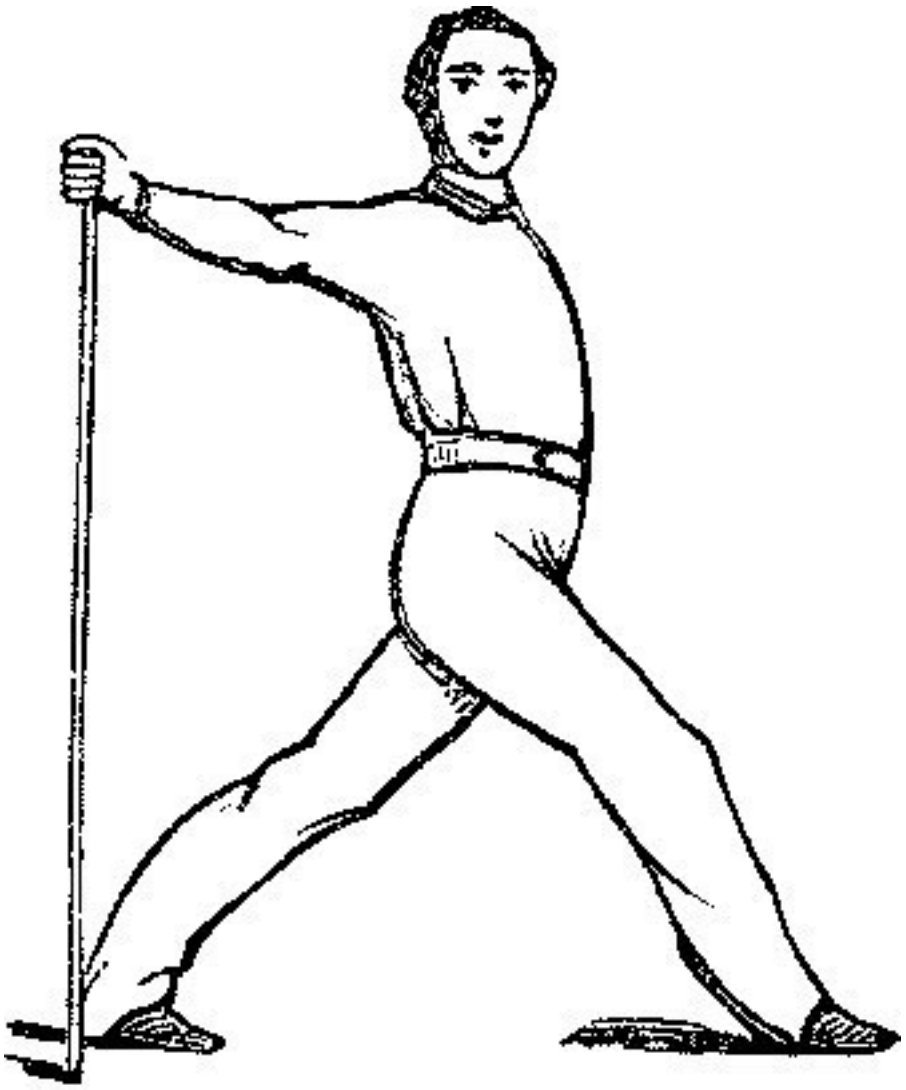
Of this series there are sixty-eight exercises in the new system, but I have space only for a few illustrations.

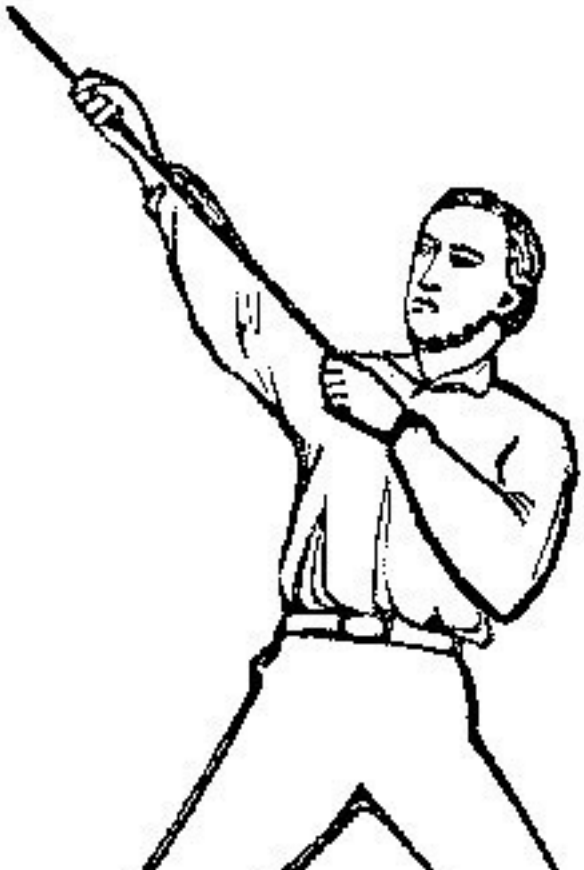










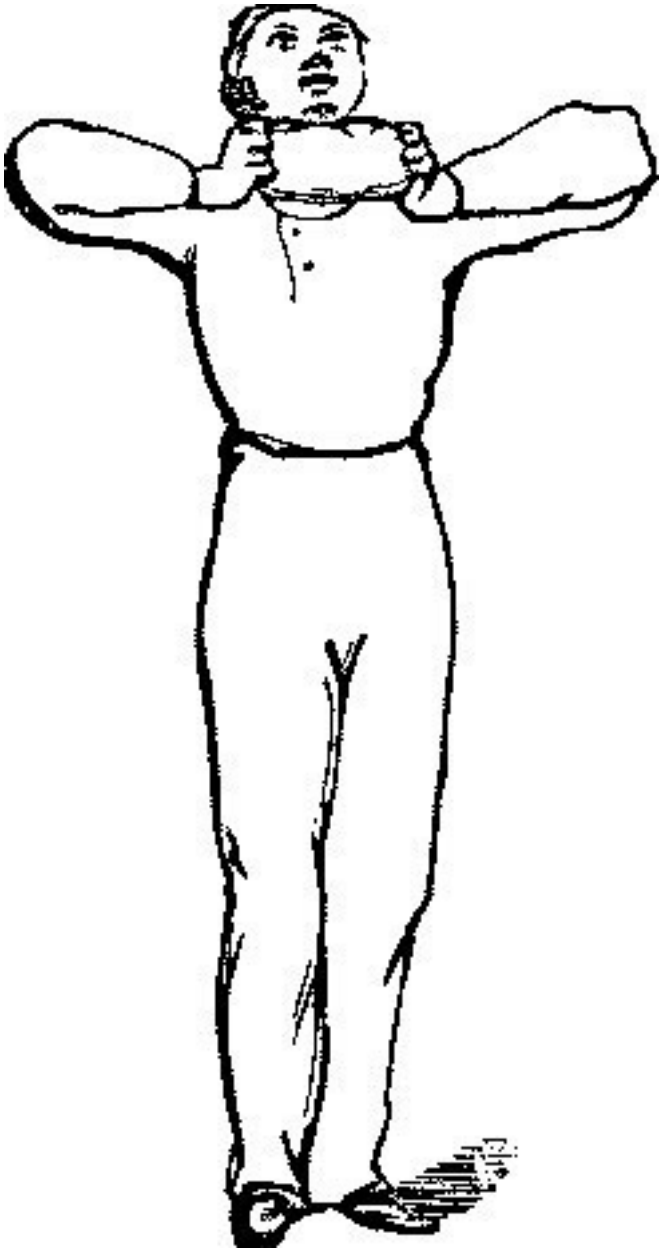


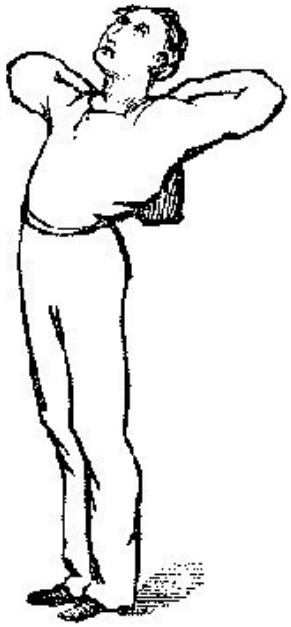
EXERCISES WITH BEAN-BAGS

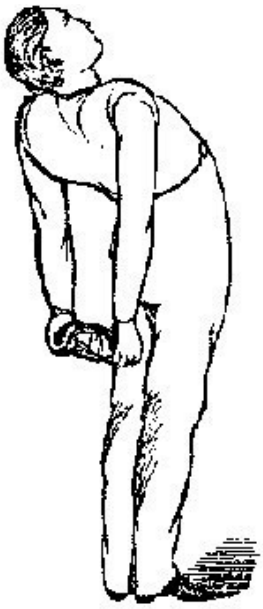
The use of small bags filled with beans, for gymnastic exercise, was suggested to my mind some years since, while attempting to devise a series of games with large rubber-balls. Throwing and catching objects in certain ways, requiring skill and presence of mind, not only affords good exercise of the muscles of the arms and upper half of the body, but cultivates a quickness of eye and coolness of nerve very desirable. Appreciating this, I employed large rubber-balls, but was constantly annoyed at the irregularities resulting from the difficulty of catching them. When the balls were but partially inflated, it was observed that the hand could better seize them. This at length suggested the bean-bags. Six years' use of these bags has resulted in the adoption of those weighing from two to five pounds, as the best for young people. The bags should be very strong, and filled three-quarters full with clean beans. The beans must be frequently removed and the bags washed, so that the hands and dress may not be soiled, nor the lungs troubled with dust.

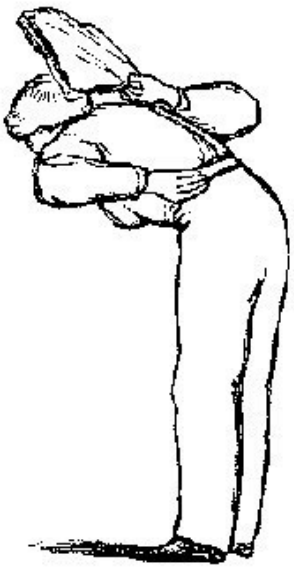
Forty games have been devised. If managers of schools are unwilling to *study* these games, and organize their practice, it is hoped they will reject them altogether. If well managed, a school of young ladies will use the bags half an hour every day for years, and their interest keep pace with their skill; but mismanaged, as they generally have been, it is a marvel, if the interest continues through a single quarter.

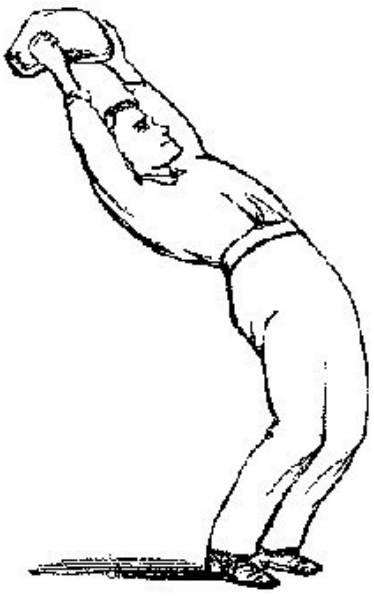
The following cuts may serve to illustrate some of the bag-exercises. It will be observed that the players appear to be looking and throwing somewhat upward. Most of the exercises illustrated are performed by couples,–the bags being thrown to and fro. It has been found advantageous, where it is convenient, to suspend a series of hoops between the players, and require them to throw the bags through these hoops, which, being elevated several feet, compel the players to assume the positions seen in the figures.

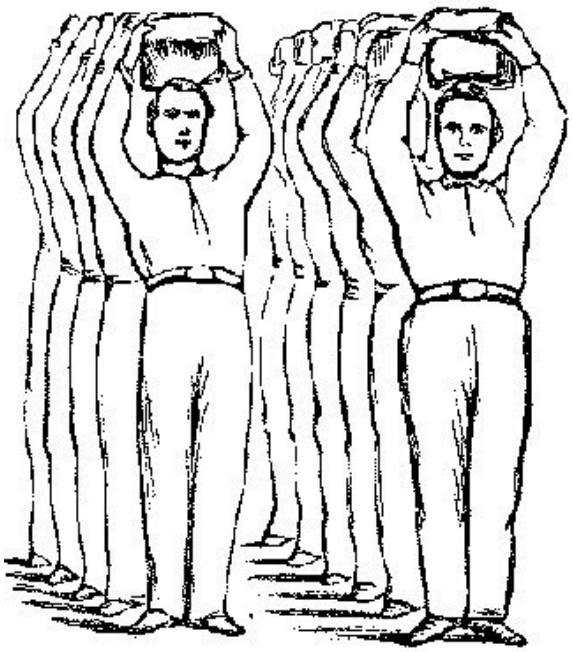


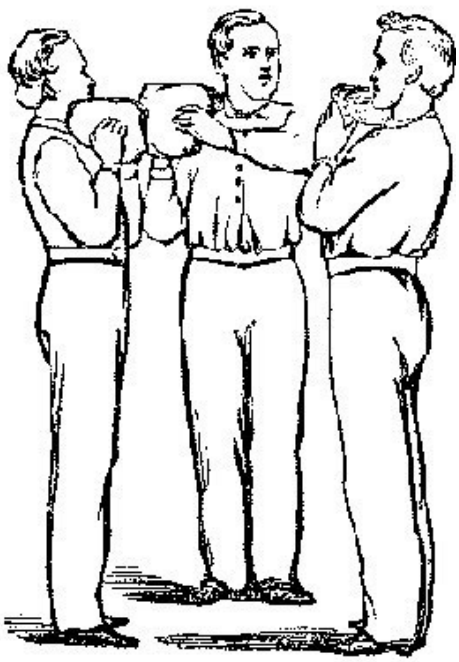












With the bean-bags there are numberless possible games, requiring eye and hand so quick, nerves so cool, skill and endurance so great, that the most accomplished has ever before him difficulties to be surmounted.

In a country where pulmonary maladies figure so largely in the bills of mortality, a complete system of physical training must embrace special means for the development of the respiratory apparatus. The new system is particularly full and satisfactory in this department. Its spirometers and other kindred agencies leave nothing to be desired.

Physiologists and teachers believe that the new system of gymnastics is destined to establish a new era in physical education. It is ardently hoped that events may justify their confidence.

MR. AXTELL

PART I

I cannot tell who built it. It is a queer piece of architecture, a fragment, that has been thrown off in the revolutions of the wheel mechanical, this tower of mine. It doesn't seem to belong to the parsonage. It isn't a part of the church now, if ever it has been. No one comes to service in it, and the only voiced worshipper who sends up little winding eddies through its else currentless air is I.

My sister said "I will" one day, (naughty words for little children,) and so it came to pass that she paid the penalty by coming to live in the parsonage with a very grave man. And he preaches every Sunday out of the little square pulpit, overhung by a great, tremulous sounding-board, to the congregation, sitting silently listening below, within the church.

I come every year to the parsonage, and in my visiting-time I occupy this tower. It is quite deserted when I am away, for I carry the key, and keep it with me wherever I go. I hang it at night where I can see the great shadow wavering on the ceiling above my head, when the jet of gas, trembling in the night-wind below, sends a shimmer of light into my room.

It is a skeleton-key. It wouldn't open ordinary homes. There's a something about it that seems to say, as plainly as words *can* say, "There are prisoners within"; and as oft as my eyes see it hanging there, I say, "I am your jailer."

On the first day of March, in the year one thousand eight hundred and sixty, I arrived at the parsonage. It was early morning when I saw the little wooden church-"steeple," in the distance, and the sun was not risen when she who said the "naughty words" and the grave minister came out to welcome me.

Ere the noontide came, I had learned who had gone from the village, all unattended, on the mysterious journey, since last I had been there. There were new souls within the town. And a few, that had been two, were called one. These things I heard whilst the minister sat in his study up-stairs, and held his head upon his hands, thinking over the theology of the schools; his wife, meanwhile, in the room below, working out a strange elective predestination, free-will gifts to be, for some little ones that had strayed into the fold to be warmed and clothed and fed. At length the village "news" having all been imparted to me, I gave a thought to my tower.

"How is the old place?" asked I, as my sister paused a moment in the cutting out of a formula for a coat, destined for a growing boy.

"Don't get excited about the tower yet, Sister Anna," she said; "let it alone one day."

"Oh, I can't, Sophie!" I said; "it's such a length of days since I sat in the grated window!"–and I looked out as I spoke.

Square and small and high stood the tower, as high as the church's eaves.

"What could it have been built for?"

I knew not that I had spoken my thought, until Sophie answered,–

"We have found out recently that the tower was here when the first church was built. It may have been here, for aught we know, before white men came."

"Perhaps the church was built near to it for safety," I suggested.

"It has been very useful," said Sophie. "Not long ago, the first night in January, I think, Mr. Bronson came to see my husband. He lived here when he was a boy, and remembers stories told by his father of escapes, from the church to the tower, of women and children, at the approach of Indians. One stroke of the bell during service, and all obeyed the signal. Deserted was the church, and peopled the tower, when the foes came up to meet the defenders outside."

"I knew my darling old structure had a history," said I. "Is there time for me to take one little look before dinner?"

"No," somewhat hastily said Sophie; "and I don't wish you to go up there alone."

"Don't wish me to go alone, Sophie? Why, I have spent hours there, and never a word said you."

"I–believe–the–place–is–haunted," slowly replied she, "by living, human beings."

"Never! Why, Sophie, think how absurd! Here's the key,–a great, strong, honest key; where could another be found to open the heavy door? Such broad, true wards it has,–look, and believe!"

As if unhearing, Sophie went on,–

"I certainly heard a voice in there one day. Old Mother Hudson died, and was buried in the corner, close beside the church. My husband went away as soon as the burial was over, and I came across the graveyard alone. It was a bright winter's day, with the ground all asnow, and no footstep had broken the fleecy white that lay on my way. As I passed under the tower I heard a voice, and the words, too, Anna, as plainly as ever spoken words were heard."

"What were they, Sophie?"

"'But hope will not die; it has a root of life that goes down into the granite formation; human hand cannot reach it.'"

"Who said it?" I asked.

"That is the mystery, Anna. The words were plainly spoken; the voice was that of one who has sailed out into the region of great storms, and found that heavy calms are more oppressive."

"Was it voice of man?"

"Yes, deep and earnest."

"Where did it come from?"

"From the high window up there, I thought."

"And there were no footsteps near?"

"I told you, none; my own were the first that had crossed the church-yard that day."

"You know, Sophie, we voice our own thoughts sometimes all unknowingly; and knowing the thought only, we might dissever the voice, and call it another's."

Sophie looked up from the table upon which she had been so industriously cutting, and holding in one hand an oddly shapen sleeve, she gave a demonstrative wave at me, and said,–

"Anna, your distinctions are too absurd for reason to examine even. Have I a voice that *could command an army*, or shout out orders in a storm at sea? Have I the voice of a man?"

Sophie had a depth of azure in her eyes that looked ocean-deep into an interior soul; she had softly purplish windings of hair around a low, cool brow, that said, "There are no torrid thoughts in me." And yet I always felt that there was an equator in Sophie's soul, only no mortal could find it. Looking at her, as thus she stood, I forgot that she Lad questioned me.

"Why do you look at me so?" she asked. "Answer me! Have I the voice of a man? Listen now! Hear Aaron up-stairs: he's preaching to himself, to convince himself that some thorn in theology grows naturally: could I do that?"

"Your voice, I fancy, can do wonders: but about the theology, I don't believe you like thorns in it; I think you would break one off at once, and cast it out";–and I looked again at the rough tower, and ran my fingers over the strong protective key in my hands.

"Don't look that way, Anna,–please don't!–for your footsteps have an ugly way of following some will-o'-the-wisp that goes out of your eyes. I know it,–I've seen it all your life," Sophie urged, as I shook my head in negation.

"Will you lend me this hood?" I asked, as I took up one lying near.

"If you are determined to go; but do wait. Aaron shall go with you after dinner; he will have settled the thorn by that time."

"What for should I take Aaron up the winding stairs? There is no parishioner in want or dying up there."

And I tied the hood about my head, and in a wrapping-shawl, closely drawn,–for cold and cannon-like came the bursts of wind down through the mountain valleys,–I went out. Through the path, hedged with leafless lilac-shrubs, just athrob with the mist of life sent up from the roots below, I went, and crossed the church-yard fence. Winding in and out among the graves,–for upon a heart, living and joyous, or still and dead, I cannot step,–I took my way. "Dear old tower, I have thee at last!" I said; for I talk to unanswering things all over the world. In crowded streets I speak, and murmur softly to highest heights.

But I quite forgot to tell what my tower was built like, and of what it was made. A few miles away, a mountain, neither very large nor very high, has met with some sad disaster that cleaved its stony shell, and so, time out of memory, the years have stolen into its being, and winter frosts have sadly cut it up, and all along its rocky ridges, and thickly at its base, lie beds of shaly fragments, as various in form and size as the autumn-leaves that November brings.

I've traced these bits of broken stone all the way from yonder mountain hither; and that once my tower stood firm and fast in the hill's heart, I know.

There are sides and curves, concaves and convexities, and angles of every degree, in the stones that make up my tower. The vexing question is, What conglomerated the mass?

No known form of cement is here, and so the simple village-people say, "It was not built by the present race of men."

On the northern side of the tower leaves of ungathered snow still lay.

In the key-hole all winter must have been dead, crispy, last-year leaves, mingled with needles of the pine-tree that stands in the church-yard corner; for I drew out fragment after fragment, before I could find room for my key. At last the opening was free, and my precious bit of old iron had given intimation of doing duty and letting me in, when a touch upon my shoulder startled me.

'T was true the wind was as rude as possible, but I knew it never could grasp me in that way. It was Aaron.

"What is the matter?" I asked; for he had come without his hat.

My brother-in-law, rejoicing in the authoritative name of Aaron, looked decidedly foolish, as I turned my clear brown eyes upon him, standing flushed and anxious, with only March wind enveloping his hair all astir with breezes of Theology and Nature.

"Sophie sent me," he said, with all the meekness belonging to a former family that had an Aaron in it.

"What does Sophie wish?" I asked.

"She says it's dinner-time."

"And did she send you out in such a hurry to tell me that?"

"No, Anna,"–and the importance of his mission grew upon him, for he spoke quite firmly,–"Sophie is troubled and anxious about your visit to this tower; please turn the key and come away."

"I will, if you give me good reason," I said.

"Why do you wish to go up, just now?"

"Simply because I like it."

"To gratify a passing fancy?"

"Nothing more, I do assure you; but why shouldn't I?"–and I grasped the key with a small attempt at firmness of purpose.

"Because Sophie dislikes it. She called to me to come and keep you from going in; there was distress in her manner. Won't you come away, for now?"

He had given me a reason. I rejoice in being reasonable. I lent him a bit of knitting-work that I happened to have brought with me, with which he kept down his locks, else astray, and walked back with him.

"You are not offended?" he asked, as we drew near to the door.

"Oh, no!"

Sophie hid something that had been very close to her eyes, as we went in.

My brother-in-law gave me back my strip of knitting-work, and went upstairs.

"You think I'm selfish, Anna," spoke Sophie, when he was gone.

"I don't."

"You can't help it, I think."

"But I can. I recognize a law of equilibrium that forbids me to think so."

"How? What is the law like?"

"Did you ever go upon the top of a great height, whether of building or earth?"

"Oh, yes,–and I'm not afraid at all. I can go out to the farthest edge, where other heads would feel the motion of the earth, perhaps, and I stand firm as though the north-pole were my support."

"That is just it," replied I. "Now it puts all my fear in action, and imagination works indescribable horrors in my mind, to stand even upon a moderate elevation, or to see a little child take the first steps at the head of a staircase; and I think it would be the height of cruelty for you to go and stand where it gave me such pain."

"I wouldn't do it knowingly,"–and the blue in Sophie's eyes was misty as she spoke.

"How did you feel about my going into the tower a few moments ago?"

"As you would, if you saw me on a jutting rock over the age-chiselled chasm at Niagara."

"Thus I felt that it would be wrong to go in, though I had no fear. But you will go with me, perhaps, this afternoon; I can't quite give up my devotion."

"If Aaron can't, I will," she said; but a bit of pallor whitened her face as she promised.

I thoroughly hate ghosts. There is an antagonism between mystery and me. My organs of hearing have been defended by the willingest of fingers, from my childhood, against the slightest approach of the appearance or the actions of one, as pictured in description. I think I'm afraid. But in the mid-day flood of sunlight, and the great sweep of air that enveloped my tower, standing very near to the church, where good words only were spoken, and where prayers were prayed by true-hearted people, *why* should my cool-browed sister Sophie deter me from a pleasure simple and true, one that I had grown to like, weaving fancies where I best pleased? I asked myself this question, with a current of impatience flowing beneath it, as I waited for Sophie to finish the "sewing-society work," which must go to Deacon Downs's before two of the clock.

I know she did not hasten. I know she wished for an interruption; but none came. The work-basket was duly sent off, whither Sophie soon must follow; for her hands, and her good, true heart, were both in the work she had taken up to do. Sophie won't lay it down discouraged; she sees plains of verdure away on,–a sort of *mirage* of the mind. I cannot. It is not given unto me.

I had prepared the way to open the door of the tower when Aaron interrupted me in the morning. I didn't keep Sophie standing long in the wind, but she was trembling when I said,–

"Help me a little; my door has grown heavy this winter."

It creaked on its hinges, rusted with the not-far-away sea-air; and a good strong pull, from four not very strong hands, was necessary to admittance. Darkness was inside, except the light that we let in. We stood a little, to accustom our eyes to the glimmer of rays that came down from the high-up window, and those that went up from the open door. At length they met, and mingled in a half-way gloom. There were broad winding stairs, with every inch of standing-room well used; for wherever within a mortal might be, there was fixed a foundation.

"What's the use of going up, Anna? It's only a few minutes that we can stay."

Sophie looked pale and weary.

"You shall not," I said; "stay here; let me reconnoitre: I'll come down directly."

I left her standing outside,–or rather, I felt her going out, as I ran lightly on, up the rude stairway. Past a few of the landings, (how short the way seemed this day!) and I was beside the window. I

looked across into the belfry of the church, lying scarce a hundred feet away. I thought it was bird-time; but no,–deserted were the beamy rafters and the spaces between.

What is this upon the window-bar? A scrap, a shred of colored fabric. "It has been of woman's wear," thought I, as I took the little bit from off its fastening-hook; "but how came it here? It isn't anything that I have worn, nor Sophie. A grave, brown, plaid morsel of a woman's dress, up here in my tower, locked all the winter, and the key never away from me!"

Ah! what is that? A paper, on the floor. I got down from the high window-ledge, where I had climbed to get the piece of cloth, and picked up an envelope, or as much of one as the mysterious visitor had left. The name, once upon it, was so severed that I could not link the fragments.

I heard a voice away down the winding stair. It was Sophie, calling, because I stayed so long. I hid the trophies of my victory, for I considered my coming to be a style of conquering, and relieved her waiting by my presence.

"Perhaps you were afraid to come up?" I asked, as I joined her.

"I was, and I was not," she said; "but please hurry, Anna, and lock the door, for we shall be late at 'Society.'"

"No one knows that I am here as yet," I pleaded, "and I feel a little weary with having been last night on the steamboat. Suppose you let me stay quietly at home. I don't feel like talking, and you know I'm not of much assistance in deeds of finger-charity."

"And will you not get lonely?"

"Not a bit of it,–or if I do, there's Aaron up-stairs; he doesn't mind my pulling his sermons in pieces, for want of better amusement."

Thus good sister Sophie let me escape scrutiny and observation on the first day of March, 1860. How recent it is, scarcely a week old, the time!

Sophie went her way to Deacon Downs's farm-house up the hill, to tire her fingers out with stitches put in, to hear the village grievances told over, and to speak her words of womanly kindness. I walked a little of the way with her; then, in turning back, I remembered that Aaron would think me gone with Sophie; so I had the time, four full hours, to dream my dreams and weave my fancies in.

I took out my envelope, and tried to find a name to fit it among the good people whose names were known to me. The wind was blowing in my face. A person came up and passed me by, as I, with head bent over the paper, walked slowly. I only noticed that he turned to see what I was doing. At the paper bit he cast only the slightest glance.

The church-door was open. This was the day for sweeping out the Sunday dust. "Is there any record here, any old, forgotten list of deeds done by the early church?" I questioning thought. "There's a new sexton, I heard Aaron say,–a man who used, years ago, to fulfil the duties; perhaps he'll know something of the tower. I'll ask him this very afternoon."

In the vestibule lay the brooms and brushes used in renovating the place, the windows were open, but no soul was inside. I walked up the central aisle, and read the mortuary tablets on either pulpit-side. We sometimes like to read that which we best know, and the words on these were written in the air wherever I went, still I chose the marble-reading that day.

A little church-mouse ran along the rail, and stopped a moment at the baptismal basin, but, finding no water left by careless sexton there, it continued its journey up the pulpit-stairs, and I saw the hungry little thing go gnawing at the corner of the Book wherein is the Bread of Life. I threw a pine-tree cone that I had gathered in my walk up at the little Vandal, and went out.

"I'll wait for the sexton in my tower," thought I; "he'll not be long away, and I can see him as he comes."

I looked cautiously up at the study-windows ere I went into the tower. I took out the key, for it fastened only on the outside, and closed myself tightly in. A moment of utter darkness, then the thread of light was let down to me from above. I caught at it, and, groping up the stairs, gained my high window-seat. Without the tower, I saw the deep-sea line, crested with short white waves, the far-away

mountain, and all the valley that lay between, while just below me, surging close to the tower's base, were the graves of those who had gone down into the deeper, farther-away Sea of Death, the terrible sea! What *must* its storms be to evolve such marble foam as that which the shore of our earth receives?

"O Death, Death! what art thou?" my spirit cried out in words, and only the dream of Life answered me. In the midst of it, I saw the person who had passed me as I examined the envelope coming up the street churchward. Not a sound of life or of motion came from the building, and I must have heard the slightest movement, for my window was only of iron bars. Losing sight of this face new to me, I lost the memory of it in my dream. Still, this figure coming up the silent village-street on that afternoon I found had unwoven the heavier part of my vision; and to restore it, I took from my pocket, for the second time, my two treasures.

Oh, how I did glory in those two wisps of material! The fragment of envelope had come from a foreign land. What contained it once? joy or sorrow? Was the recipient worthy, or the gift true? And I went on with the imaginary story woven out of the shreds of fabric before me until it filled all my vision, when suddenly fancy was hushed to repose,–for, as sure as I sat there, living souls had come into the tower below.

How?

All was darkness down there; not one ray of light since I shut the door. Why did I do it?

It was the fear that Aaron in his study would see me.

Voices, confused and indistinct, I heard, sending bubbling words up through the sea of darkness down below. At first I did not try to hear; I listened only to the great throbbings of my own heart, until there came the sound of a woman's voice. It was eager, anxious, and pained. It asked,–

"Did he see you?"

A man's voice, deep and earnest, answered,–

"No, no; hush, child!"

"This is dreadful!"

"But I know I was not seen. And here you are sure no one ever comes?" –and I heard a hand going over the great door down there, to find the latch.

"Yes, no one ever comes but the minister's wife's sister. She takes a fancy to the dreariness, and always carries the key with her. She's away, and no one can get in."

"Shall we go up higher, nearer to the window?"

"No. I must wait but a moment; I have something yet to do."

I heard the deep voice say,–

"Oh, woman's moments, how much there is in one of them! Will you sit on this step? But you won't heed what I have to say, I know."

"I always heed you, Herbert. What have you to say? Speak quickly."

"Sit here, upon this step."

A moment's rustling pause in the darkness down below, and then the far-out-at-sea voice spoke again.

"Do you send me away?"

"Indeed you must go; it is terrible to have you here. Think, what if you had been seen!"

"I know, I know; but you won't go with me?"

"Why are you cruel, uselessly?" said the pleading voice of woman.

"Cruel? Who? I cruel?"

"What is it that keeps me? Answer me that!"

"Your will is all."

Silence one moment,–two,–and an answer came.

"Herbert! Herbert! is it *you* speaking to *me*? My will keeping me? Who hath sinned?"

The sound of a soul in torture came eddying up in confused words; all that came to the mortal ear, listening unseen, were, "Forgive–I–I only"–

A few murmurous sounds, and then the voice that had uttered its confession in that deep confessional of a gloomy soul said, and there was almost woman's pleadingness in it,–

"When can I come again?"

"I will write to you."

"When will you write?"

"When one more soul is gone."

"Oh, it's wicked to shorten life by wishes even! but when one has done one terrible wrong, little wickednesses gather fast."

Woman has a pathos, when she pleads for God, deeper than when she pleads for anything on earth. That pleading,–I can't make you hear it,–the words were,–

"Herbert! Herbert! don't you see, *won't you see*, that, if you leave the one great sin all uncovered, open to the continual attrition of a life of goodness, God *will* let it wear away? It will lessen and lessen, until at the last, when the Ocean of Eternity beats against it, it shall go down, down into the deeps of love that no mortal line can fathom. Oh, Herbert, come out with me!–come out into this Infinity of Love!"

"With you? yes, anywhere!"

"Oh, oh! this is it!–*this is man!* It isn't *my* love that you want; it isn't the little one-grained thing that the Angel of Life takes from out of Heaven's granary and scatters into the human soul; it is the great Everlasting, a sempiternity of love, that *you* want, Herbert!"

"And you can't give it to me?"

"No, I will ask it for you; and you will ask it for yourself?"

"Only tell me how."

"You know how to ask for human love."

"Yours, yes; but then I haven't sinned against you."

"Have you not, Herbert?"

"Well,–but not in the same way. I haven't gone beyond the measure of your affection, I feel that it is larger than my sin, or I could not be here."

"Tell me how you know this. What is the feeling like?"

"What is it like? Why, when I come to you, I don't forever feel it rising up with a thousand speary heads that shut you out; it drowns in your presence; the surface is cool and clear, and I can look down, down, into the very heart of my sin, like that strange lake we looked into one day,–do you remember it?–the huge branches and leafless trunks of gigantic pines coming up stirless and distinct almost to the surface; and do you remember the little island there, and the old tradition that it was the feasting-place of a tribe of red men, who displeased the Great Spirit by their crimes, and in direful punishment, one day, when they were assembled on their mountain, it suddenly gave way beneath them, and all were drowned in the flood of waters that rushed up, except one good old squaw who occupied one of the peaks that is now the island?"

"And so I am the good old squaw?" said the lady.

"For all that I can see in the darkness."

"But that makes me better than the many who lie below;–the squaw was good, you remember. But how did she get off of the island? Pity tradition didn't tell us. Loon's Island, in Lake Mashapaug in Killingly, wasn't it?"

A little silence came, broken by the words,–

"It's so long since I have been with you!"

"Yes, and it's time that I was gone."

"Not a few moments more?–not even to go back to the old subject?"

"No,–it's wrong,–it perils you. You put away your sin when you come to the little drop of my love; go and hide it forever in the sea that every hour washes at your feet."

"You'll write?"

"I will."

I heard a sound below, like the drawing of a match across a stone; then a faint bit of glimmer flickered a moment. I couldn't see where they were. I bent forward a little, in vain.

"My last match," said the lady. "What shall we do? We can't go through in the darkness."

"We must. I will go first. Give me your hand. Now, three steps down, then on; come,–fear nothing."

A heavy sound, as of some ponderous weight let fall, and I knew that the only living soul in there was hers who sat with hands fast hold of frosty bars, high up in the window of the tower.

I left fragments of the skin of my fingers upon the cold iron, in pay for the woollen bit I had taken thence.

I ventured down a step or two. Beyond was inky darkness. If only a speck of light were down below! Why did I shut the door? Go on I could not. I turned my face upward, where the friendly light, packing up its robes of every hue for the journey of a night, looked kindly in. And so I went back, and sat in my usual seat, and watched the going day, as, one by one, she took down from forest-pegs and mountain-hooks breadths of silver, skirts of gold, folding silently the sheeny vestments, pressing down each shining fold, gathering from the bureau of the sea, with scarcely time enough for me to note, waves of whitely flowing things, snowy caps, crimpled crests, and crispy laces, made by hands that never tire, in the humid ocean-cellar. A wardrobe fit for fair Pre-Evites to wear lay rolled away, and still I, poor prisoner in my tower, watched in vain the dying day. It sent no kind jailer to let me free. No footstep crossed the church-yard. The sexton had put the windows down before my visitors went away. He must have gone home an unusual way, for I waited in vain to hear him go.

I saw, when just enough of light was left to see, my sister Sophie coming down the hill. Strange fancy,–she went as far from the tower as if it were a ghostly quarantine. She did not hear me call in a very human voice, but went right on; and I heard the parsonage door-latch sharply close her in.

Would they look for me, now I was not there? I waited, and a strange, unearthly tremor shook both blood and nerves, until tears were wrought out, and came dropping down, and in the stillness I heard one fall upon a stone below.

A forsaken, forgotten, uncared-for feeling crept up to me, half from the words of woful meaning that I that afternoon had heard, and half the prisoned state, with fear, weak and absurd, jailing me in.

The reverberations from my fallen tear scarce were dead in my ears when I heard footsteps coming. I called,–

"Aaron!"

Aaron's own true voice answered me,–

"Where are you, Anna?"

"In the tower. Open the door, please."

"Give me the lantern," Sophie said, "whilst you open the door."

I, thoughtlessly taking the key, had left nothing by which to draw it out. Aaron worked away at it, right vigorously, but it would not yield.

"Can't you come down and push?" timidly asked Sophie, creeping round the corner, in view of tombstones.

"It's very dark inside; I can't," I said; and so Aaron went on, pulling and prying, but not one inch did the determined door yield.

Out of the darkness came an idea. I came in with the key,–why not they? and, calling loudly, I bade them watch whilst I threw it from the window. In the lantern's circle of light it went rushing down; and I'm sorry to tell that in its fall it grazed an angel's wing of marble, striking off one feather from its protecting mission above a sleeping child.

The door was opened at last; at last a circle of light came into this inverted well, and arose to me. Can you imagine, any one, I ask, who is of mortal hue and mould,–can you imagine yourself deep down in a well, such a one as those living on high lands draw their water from, holding on with

weary fingers to the slimy mosses, fearing each new energy of grasping muscle is the last that Nature holds in its store for you; and then, weary almost unto death, you look up and see two human faces peering above the curbstone, see the rope curling down to you, swinging right before your grasp, and a doubt comes,–have you life enough to touch it?

So, could I get down to them, to the two friendly, anxious faces that peered up at me? You who have no imaginary fears, who never press the weight of all your will to weigh down eyelids that something tells you, if uplifted, would let in on the sight a something nameless, come from where you know not, made visible in midnight darkness, can never know with what a throbbing of heart I went weakly down. If I did not know that the great public opinion becomes adamant after a slight stratum of weakness, I would say what befell me when Sophie's fingers, tired with stitching, clasped mine.

Aaron and Sophie were not of the questioning order of humanity, and I was left a few moments to my own way of expressing relief, and then Aaron locked the tower as usual, and we went away. He, I noticed, put the key in his pocket, instead of delivering it to me, self-constituted its rightful owner.

"Will you give me my key?" I said, with a timid tenacity in the direction of my right.

"Not enough of the dreary, ghoul-like place yet, Anna? And to give us such an alarm upon your arrival-day!"

The key came to me, for Aaron would not keep it without good reason.

It was around the bright, cheerful tea-table that Sophie asked,–

"Why did you not come down, Anna? Did you choose staying up so late?"

"No, Sophie,"–and I looked with my clear brown eyes as fearlessly at them both as when I had listened to reason in the morning,–"I shut the door when I went up, and afterwards, when I would have come down, I felt afraid invisible hands were weaving in the blackness to seize me. I believe it would have killed me to come out, after I had been an hour up there."

"And you don't mind confessing to such cowardice?" asked Sophie, evidently slightly ashamed of me.

"I never did mind telling the truth, when it was needful to speak at all. I don't cultivate this fear,–I urge reason to conquer it; but when I have most rejoiced in going on, despite the ache of nerve and brain, after it I feel as if I had lost a part of my life, my nature doesn't unfold to sunny joys for a long time."

"'Tis a sorry victory, then!" said Aaron.

"You won't mind my telling you what it is like?"

"Certainly not."

"It's like that ugly point in theology that hurt you so, last autumn; and when you had said a cruel *Credo*, you found sweet flowers lost out of your religion. I know you missed them."

"Oh, Anna!"

"Don't interrupt me; let me finish. It's like making maple-sugar: one eats the sugar, calling it monstrous sweet, and all through the burning sun of summer sits under thin-leaved trees, to pay for the condensation. The point is, it doesn't pay,–the truest bit of sentiment the last winter has brought to me."

"Is this Anna?" asked the minister.

"Yes, Aaron, it is I, Anna."

"You're not what you were when last here."

"Quite a different person, Sir. But what is your new sexton's name?"

"That is more sensible. His name is Abraham Axtell."

"What sort of person is he?"

"The strangest man in all my parish. I cannot make him out. Have you seen him?"

"No. Is there any harm in my making his acquaintance?"

"What an absurd question!" said Sophie.

"You are quite at liberty to get as many words out of him as he will give, which I warn you will be very few," said the sexton's friendly pastor.

"Is he in need of the small salary your church must give its sexton?" I asked.

"The strangest part of the whole is that he won't take anything for his services; and the motive that induces him to fight the spiders away is past my comprehension. He avoids Sophie and me."

So much for my thread of discovery: a very small fibre, it is true,–a church-sexton performing the office without any reward of gold,–but I twisted it and twirled it round in all the ideal contortions plausible in idealic regions, and fell asleep, with the tower-key under my pillow, and the rising moon shining into my room.

I awoke with my secret safely mine,–quite an achievement for one in no wise heroic; but I *do delight* in sole possessions.

There is the sun, a great round bulb of liquid electricity, open to all the eyes that look into the sky; but do you fancy any one owns that sun but I? Not a bit of it! There is no record of deed that matches mine, no words that can describe what conferences sun and I do hold. The cloudy tent-door was closed, the sun was not "at home" to me, as I went down to life on the second day of March, 1860.

Sophie seemed stupid and commonplace that morning. Aaron had a headache, (that theologic thorn, I know,) and Sophie must go and sit beside him, and hold the thread of his Sunday's discourse to paper, whilst with wrapped brow and vision-seeing eyes he told her what his people ought to do.

Good Sophie! I forgave her, when she put sermons away, and came down to talk a little to me. It is easy to forgive people for goodness to others, when they are good to one's self *just afterwards*.

"Do you know any Herbert in Redleaf?" I ventured to ask, with as careless a tone as I knew.

"No, Anna;–let me think;–I thought I knew,–but no, it is not here. Why?"

"It doesn't matter. I thought there might be a person with that name.–Don't you get very tired of this hum-drum life?"

"But it isn't hum-drum in the least, except in bee-time, and on General-Training days."

"Oh, Sophie! you know what I mean."

"Well, I confess to liking a higher development of intellectual nature than I find in Redleaf, but I feel that I belong to it, I ought to be here; and feeling atones for much lack of mind,–it gets up higher, nearer into the soul. You know, Anna, we ought to love Redleaf. Look across that maple-grove."

"What is there?"

"Chimneys."

"Well, what of them?"

"There was smoke in them once,–smoke rising from our father's fires, you know, Anna."

"But so long ago, one scarcely feels it."

"Only sixteen years; we remember, you and I, the day the fires were put out."

"Yes, I remember."

"Don't you think we ought to love the place where our lives began, because our father lived here too?"

"It's a sorry sort of obligation, to ought to love anything."

"Even the graves, out there, in the church-yard?"

"Yes, even them. I would rather love them through knowing something that some one tenant of them loved and suffered and achieved than to love them merely because they hold the mortal temples that once were columns in 'our family.' The world says we ought to love so much, and our hearts tell us we ought to love foolishly sometimes, and I say one oughtn't to love at all."

"Anna! Anna!"

"I haven't got any Aaron, Sophie, to teach me the 'ought-tos.'"

There was a morsel of pity outgleaming from Sophie's eyes, as she went to obey a somewhat peremptory call. She needn't have bestowed it on me; I learned not to need it, yesterday.

Satisfied that the tower wouldn't give me any more information, and that the visit of "the two" was the last for some time to come, I closed down my horizon of curiosity over the church-steeple, a little round, shingly spire with a vane,–too vain to tell which way the wind might chance to go.

Ere Sophie came back to me, there was a bell-stroke from the belfry. She hurried down at the sound of it.

"Will you come with me, Anna? Aaron wants to know who is dead."

"Who rings the bell?"

"The sexton, of course."

We were within the vestibule before he had begun to toll the years.

A little timidly, Sophie spoke,–

"Mr. Wilton wishes to know who has died."

The uncivil fellow never turned an inch; he only started, when Sophie began to speak. I couldn't see his face.

"Tell Mr. Wilton that my mother is dead, if he wishes to know."

Sophie pulled my sleeve, and whispered, "Come away!"–and the man, standing there, began to toll the years of his mother's life.

"Don't go," I said, outside; "*don't* leave him without saying, 'I am sorry': you didn't even ask a question."

"You wouldn't, if you knew the man."

"Which I mean to do. You go on. I'll wait upon the step till he is done, and then I'll talk to him."

"I wouldn't, Anna. But I must hurry. Aaron will go up at once."

Dutiful little wife! She went to send her headaching husband half a mile away, to offer consolation, unto whom?

I sat upon the step until he had done. The years were not many,–half a score less than the appointed lot.

Would he come out? He did. I heard him coming; but I would not move. I knew that I was in his way, and wanted him to have to speak to me. I sat just where he must stand to lock the door.

"Are you waiting to see me?" he asked. "Is there anything for the sexton to do?"

I arose, and turned my face toward him.

"I am waiting to see if I can do anything for you. I am your minister's wife's sister."

What could have made him shake so? And such a queer, incongruous answer he gave!

"Isn't it enough to have a voice, without a face's coming to torment me too?"

It was *not* the voice that spoke in the tower yesterday. It was of the kind that has a lining of sentiment that it never was meant by the Good Spirit should be turned out for the world to breathe against, making life with mortals a mental pleurisy.

"I hope I don't torment you."

"You do."

"When did your mother die?"

"There! I knew! *Will* you take away your sympathy? I haven't anything to do with it."

"You'll tell me, please, if I can do anything for you, or up at your house. Do you live near here?"

"It's a long way. You can't go."

"Oh, yes, I can. I like walking."

He locked the door, and dropped the key when he was done. I picked it up, before he could get it.

A melodious "Thank you," coming as from another being, rewarded me.

"Let me stop and tell my sister, and I'll go with you," I said, believing that he had consented.

The old voice again was used as he said,–

"No, you had better not"; and he quickly walked on his way.

Completely baffled in my expectation of touching this strange being by proffers of kindness, I turned toward the parsonage. Aaron was already gone on his ministerial mission.

"What strange people one does find in this world!" said Sophie, as I gave her the history of my defeat. "Now this Axtell family are past my comprehension."

"Ah! a family. I didn't think him a married man."

"Neither is he."

"Then what is the family?"

"The mother, a sister, and himself."

"Do you know the sister?"

"Just a little. She is the finest person in mind we have here, but wills to live alone, except she can do deeds of charity. I met her once in a poor farmer's house. The man had lost his wife. Such a soft, sweet glamour of comfort as she was winding in and out over his sorrow, until she actually had the poor fellow looking up with an expression that said he was grateful for the good gift Heaven had gained! She stopped as soon as I went in. I wish she would come out in Redleaf."

"And the mother?"

"A proud old lady, sick these many years, and, ever since we've been here, confined to her room. I've only seen her twice."

"And now she's dead?"

Sophie was silent.

"Who'll dig her grave?"

One of my bits of mental foam that strike the shore of sound.

"Anna, how queer you are growing! What made you think of such a thing?"

"I don't think my thoughts, Sophie."

But I did watch the church-yard that day. No one came near it, and my knitting-work grew, and my mystery in the tower was as dark as ever, when at set of sun Aaron came home.

"There is a sorry time up there," he said. "The old lady died in the night, and Miss Lettie is quite beside herself. Doctor Eaton was there when I came away, and says she will have brain-fever."

"Oh, I hope not!" said Sophie.

"Who is there?" I asked.

"No one but Abraham. I offered to let Sophie come, but he said no."

"That will never do, Aaron: one dead, and one sick in the house, and only one other."

"Of course it will not, Sophie,–I will go and stay to-night," said I.

"You, Anna? What do you know of taking care of sick people?"

"I? Why, here, let me take this,"–and I picked up Miss Nightingale's new thoughts thereon. "Thus armed and fortified, do you think they'll ask other reference of their nurse?"

"It's better for her than going up to stay in the tower; and they *are* in need, though they won't say it. Let it be, Sophie."

And so my second night in March came on. A neighbor's boy walked the way with me, and left me at the door.

"I guess you'll repent your job," he said, as I bade him good-night.

"Mr. Axtell will not send me back alone," I thought; and I waited just a little, that my escort might get beyond call before I knocked.

It was a solemn, great house under whose entrance-porch I stood. Generation after generation might have come, stayed, and gone, like the last soul: here last night,–to-night, oh! where?

I looked up at the sombre roof, dropping a little way earthward from the sides. Mosses hung from the eaves. Not one sound of life came to me as I stood until the neighbor's boy was out of sight. I knocked then, a timid, tremulous knock,–for last night's fear was creeping over me. The noise startled a dog; he came bounding around the corner with a sharp, quick bark.

I am afraid of dogs, as well as of several other things. Before he reached me the door opened.

A little maid stood within it. Fear of the dog, scarce a yard away, impelled me in.

"Away, Kino! Away, I say! Leave the lady alone!"

Kino went back to his own abode, and I was closed into the hall of this large, melancholy house. The little maid waited for some words from me. Before I found any to bestow, the second door along the hall opened, and the voice that had been so uncivil to me in the morning said,–

"What aroused Kino, Kate?"

"This lady, Sir."

The little Kate held a candle in her hand, but Mr. Axtell had not seen me. Strange that I should take a wicked pleasure in making this man ache!–but I know that I did, and that I would have owned it then, as now, if I had been accused of it.

"What does the lady want?"

"It is I, who have come to stay with your sister. Mr. Wilton says she's sick."

"She's sick, that's true; but I can take care of her."

"And you won't let me stay?"

"*Won't let you*? Pray tell me if young ladies like you like taking care of sick people."

"Young ladies just like me do, if brothers don't send them away."

Did he say, "Brothers ar'n't Gibraltars"? I thought so; but immediately thereafter, in that other voice, out of that other self that revolved only in a long, long period, came,–

"Will you come in?"

He had not moved one inch from the door of the room out of which he had come; but I had walked a little nearer, that my voice might not disturb the sick. The one lying dead, never more to be disturbed, where was she? Kate, the little maid, said,–

"It is in there he wants you to go."

Abraham Axtell stood aside to let me enter. There was no woman there, no one to say to me, in sweet country wise,–"I'm glad you're come,–it's very kind of you; let me take your things."

I did not wait, but threw aside my hood, the very one Sophie had lent me to go into the tower, and, taking off my shawl and furs, I laid them as quietly away in the depths of a huge sofa's corner as though they had hidden there a hundred times before.

"I think I scarcely needed this," I said, putting upon the centre-table, under the light of the lamp, Miss Nightingale's good book,–and I looked around at a library, tempting to me even, as it spread over two sides of the room.

He turned at my speaking; for the ungrateful man had, I do believe, forgotten that I was there.

He took up the book, looked at its title, smiled a little–scornfully, was it?–at me, and said of her who wrote the book,–

"She is sensible; she bears the result of her own theories before imposing their practice upon others; but," and he went back to the thorn-apple voice, "do you expect to take care of my sister by the aid of this to-night?"

"It may give me assistance."

"It will not. What does Miss Nightingale know of Lettie?"

Well, what does she? I don't know, and so I had to answer,–

"Nothing."

"That doctor is here," said Kate, at the door.

"Are you coming up, too?" he asked, as he turned suddenly upon me, half-way out of the room.

"Certainly!"–and I went out with him.

Up the wide staircase walked the little maid, lighting the way, followed by the doctor, Mr. Axtell, and Anna Percival.

Kate opened the door of a room just over the library, where we had been.

The doctor went in, quietly moving on toward the fireplace, in which burned a cheery wood-fire. In front of it, in one of those large comfort-giving, chintz-covered, cushioned chairs, sat Miss Axtell; but the comfort of the chair was nothing to her, for she sat leaning forward, with her chin resting upon the palm of her right hand, and her eyes were gone away, were burning into the heart of

the amber flame that fled into darkness up the chimney. Hers was the style of face which one might expect to find under Dead-Sea waves, if diver *could* go down,–a face anxious to escape from Sodom, and held fast there, under heavy, heavy waters, yet still with its eyes turned toward Zoar.

Now a feverous heat flushed her face, white a moment before, when we came in; but she did not turn away her eyes,–they seemed fixed, out of her control. The doctor laid his hand upon her forehead. It broke the spell that bound her gaze. She spoke quite calmly. I almost smiled to think any one could imagine danger of brain-fever from that calm creature who said,–

"Please don't give me anything, Doctor Eaton; believe me, I shall do better without."

"And then we shall have you sick on our hands, Abraham and I. What should we do with you?"

"I'll try not to trouble you," she said,–"but I would rather you left me to myself to-night"; but even as she spoke, a quick convulsion of muscles about her face told of pain.

Doctor Eaton had not seen me, for I stood in the shadow of the bed behind him.

"Who will stay with your sister tonight?" he asked Mr. Axtell.

Mr. Axtell looked around at me, as if expecting that I would answer; and I presented myself for the office.

"You look scarcely fit," was the village-physician's somewhat ungracious comment; and his eyes said, what his lips dared not,–"Who are you?"

"I think you'll find me so, if you try me."

Miss Axtell had gone away again, and neither saw nor heeded me.

"Will you come below?"–and the doctor looked at me as he went out.

I followed him. In the library he shut the door, sat down near the table, took from his pocket a small phial containing a light brown powder, and, dividing a piece of paper into the minute scraps needful, made a deposit in each from the phial, and then, folding over the bits of paper, handed them to me.

"Are you accustomed to take care of sick persons?" he asked.

"Not much; but I am a physician's daughter. I have a little experience."

"Are you a visitor here?"

"No,–at the parsonage."

A pair of quick gray eyes danced out at me from under browy cliffs clothed with a ledge of lashes, in an actually startling manner. I didn't think the man had so much of life in him.

"You're Mrs. Wilton's sister, perhaps."

"I am."

"Give her one of these every half-hour, till she falls asleep."

"Yes, Sir."

"Don't let her talk; but she won't, though. If she gets incoherent,–says wild things,–talks of what you can't understand,–send for me; I live next door."

"Is this all for her?"

"Enough. Do you know her?"

"I never saw her until to-night."

"The brother? Monstrous fellow."

"Until to-day."

"Look up there."

"Where?"

"On the wall."

"At what?"

There were several paintings hanging there.

"The face, of course."

"I can't see it very well."

Shadows were upon it, and the lampshade was on.

"Then I'll take this off"; and Doctor Eaton removed the shade, letting the light up to the wall.

"A young girl's face," I said.

The doctor was looking at me, and not at the painting there. A little bit of confusion came,– I don't know why.

"Do you like it?" I ventured.

"I like it? I'm not the one to like it."

"Somebody does, then?"

"Of course. What did he paint it for, if he didn't like it?"

"I do not know of whom you are talking, at all," I said, a little vexed at this information-no-information style.

"You don't?" in a voice of the utmost astonishment.

"No. Is this all, for the sick lady? I think I ought to go to her."

"Of course you ought. It's a sad thing, this death in the house"; and Doctor Eaton picked up his hat, and opened the door.

Kate was waiting in the hall.

"Mr. Abraham thinks you'd better look in and see if it's well to have any watchers in there, before you go," she said.

"Well, light me in, then, Katie. You wait in there, if you please, Miss," to me; and I saw the two go to the front-room on the right.

A waft of something, it may have been the air that came out of that room, sent me back from the hall, and I shut the door behind me. It was several minutes before they came back. In the interim I had taken a long look at the face on the wall. It seemed too young to be very beautiful, and I couldn't help wishing that the artist had waited a year or two, until a little more of the outline of life had come to it; yet it was a sweet, loving face, with a brow as low and cool as Sophie's own, only it hadn't any shadow of an Aaron on it. I didn't hear the door open, I hadn't heard the sound of living thing, when some one said, close to me, as I was standing looking up at the face I've spoken of,–

"What are you doing?"

It was Mr. Axtell, and the voice was a prickly one.

"Is there any harm?" I said. "I'm only looking here,"–pointing to where my eyes had been before. "Who painted it?"

"An unknown, poor painter."

"Was he poor in spirit?"

"He is now, I trust."

A man that has variant voices is a cruel thing in this world, because one cannot help their coming in at some one of the gates of the heart, which cannot all be guarded at the same moment. "Poor in spirit?" "He is now, I trust." I felt decidedly vexed at this man before me for having such tones in his voice.

"Can I go up to Miss Axtell now?" I asked.

"In a moment, when Kate has shown Doctor Eaton out."

I picked up my powders and my illustrious book, and waited.

Kate came.

"The doctor says there's no need," she said, in her laconic way.

Kate, I afterwards learned, was the daughter of the farmer that Sophie heard Miss Axtell consoling for the loss of his wife, one day.

MY DAPHNE

My budding Daphne wanted scope

To bourgeon all her flowers of hope.

She felt a cramp around her root
That crippled every outmost shoot.

I set me to the kindly task;
I found a trim and tidy cask,

Shapely and painted; straightway seized
The timely waif; and, quick released

From earthen bound and sordid thrall,
My Daphne sat there, proud and tall.

Stately and tall, like any queen,
She spread her farthingale of green;

Nor stinted aught with larger fate,
For that she was innately great.

I learned, in accidental way,
A secret, on an after-day,–

A chance that marked the simple change
As something ominous and strange.

And so, therefrom, with anxious care,
Almost with underthought of prayer,

As, day by day, my listening soul
Waited to catch the coming roll

Of pealing victory, that should bear
My country's triumph on the air,–

I tended gently all the more
The plant whose life a portent bore.

The weary winter wore away,
And still we waited, day by day;

And still, in full and leafy pride,
My Daphne strengthened at my side,

Till her fair buds outburst their bars,
And whitened gloriously to stars!

Above each stalwart, loyal stem
Rested their heavenly diadem,

And flooded forth their incense rare,
A breathing Joy, upon the air!

Well might my backward thought recall
The cramp, the hindrance, and the thrall,

The strange release to larger space,
The issue into growth and grace,

And joyous hail the homely sign
That so had spelled a hope divine!

For all this life, and light, and bloom,
This breath of Peace that blessed the room,

Was born from out the banded rim,
Once crowded close, and black, and grim,

With grains that feed the Cannon's breath,
And boom his sentences of death!

CONCERNING DISAGREEABLE PEOPLE

"On the whole, it was very disagreeable," wrote a certain great traveller and hunter, summing up an account of his position, as he composed himself to rest upon a certain evening after a hard day's work. And no doubt it must have been very disagreeable. The night was cold and dark; and the intrepid traveller had to lie down to sleep in the open air, without even a tree to shelter him. A heavy shower of hail was falling,–each hailstone about the size of an egg. The dark air was occasionally illuminated by forked lightning, of the most appalling aspect; and the thunder was deafening. By various sounds, heard in the intervals of the peals, it seemed evident that the vicinity was pervaded by wolves, tigers, elephants, wild-boars, and serpents. A peculiar motion, perceptible under horse-cloth which was wrapped up to serve as a pillow, appeared to indicate that a snake was wriggling about underneath it. The hunter had some ground for thinking that it was a very venomous one, as indeed in the morning it proved to be; but he was too tired to look. And speaking of the general condition of matters upon that evening, the hunter stated, with great mildness of language, that "it was very disagreeable."

Most readers would be disposed to say that *disagreeable* was hardly the right word. No doubt, all things that are perilous, horrible, awful, ghastly, deadly, and the like, are disagreeable too. But when we use the word disagreeable by itself, our meaning is understood to be, that in calling the thing disagreeable we have said the worst of it. A long and tiresome sermon is disagreeable; but a venomous snake under your pillow passes beyond being disagreeable. To have a tooth stopped is disagreeable; to be broken on the wheel (though nobody could like it) transcends *that*. If a thing be horrible and awful, you would not say it was disagreeable. The greater includes the less: as when a human being becomes entitled to write D.D. after his name, he drops all mention of the M.A. borne in preceding years.

Let this truth be remembered, by such as shall read the following pages. We are to think about disagreeable people. Let it be understood that (speaking generally) we are to think of people who are no worse than disagreeable. It cannot be denied, even by the most prejudiced, that murderers, pirates, slave-drivers, and burglars, are disagreeable. The cut-throat, the poisoner, the sneaking black-guard who shoots his landlord from behind a hedge, are no doubt disagreeable people,–so very disagreeable that in this country the common consent of mankind removes them from human society by the instrumentality of a halter. But disagreeable is too mild a word. Such people are all that, and a great deal more. And accordingly they stand beyond the range of this dissertation. We are to treat of folk who are disagreeable, and not worse than disagreeable. We may sometimes, indeed, overstep the boundary-line. But it is to be remembered that there are people who in the main are good people, who yet are extremely disagreeable. And a further complication is introduced into the subject by the fact, that some people who are far from good are yet unquestionably agreeable. You disapprove them; but you cannot help liking them. Others, again, are substantially good; yet you are angry with yourself to find that you cannot like them.

I take for granted that all observant human beings will admit that in this world there are disagreeable people. Probably the distinction which presses itself most strongly upon our attention, as we mingle in the society of our fellow-men, is the distinction between agreeable people and disagreeable. There are various tests, more or less important, which put all mankind to right and left. A familiar division is into rich and poor. Thomas Paine, with great vehemence, denied the propriety of that classification, and declared that the only true and essential classification of mankind is into male and female. I have read a story whose author maintained, that, to his mind, by far the most interesting and thorough division of our race is into such as have been hanged and such as have not been hanged: he himself belonging to the former class. But we all, more or less, recognize and act upon the great classification of all human beings into the agreeable and the disagreeable. And we begin very early to recognize and act upon it. Very early in life, the little child understands and feels

the vast difference between people who are nice and people who are not nice. In school-boy days, the first thing settled as to any new acquaintance, man or boy, is on which side he stands of the great boundary-line. It is not genius, not scholarship, not wisdom, not strength nor speed, that fixes the man's place. None of these things is chiefly looked to: the question is, Is he agreeable or disagreeable? And according as that question is decided, the man is described, in the forcible language of youth, as "a brick," or as "a beast."

Yet it is to be remembered that the division between the agreeable and disagreeable of mankind is one which may be transcended. It is a scratch on the earth,–not a ten-foot wall. And you will find men who pass from one side of it to the other, and back again,–probably several times in a week, or even in a day. There are people whom you never know where to have. They are constantly skipping from side to side of that line of demarcation; or they even walk along with a foot on each side of it. There are people who are always disagreeable, and disagreeable to all men. There are people who are agreeable at some times, and disagreeable at others. There are people who are agreeable to some men, and disagreeable to other men. I do not intend by the last-named class people who intentionally make themselves agreeable to a certain portion of the race, to which they think it worth while to make themselves agreeable, and who do not take that trouble in the case of the remainder of humankind. What I mean is this: that there are people who have such an affinity and sympathy with certain other people, who so *suit* certain other people, that they are agreeable to these other people, though perhaps not particularly so to the race at large. And exceptional tastes and likings are often the strongest. The thing you like enthusiastically another man absolutely loathes. The thing which all men like is for the most part liked with a mild and subdued liking. Everybody likes good and well-made bread; but nobody goes into raptures over it. Few persons like caviare; but those who do like it are very fond of it. I never knew but one being who liked mustard with apple-pie; but that solitary man ate it with avidity, and praised the flavor with enthusiasm.

But it is impossible to legislate for every individual case. Every rule must have exceptions from it; but it would be foolish to resolve to lay down no more rules. There may be, somewhere, the man who likes Mr. Snarling; and to that man Mr. Snarling would doubtless be agreeable. But for practical purposes Mr. Snarling may justly be described as a disagreeable man, if he be disagreeable to nine hundred and ninety-nine mortals out of every thousand. And with precision sufficient for the ordinary business of life we may say that there are people who are essentially disagreeable.

There are people who go through life, leaving an unpleasant influence on all whom they come near. You are not at your ease in their society. You feel awkward and constrained while with them. *That* is probably the mildest degree in the scale of unpleasantness. There are people who disseminate a much worse influence. As the upas-tree was said to blight all the country round it, so do these disagreeable folk prejudicially affect the whole surrounding moral atmosphere. They chill all warmth of heart in those near them; they put down anything generous or magnanimous; they suggest unpleasant thoughts and associations; they excite a diverse and numerous array of bad tempers. The great evil of disagreeable people lies in this: that they tend powerfully to make other people disagreeable too. And these people are not necessarily bad people, though they produce a bad effect. It is not certain that they design to be disagreeable. There are those who do entertain that design; and they always succeed in carrying it out. Nobody ever tried diligently to be disagreeable, and failed. Such persons may, indeed, inflict much less annoyance than they wished; they may even fail of inflicting any pain whatever on others; but they make themselves as disgusting as they could desire. And in many cases they succeed in inflicting a good deal of pain. A very low, vulgar, petty, and uncultivated nature may cause much suffering to a lofty, noble, and refined one,–particularly if the latter be in a position of dependence or subjection. A wretched hornet may madden a noble horse; a contemptible mosquito may destroy the night's rest which would have recruited a noble brain. But without any evil intention, sometimes with the very kindest intention, there are those who worry and torment you. It is through want of perception,–want of tact,–coarseness of nature,–utter lack of

power to understand you. Were you ever sitting in a considerable company, a good deal saddened by something you did not choose to tell to any one, and probably looking dull and dispirited enough,–and did a fussy host or hostess draw the attention of the entire party upon you, by earnestly and repeatedly asking if you were ill, if you had a headache, because you seemed so dull and so unlike yourself? And did that person time after time return to the charge, till you would have liked to poison him? There is nothing more disagreeable, and few things more mischievous, than a well-meaning, meddling fool. And where there was no special intention, good or bad, towards yourself, you have known people make you uncomfortable through the simple exhibition to you, and pressure upon you, of their own inherent disagreeableness. You have known people after talking to whom for a while you felt disgusted with everything, and above all, with those people themselves. Talking to them, you felt your moral nature being rubbed against the grain, being stung all over with nettles. You showed your new house and furniture to such a man, and with eagle eye he traced out and pointed out every scratch on your fine fresh paint, and every flaw in your oak and walnut; he showed you that there were corners of your big mirrors that distorted your face,–that there were bits of your grand marble mantel-pieces that might be expected soon to scale away. Or you have known a man who, with no evil intention, made it his practice to talk of you before your face as your other friends are accustomed to talk of you behind your back. It need not be said that the result is anything but pleasant. "What a fool you were, Smith, in saying *that* at Snooks's last night!" your friend exclaims, when you meet him next morning. You were quite aware, by this time, that what you said was foolish; but there is something grating in hearing your name connected with the unpleasant epithet. I would strongly advise any man, who does not wish to be set down as disagreeable, entirely to break off the habit (if he has such a habit) of addressing to even his best friends any sentence beginning with "What a fool you were." Let me offer the like advice as to sentences which set out as follows:–"I say, Smith, I think your brother is the greatest fool on the face of the earth." Stop that kind of thing, my friend; or you may come to be classed with Mr. Snarling. You are probably a manly fellow, and a sincere friend; and for the sake of your substantial good qualities, one would stand a great deal. But over-frankness is disagreeable; and if you make over-frankness your leading characteristic, of course your entire character will come to be disagreeable, and you will be a disagreeable person.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.