

THESIS.

Subject: Constitutional Talent.

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The first element of success needed by one who has wisely chosen his calling is constitutional talent. By constitutional talent we mean the warmth and vigor given to a man's ideas by a strong physical constitution.

Till within a comparatively recent period, physical education has been sadly neglected in this country. Our books have been full of praises of the midnight oil; our authorities on education have urged unsparring study.

It has been truly said that the influences under which the American student of the last generation lived, taught him to despise the

body, while the mind was goaded to an activity beyond what was natural. However, a revolution has taken place in the public sentiment on this subject. We see that the body as well as the mind has rights that must be respected. We learn by bitter experience that if the mind, which rules the body, ever forgets itself so far as to trample on its slave, the slave will "rise and smite the oppressor." We are discovering that though the pale, sickly student may win the most prizes in college, it is the tough, sinewy one that will win the most prizes in life; and that in every call-

ing, other things being equal, the most successful man will be the one who has slept the soundest and digested the most dinners without difficulty.

In order to do his work cheerfully and well, every man needs a working constitution, and this can be obtained only by daily exercise in the open air. The atmosphere we breathe is an exhalation of all the minerals of the globe. Draughts of this are the true stimulants.

The thorough aëration of the blood by deep exhalations of air, so as to bring it in contact with the whole

breathing surface of the lungs, is necessary to one who would keep that full vital power on which the vigorous working powers of the brain depends.

Sydney Smith tells public speakers that if they would walk twelve miles before speaking they would never break down. The English people understand this, and consequently at the universities, boat races, horse-back rides, and ten-mile walks are practically a part of the educational course.

The success of the English people - their victories on the field, in

the smart, and in study— has been largely owing to physical training. The Englishman loves the open air, and keeps his mind and body vigorous by constant exercise in it.

The effects of this are strikingly seen in the achievements of the British army and navy, whose soldiers and sailors are surpassed in powers of endurance by no others in the world.

The effects of the culture of the body are also strikingly seen in the nations of antiquity, with whom gymnastics and calisthenics were a part of the regular school education.

The orators, philosophers, poets, warriors, and statesmen of Greece and Rome gained strength of mind as well as of muscle by the systematic drill of the palaestra. It is told of Cicero that he became, at one time, a victim of that train of maladies expressed by the word "dyspepsia". He hastened not to the physicians but to Greece; entered the gymnasium; submitted to its diet for two entire years; and returned to the forum as vigorous as the peasants that tilled his farm. Who doubts that, by this means, his periods were rounded out to a more majestic ca-

dence, and his crushing arguments clinched with a tighter grasp?

The success of men gifted apparently with nothing but Constitutional talent, and the frequency with which men endowed with the finest intellectual powers, but powers supported by a weak body, have disappointed their admirers, have led some to regard the stomach as the seat of intellect. Ridiculous as this may seem, it is certain that the brain is often credited with achievements that belong to the digestion. Everything shows that the greatness of our great men

is as much a bodily affair as
a mental one. Nature presented
our Websters, Clays, and Calhouns,
not only with extraordinary minds,
but also with wonderful bodies.

What would our Grants, Shermans,
and Sheridans have been without
"nerves of whipcord and Lames of
iron"? Let Napoleon answer. The
torment of hereditary disease, united with
the pangs of fever, wrung from that
great Captain, in one of the most
critical days of his history, the ex-
clamation that the "first requisite
of a good generalship is good health".

True, there have been men

who, although frail and in miserable health, have done immortal things. Great and heroic were the achievements of Paul, in "bodily presence weak;" of the blind Milton; of Pascal, a confirmed invalid at eighteen; of Johnson, bravely carrying through life the weight of a diseased and tortured body.

True, Pope was an invalid; and Aristotle was a dwarf in body though a giant in intellect. But these are brilliant exceptions. The general fact still remains that it is the man of tough and endur-

ing fibre, of elastic nerve, of good digestion, that does the great work of life. It is Scott, with his manly form; it is Lord Brougham with his almost superhuman powers of endurance.

Let, then, him who is preparing for the race of life account no time or money as wasted that contributes in any way to his physical health - that gives tone to the stomach, or development to the muscles.

The life of this latter half of nineteenth century is very swift and restless. We need therefore,

all the vigor that can be drawn from sport or play, to strengthen us for the struggle.

It is true, the professional or business man needs health rather than strength; he need not boast the brawn of the gladiator; he need not lift a thousand pounds, nor walk a hundred miles in twenty-four hours.

It is a sound constitution that most men want, to do their work—in short, that condition of body and that amount of vital power, which shall enable them to pursue their callings with the great

est amount of comfort to themselves and usefulness to others.

It is true also, that physical ability is required more in some callings than in others. But in all it is indispensable to leadership, and he who lacks it, though he may live a useful and reputable life, must not think to command.