

THESE "MODERN SCHOOLS"

BY HUBERT V. CORYELL

WHAT is a "modern school"? Is it a play school? A freak school? A fad? Is it an institution for the sugar-coating of education? Does it play havoc with all the established principles of education? Does it totally abandon the theory that a child's mind needs the discipline of hard work on disagreeable tasks? Does it develop habits of helter-skelter thinking and impulsive, unordered acting? Does it teach children to believe that they have the right to follow the dictates of their own wills, regardless of the rights of others? Are there a hundred other faults to be laid at its door?

One might almost think so, to hear the anathemas hurled at it by its critics.

Or, on the other hand, is the "modern school" a sort of heaven-sent "last word" in education? Have its "projects" and its "self-expression" methods created utopian education for the young people who are fortunate enough to get into such a school?

One might almost think so, to listen to the pæans of praise sung to it by its advocates.

Where, then, lies the truth?

Not very long ago I was recommending a school of my home city to a friend of mine.

"That's one of those freak schools, isn't it?" he asked. "The children never do any work unless they feel like it. Teachers aren't supposed to correct or punish them for fear of repressing them, and all that sort of thing."

I spent half an hour trying to give him a different idea of that little school. But it was a half-hour wasted. In the end he sent his children to the public school, not because it was nearer to him, not because he could not afford tuition fees, and not because he wanted to be democratic, but because he felt safer in sending his children to a school of the good, solid, substantial type familiar to all of us. And he still looks upon the school that I recommended as a "freak school" where the children "play all the time."

This is an unfortunate misconception of the modern progressive type of school that is all too common among people whose intellectual attainments ought to make them more searching in their examination of things that have such vital potentialities in the lives of our young people. Because enthusiasts bubble over with their delight in the wonderful new kind of education that they have come to know about, calmer people put on an armor of skepticism. Then when the enthusiasts speak of the outstanding features that please them the skeptics take it for granted that the enthusiasts have told the whole story—which they never have done.

"Oh," cries the enthusiast, "you should

see the delightful way in which they teach arithmetic—all by games, you know. My little girl is simply thrilled! How much better than the old way, sitting at our desks endlessly working at those meaningless sums!"

The skeptical listener, very properly convinced in his own mind that no real understanding of arithmetic can be gained without some pretty steady, concentrated drill, is greatly shocked at this attempt to sugar-coat arithmetic. He doesn't realize that the enthusiastic mother has told only one part of the story. He doesn't know that the arithmetic games which have so thrilled the little child all involve, first, a very clear, concrete explanation of the process that is being taught, and, second, an endless amount of real figuring during the course of the game. All this, indeed,

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seems purely incidental, perhaps, to the little child, who recounts to her mother only the delights of the game. But explanation and drill on the fundamental process are there all the same. Moreover, ten to one the next arithmetic period will be devoted to a more formal type of lesson, in which the teacher will check up results and make sure that nothing vital has been skipped. The mother will never hear of this lesson, because it carries with it no thrill to the pupil comparable to the thrill of the game lesson. So the mother proclaims broadcast, in good faith, that her little daughter goes to a school where arithmetic and all the other dry things are made pure delight by the playing of games. And her conservative hearers smile knowingly and conclude that such a "play school" can't be any good.

Nor is this the whole story. The type of lesson just described, which may be very common with little children, is altered decidedly as the children grow older and more mature. The game aspect of the thing is no longer altogether pleasing to the pupils. They know that they are at school to learn, and they insist that the teacher hand things out to them in clean-cut, man-to-man fashion.

To be sure, a game now and then is pleasant, especially in drill work, where it can be made competitive and rouse keen enthusiasm. But, paradoxical as it may seem, the older pupils of the so-called "play school" are extraordinarily alert mentally as a result of the stimulating nature of their previous training, and, instead of demanding more play, demand more work.

I remember an eighth-grade class which I once taught in a "progressive school" in which the pupils discovered that I was willfully eliminating square root from the course. They came to me in a body and insisted that they learn to do square root, because one of the girls had a cousin in a regular school who was learning square root, and none of these "progressively" trained girls was willing to be left behind. The amusing part of it was that I—like a good many others who are not trained to be arithmetic teachers—had gladly forgotten how to do square root myself. Being only a makeshift arithmetic teacher myself, I went to a real, old-fashioned arithmetic teacher for help. She very kindly wrote out the formula for me, and I presented it to the pupils. They could not understand it, and were not satisfied to go on using it until they could understand it. I went back to my old-fashioned teacher, and found that she did not understand it herself, though she had been teaching it for years! So the pupils and I together dug up all the arithmetic books we could get hold of, and finally found one which made square root perfectly clear and understandable. Then the class was satisfied. But it had been unwilling to be satisfied with anything less than real mastery, because mental activity had come to be a delight to that class, and mental activity to be really delightful must involve total mastery of all subjects encountered. Yet this school was called a "play school" by skeptics who had heard over-enthusiastic mothers praising it to the skies.

Many of the misunderstandings of the "modern school" are due to the acceptance by skeptics of the extravagant, narrow-visioned laudatory descriptions of extreme enthusiasts as accurate pictures of what really goes on in the "modern school." These misunderstandings are intensified by the caustic accounts occasionally forthcoming from rock-ribbed conservatives who visit the "modern schools" for an hour or two and go home utterly disgusted at the seeming helter-skelter disorder of some of the class-rooms. Such visitors know nothing of the purposes that lie back of the seeming disorder, know nothing of the lasting intellectual stimulation that each apparently disorderly child may be getting out of the thing he is doing,

know nothing of the extremely orderly, quiet periods that may balance the extremely free periods, know nothing of the permanency of impressions on the brain gained through self-directing activities compared with impressions gained through teacher-imposed activities. They see only confusion and apparent disorder; and they say, "This is progressive education; this is the modern school; Heaven deliver us!"

There is one other group of people who help to bring about the present misunderstanding of progressive education. It is the group of blind, shallow, lip-service fetish worshippers whose fetish is the new and the bizarre. Some real progressive will discover the value of some particular device or method, and will lecture somewhere about it. Instantly the unbalanced chasers after the new will snatch at the idea, make it a part of their enraptured patter, and organize a school based on that one idea. The school will instantly be classified by the conservatives as "modern;" and immediately the modern schools of the sanely progressive type will be labeled once more as "dangerous."

Let us see how this works out in actual practice. One of the best recognized progressive methods of teaching history is through pageants and dramatizations. The fad-chasers decide that this is the only proper way to teach history. "Away with dull study!" they cry. "Our children must dramatize!" So they dramatize this and they dramatize that and they dramatize the other thing. And each time that they succeed in getting drama they think that they have succeeded in teaching history. They become sure that they are doing a wonderful bit of progressive teaching. They decide that the world must know about it. So they plan a dramatization still more elaborate than any yet conceived, and they invite patrons and possible patrons to come and witness it. Then suddenly they become superconscious of the crudeness of the thing that they have been planning. They decide to polish it. They call for more rehearsals than have seemed necessary before. They practice for weeks beforehand, knocking the systematic schedule of study (if there be any) galley-west, yanking children out of recitations here and study periods there in order to get the *ensembles*, drilling star pupils on long parts, while the less brilliant ones stand for accumulating hours as supernumeraries who often don't even know what they are supposed to represent until they are sent home with orders to get such and such a costume. Finally, the play is presented with a grand burst of glory which hides the endless number of individual strains and worries of teachers and pupils. The devotees of "Education by the Dramatic Method" preen themselves complacently, while the skeptics, who can't help but have an inkling of the facts, wonder dubiously if the game was worth the candle. "What did the children get out of it?"

they ask. "Nothing but nervous tension and a few meaningless pictures. Give us the good old-fashioned text-book. Away with these dramatizations!"

As a consequence of this, when some sanely progressive teacher, discovering a dramatic possibility in the day's lesson, lets the class work up a crude, spontaneous little drama on the spur of the moment, with every child at work creating his or her own part and devising his or her own costume and properties, the whole thing occupying a few of their own lesson periods and not disturbing other classes at all, the same skeptics, sickened by the other type of painfully worked up play, shake their heads and say: "More tommy-rot dramatizations. Why can't that school get down to brass tacks and do a little real work?" They have no conception of how hard those individual children have worked in their creative enthusiasm. They don't know of the histories and biographies and encyclopædias pored over with eyes that by reason of the enthusiasm make permanent records on the supersensitized brain-stuff. They haven't the faintest idea of the training in research that has come as a mere incidental to the preparation of that crudely presented little drama. So the truly progressive bit of education is scoffed at by the conservative, who has his mind soured by the monkey-like mummery of the faddists.

This is just a sample. Every truth of progressive education is similarly distorted by unthinking enthusiasts who mimic the forms without grasping the basic ideas at all. Hence the righteous scorn of the conservatives for the "modern school."

Those who really wish to be just must remember that there are "modern schools" and "modern schools," the one set run cautiously by real educators who admit that they are groping for "the real thing," who admit that they often miss it, who believe that they sometimes attain it, who never allow themselves to be fooled by shallow forms, who endlessly check up by common sense and educational measurements; the other set run by flashy imitators who mimic the form and miss the substance, who talk glibly of their "projects," and their "learning by doing," and their "education through plays and games," and so forth and so on. But because the sane progressives are for the most part too busy to advertise themselves and the mummies are so vociferous, they are all lumped together and looked upon with pity and disdain by the great mass of intelligent but conservative people of this world. To them "progressive education" is a joke at best.

But "progressive education" is not a joke; it is a serious effort on the part of earnest men and women to get at fundamental principles and put them into practice for the benefit of the children of the world, present and future. These experimental workers believe that true education is the arousing of the

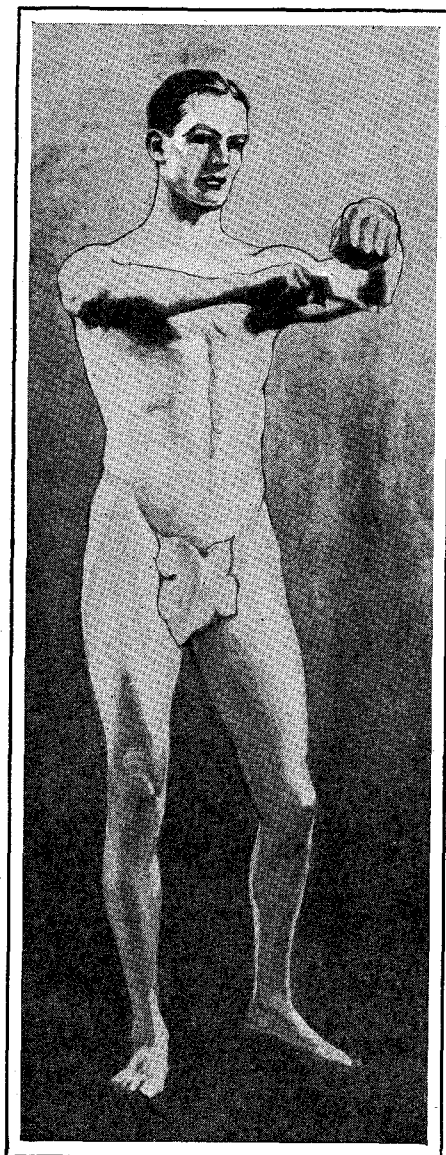
powers and faculties of children into vigorous activity, the directing of the resulting enthusiasms into worth-while channels, and the training of the energies into efficient habits of work. They believe that vivid creative experiences burn deep into the brain-stuff and that one creative effort is worth a dozen coldly assigned tasks. They believe that mental and moral discipline comes from wanting so hard to accomplish something that no labor seems too great in bringing it about, and that one hard job completed because of the inner urge is better than a dozen hard jobs done to get marks or escape punishment. They believe that it is the teacher's job to study the inherent nature of children in general for general tendencies by giving them more freedom of choice in the things they study and do, and by observing the nature of their voluntary acts; and to study the particular nature of each individual child, harnessing his impulses and guiding his energies to successful creative accomplishments, which give the only real growth. They believe in less adult restraint and more play for little children; but they also believe in more social responsibility, more self-restraint on the part of the children. They believe that much in the present curriculum has no proper place in the education of most children, not because it is hard but because it simply doesn't fit; that some of it is useless for any children, for the same reason. But they do not wish to tear down; they wish to build up. They are not fanatics, but level-headed experimenters.

The real "modern school" is not a farce, a fad, a fake. It is just what the true advocates claim for it—merely a turning of the face in the direction of truth and a courageous attempt to go forward, expecting to make mistakes, but intending to profit by them, expecting to lose the path now and then, but pledged to come back faithfully to it after each discovery of departure from the true course.

We should support the modern "progressive education" movement with every means at our disposal. But we should remember that some "modern schools" are in the hands of shallow, fad-chasing mummies, while others are in the hands of sane, forward-looking educators. We should learn to distinguish the real thing from its shadow. We should ignore the ill-founded criticisms of those who have been prejudiced by people who don't know the whole story, and we should equally reject the undue enthusiasms of those who think that the "modern school" has already solved all the problems of education. But let us watch with sympathetic interest the efforts of those who are going forward in modest courage toward the goal long pointed to by the greatest educators and philosophers of the world from Plato down to the present time. These are the real progressives in education, and they are the ones who conduct the real "modern schools."

VARIATIONS OF ATHLETIC TYPES

BY R. TAIT McKENZIE, M.D.



Shows the typical oarsman. Long in the limb, short in the trunk, with finely drawn lines and corresponding closely to the Apoxyomenos of the school of Lysippus, which represented the change in the Greek ideal to a more graceful and slender type

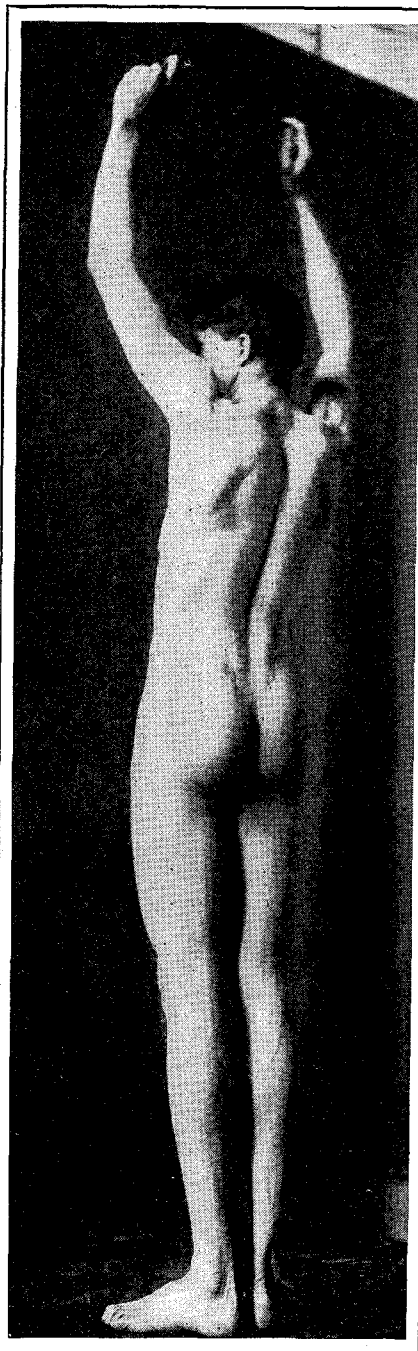
THE attempt to make the human animal conform to an average of height and weight by overfeeding the slender and starving the stout, by driving the fat and resting the thin, or by changing the surroundings of either, is naturally foredoomed to failure.

The variations within the normal are what give diversity and interest to the study of man and his measurements, and Sir Francis Galton, that great anthropologist, truly says: "It is difficult to understand why statisticians commonly limit their inquiry to averages and do not revel in more comprehensive views. Their souls seem as dull to the charm of variety as that of the native of one of our flat English counties,

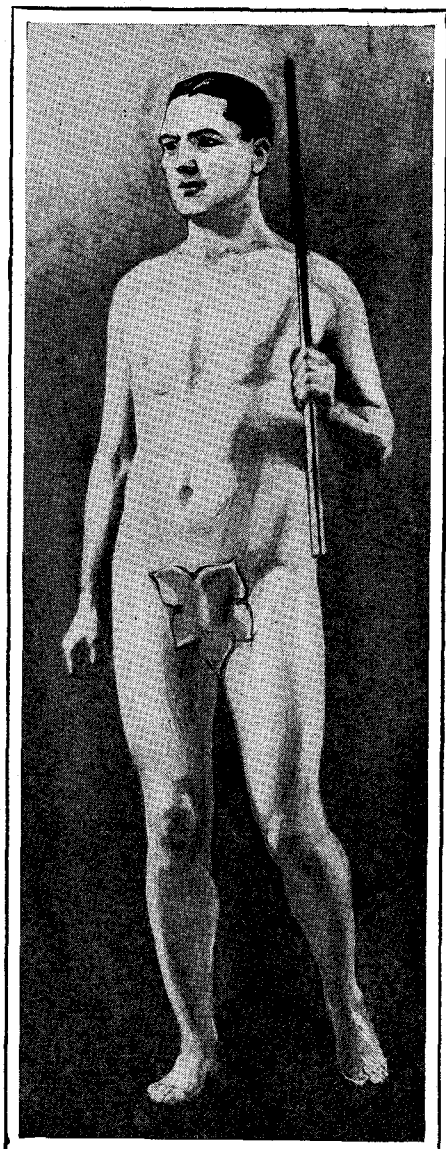
whose retrospect of Switzerland was that if its mountains could be thrown into its lakes, two nuisances would be got rid of at once."

Nowhere can one find this divergence within the normal so beautifully shown as among athletes, whose type of figure must be adapted to the particular feat in which they excel.

The place of sport and exercise in



This is the finest example of the greyhound type, the figure slender and graceful. This man was a triple champion in the Olympic Games in the standing high jump, for which his long, slender muscles and light bony structure peculiarly fitted him



This photograph of a great guard in football shows the powerful neck and trunk and the short legs that denote great vitality and strength. He is the type represented by the Doryphoros, the early Greek ideal of manly beauty

changing the development of the body has been greatly misunderstood. It is a common belief that football develops large and burly men, that swimming develops fat men, that running makes men's legs long, and that jumping develops human kangaroos. This is, after all, putting the cart before the horse. A man will select naturally such events as will enable him to succeed through the particular structure of his individual body. The wrestler with a short neck, powerful shoulders and body, and great muscular strength has an enormous advantage over a competitor whose long neck lends itself to a good half Nelson. The hurdle runner, who must clear the ten yards between the hurdles in three