

THE TEACHINGS OF A CONGRESS

About the International Congress of Physiology and Psychology in Sports held in September at Lausanne and organized by the B. I. P. S. under the directorship of D' Fr.-M. Messerli.

The Congress of Physiology and Psychology in Sports which was attended by over a hundred participants coming from twenty-five countries has come to a close. We should like to throw into light in the following lines the main object of the thorough study carried out upon the different aspects of sport.

Starting from the principle that it is easier to establish the harmony of the mind upon a well balanced physique, the organisers had left room in the programme for physiology and medicine in sports. Accordingly the members of the congress were given the opportunity to be present at a demonstration by Professor Fleisch of the new ergostat that has just come out from the workshop of the Institute of physiology, whilst several doctors lectured upon questions interesting both sport and science, such as the problem of exhaustion or « pump stroke », physical exercises from the medical point of view, etc.

However, it is mainly the psychological side of sport that retained the attention of the delegates. Defending the thesis of the complete body-mind entity, Professor Boven demonstrated in a distinguished manner that spirit is not localized in the brain substance but throughout the whole body : any harmonious movement, any well learned gesture correspond to a mental expression. To this sound truth are related the slogans which affirm that we walk with our eyes and think with the stomach. Taking care of our body as well as of our mind thus constitutes an intellectual task.

Going into the capital question of heredity, the delegates applied themselves, under the guidance of Prof. Matthey and D' Martin, to establish a parallelism between the hereditary factors and the factors acquired

through sport. Prof. Matthey stated that child is born with a complex hereditary inheritance which forms the body-mind entity, and thus determines from the first day its possibilities. On the other hand, the son of a champion will not necessarily inherit the specific qualities of his father. He would rather get them through imitation. This is how the olympic shooting champion Mr. Schnyder followed the steps of his father whose image he had before his eyes during the whole of his childhood and youth.

So it can be considered that it is through pure imitative spirit that, a child develops its inclinations. Therefore it is of great importance according to D' Martin to give it the example of a natural movement. The child must learn before everything else to breathe, to relax, to get suppler. From the educative point of view the gymnastic development is wrong, the same applies to the decomposition of movements which predisposes to errors. In learning to relax a child will acquire at the same time the principles of balance and gesture saving. It already possesses the sense of judiciously spending its strength, which is a purely intuitive and subconscious faculty. A child stops of its own accord when it feels tired. Later on tactics and combativity will grow by themselves, these faculties being already psychically born in it, the development of which should not be hurried.

Americans who are our masters in the art of training champions, exclude all formation in the shape of command. They respect the acquired order of faculties. In swimming for instance, a child first of all is to learn how to breathe and expire under water only then will he seek balance in water and the dynamic elective quality of the muscle, that it to say of style.

The hereditary factors and those acquired, thus specified in a more precise manner than they had ever been done up to the present, the congress proceeded from educational methods to the influence of physical exercises and sports at different ages. Also studying the influence of weather and climate conditions upon physical exercises, they acknowledged that the observations made were bearing more especially upon beginners and untrained sportsmen ; fully trained athletes were as a rule not easily affected by, weather conditions.

These are the essential teachings of these days of study, the object of which has been fully attained, as it aimed at giving a value to this intellectual aspect of sport so justly dear to the heart of Baron de Coubertin.

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