
James Freeman Clarke A Forgotten Champion of Physical Culture in New England

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Little attention has so far been given to the New England church and community leader James Freeman Clarke who not only served on various educational boards and as Secretary General of the American Unitarian Association, but also was for ten years non-resident professor at Harvard Divinity School. Clarke attended Harvard College when Karl Follen introduced German gymnastics there and in Boston, and he later also met the other disciple of Jahn in America, Franz Lieber.

Clarke's interest in physical culture was further stimulated through his comprehensive study of world religions. In his search for a universal religion, for which Clarke thought Christianity to be destined, he maintained that in the future the traditional Christian ill-treatment of the body must come to a definite end. The church must give up its wrong

teaching concerning the body, recreation, and amusements of these areas were vitally important for the well-being of each person.

The physical is as much a part of “self-culture ” as the intellectual, moral, and spiritual culture. Although Clarke followed the traditional belief in the separability of body and soul, he did not teach contempt for the body, as the material and the immaterial are ultimately in harmony. He developed instead the concept of an “integral education” of muscles, mind, heart, and soul.