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CORRIGENDUM

Journal, September 1991, **159,** 441. (Motor disorder in severe mental handicap, paragraph 2). The references should read Kohen & Matthew (*Journal*, October 1990, **157,** 621; *Journal*, April 1991, **158,** 571).

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Mental work and physical exercise

Mr Ritchie's assertion at a recent meeting of the Victoria Park Cricket Association, that the national game still occupies in its season a place of due prominence in the minds of our busiest legislators, is one that neither he nor his hearers have need to be ashamed of. Supported by the existence of an annual match between the Lords and Commons, besides innumerable facts of less pretention which tell the same tale, it speaks well even for the mental quality of those who guide the councils of this country. The sound mind has no reliable connexion with any but the healthy body. Under ordinary conditions, no mere closet thinker, no mere debater, can long remain master of his full power of thought or of expression. Sooner or later he must tend to exhibit in himself what we may describe as a nervous specialism to become overstrained and oversensitive. The political representative, it must be remembered, is a man of affairs. As such he has no less need of plain and practical common sense than of sagacity, acumen, and skill in argument. As such, also, he is at all times open to the access of numberless worries. He is particularly liable to digestive derangements from this cause and from the want of regular bodily exertion. Naturally and rightly, therefore, he seeks and finds in physical exercise and in all that pertains thereto the means of reaching a sounder and a simpler life than that allowed in his daily round of duty. We may depend upon it that the man who thus mingles in his daily method the conditions needful for mental and for physical development will prove in the end the fitter for all those offices which bring him into daily contact with the ways, the wills, and the needs of his fellow-men in every class. In this he is not peculiar. What is true in his case applies to that of busy men in any calling which does not itself entail a heavy drain upon physical strength. Mental workers of every variety cannot do better than follow the same rule, and, after a well-known suggestion of Abernethy, seek in muscular work a relief which will usually be found from mental irritation and overstrain. A due regard for age and for moderation, of course, must be understood.

Reference

Lancet, 21 November 1891, 1179.

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