

The School of the Soldier.

The following is an extract from the speech of Gov. Banks, of Massachusetts, on the recent occasion of the encampment of the third division of the militia of that State at Camp Wool:

"The school of the soldier has still stronger claims upon the public as a means of rational amusement and manly exercise. There is nothing in which our people are more deficient.—Recreation and exercise are as essential to man as laws are to governments. The public diversions of other nations—the pleasures of the chase and the sports of the field, or the turf, or the ring—are little known or respected here. Alleviated by few or no pleasures and interrupted or sustained by little or no exercise, in youth or in age, the sombre cares of business absorb the best years of our existence, and leave us exhausted, if not lifeless, at middle age. There is no class of our people that does not suffer from these unceasing, corroding cares. The farmer or the mechanic requires exercise for the same reason, if not to the same extent, as the student or trader. There is no pursuit that brings into action all the physical powers of man, and in the most laborious vocation there are parts of the system that do not find their proper development. Families that from generation to generation closely follow sedentary occupations are for that reason dwarfed in stature. It is noticed in England that men, who from infancy are accustomed to the use of the needle, carry with them in the public streets the badge of their calling, in the contracted muscles, in the uniform movement, as well as by the diminished strength of the arm thus constantly in use. It is not enough that the dwarfed stature, and shrunk limbs, mark those whose lives of labor have created them, but, unless corrected by change of calling or generous exercise, they are transmitted as badges of physical deficiency to their descendants. These are illustrations simply of the effect upon communities of constant devotion to one form of labor, unrelieved by exercise or recreation. Happy are those who, subjected to unremitting toil, find opportunity to diversify their labor with different employments; happier still those who are able to relieve the pressure upon mind and body, by resort to generous recreations and manly exercise.

"Where among us can the farmer, the mechanic, the manufacturer, the merchant, the scholar, find such relief from the effects of excessive mental or physical labor? I answer that it can be found for all, if properly conducted, in the school of the soldier.

"As a recreation, simply, military discipline would seem, from the enthusiasm with which it is pursued, to be a satisfactory relief from pressure of business cares. As a means of exercise, there is not a limb which is not strengthened, not a muscle which is not developed, in the training of the soldier. Every element of physical strength, the chest, the lungs, the voice, the limbs, receive new powers. He wears the mien of one who has been taught that it is equally pleasant and manly to command or obey, and he carries with him wherever he goes, and he transmits to those that come after him, not the stiff and awkward strut of a recruit, nor the sidelong movement of the half-developed man, but the easy, graceful and natural swing of a gentleman who suffers from no deficiency of physical power, and is embarrassed by no part of his body of which apparently he would gladly be relieved. Such physical training is invaluable, not so much to the individuals who receive it, as to the race to which they belong. It is a matter of common observation that a man transmits to his descendants not only his mental and physical deficiencies, but the very movement and carriage of the body which marks the father is repeated oftentimes with singular exactness in the son. A perfect man either in mental or physical organization is never the creation of a single generation, but wherever he stands he represents the virtues of a long line of ancestors.

"There is a force which is the equivalent of intellect, if it be not intellect itself, in the personal bearing of men. I have been informed by residents in the neighborhood of the School for Feeble-Minded Youth, at Boston, that a distant spectator, who observes the pupils in their morning walks, can determine from their movement of the body the degree of intellect with which each is endowed. I repeat, then, that a correct physical training of the young men of any State is a public advantage of no slight character; and, though others may be more fortunate, I do not hesitate to say, that, surveying our schools and colleges, our private and public institutions where the personal habits of our young men are formed, I know of none which presents so many salutary opportunities for the development of physical power, as the school for the soldier, when rightly understood and conducted."