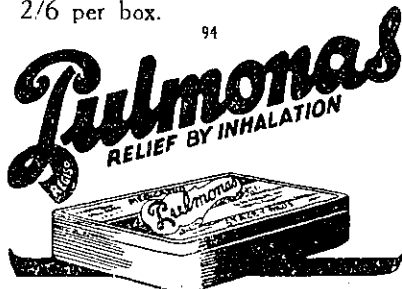




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Are Your Children Overplayed?

Continued from page 58

siderably of recent years. Modern children enjoy their play more fully than we did, and do not over-strain themselves by unduly exerting strength and nervous energy in attempting to attain results which they do not know how to achieve.

IF parents were allowed to exploit their youngsters in any way they liked, then all the arguments of the opponents of the system of teaching sport to children would hold good.

Up to a few years ago it was customary for children of exceptional athletic ability to be dragged all over the country upon pot-hunting expeditions by their parents. This was particularly evidenced at sports meetings where dancing was a feature of the gatherings. Fortunately the vogue for this class of entertainment is not so pronounced to-day as it was, and the heavily bemedalled youngsters, and their parents, who so often exploit them, are a less conspicuous feature of sports gatherings.

Then again the amateur swimming authorities, while they do everything to encourage boys and girls to become good swimmers, they absolutely discourage the giving of swimming exhibitions by children of tender ages, and also the participation of youngsters in long-distance events.

Most parents have sense enough to see to it that their children do not get exploited and overplayed. But, still, parents are queer folk, and the very mother who has always vowed that she will never let her son train for the sports, lest he develop that mysterious and purely mythical complaint "athlete's heart," is often the first to grumble if she finds her young hopeful among the "also rans" at the conclusion of the races.

ONE branch of sport in which the good little player is apt to turn into the bad little prodigy is lawn tennis. The courts are never free of kiddies nowadays. One admits the wisdom of teaching youngsters early how to develop their strokes, but tournaments are no place for children. From the English illustrated papers it would appear that the tendency to encourage youthful tennis players to compete in public is unfortunately increasing. Let us by all means avoid this tendency here. We note that these young English tennis proteges are talked about and written up and their antics provide the press photographers with some pretty pictures. Such children, through over-strain of immature nerve forces, may finish their sporting careers at the time when more normal or less exploited youngsters are beginning to play in public with natural and ever-increasing zest. Fortunately in New Zealand we have not yet come to exploiting youngsters on the tennis courts, but it is to be earnestly hoped the tennis authorities will set their faces resolutely against children taking part in public tournaments.

The common sense of most parents, the inclination of the children themselves, the stern opposition of the scholastic authorities against publicity for children, and the wise legislation of governing bodies are factors upon which we can rely to keep matters well within bounds, so that our children to-day are not overplayed. The child that knows how to play and to manage its body is far less liable to strain than another which plays by the light of nature alone and achieves its results by sheer brute force and a quite disproportionate expenditure of nervous energy.

My Ideal Girl

BEAUTIFUL? Why, of course! All perfect girls are beautiful. Dark, I see her, with eyes full of laughter, and a lithe young body. But she need not be brilliantly athletic, though fit she must be—fit to tramp the downs in the rain with me, to swim in cool seas, to ride over the moors.

She will love the country, my ideal girl. I see her more often in tweeds than in evening clothes. But she will not be a fool. Her conversation will be worth listening to, she will love books and pictures and music and old furniture, though she will be far removed from a blue-socking—did I not say she was beautiful?

She will love the good things of life, without needing to be constantly surrounded by luxury. In fact, she will rather like roughing it sometimes. For she will be a friend, as well as a lover.

She will be quick and responsive; quick to feel a mood, ready with a sudden smile. She will know the meaning of hospitality, and she will

not believe that good manners are a relic of the past.

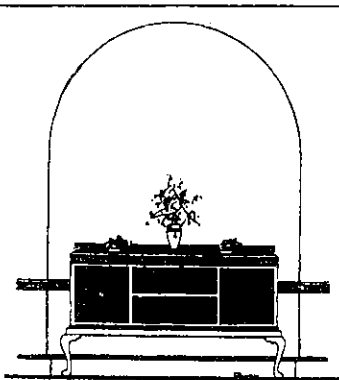
She will like my men friends, and she will love doing things on the spur of the moment, and she will not be fussy about domestic details.

She would sooner go with me in a rusty "tramp" to the Spice Islands than to Waitomo in a Rolls-Royce.

Above all, she will be alive. Alive from dawn to dark. She will live gladly, like Robert Louis Stevenson, and, like him, be ready to face death with a laugh.

I often imagine her, my ideal girl. I see her coming to meet me, swinging down the road with a spaniel at her heels. I think of the little foolishnesses just between us two. I see her sitting in the evening, the soft lamp-light on her dark head, hear her laughing, or singing gay little songs. Sometimes—ah, sometimes—I can almost feel her lips on mine. . . .

Perfect pal, and perfect lover. . . . Does she exist? I do not know. I have never met her yet. But one day, perhaps, one day . . .



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