

WOMEN AS SWIMMERS

Expert Thinks They Will Never Rival Men.

DO NOT DRESS PROPERLY

Harry W. Long Emphasizes Need of Teaching Children the Art—Little Girls Should Not Be Neglected, Because Aquatic Sport, He Says, Is Great Aid to Beauty—Should Exercise Freely.

Why cannot women learn to swim as easily and as well as men?

Just now, when the swimming season is about to begin, this query is often heard. Swimming should be of vital importance to women, because it is a great aid to beauty.

"Women will never be able to swim as well as men," declares Harry W. Long, instructor of swimming and assistant physical director at the Y. M. C. A., himself an expert swimmer, "until they make a radical change in their method of living and mode of dressing.

"Women follow all sorts of beauty cults; follow them like sheep follow the shepherd—blindly. The result is that today women walk better, stand better, and look better, perhaps, than they did twenty years ago. But the question is, Are they really better physically? I think not. They cannot stand what their grandmothers stood in youth, though they may look stronger.

"A woman who stands perfectly erect and according to all the rules governing correct carriage is supported by her clothing; but a man has no support except such as is gained by the reformation of his muscles. A woman will collapse into an incorrect posture as soon as the supporting corset has been laid aside, while a man will retain his healthy bearing under any circumstances.

Men Athletes by Nature.

"Most men are athletes by nature and seek the outdoor sports more or less, thus developing muscles that are needed in the practice of swimming; while women neglect the commonest exercises that would make for muscular development. Muscle is essential to a swimmer; you cannot swim without it, and a good swimmer must have an even disposition of good, hard muscle, too.

"Women float better than do men, for the reason that they have more fatty tissue. I cannot float, though I can swim in any manner, and I have found but few men who can float as well as women can, owing to their superabundance of muscular tissue.

"I do not think weight or temperament has much to do with swimming. If women should dress in a manner that would leave the diaphragm undepressed, and if they should live outdoors more and take exercise that would tend to develop the arm and shoulder muscles, they might be able to rival men. Naturally, their very organization is a drawback, in a measure, but even that could be overcome through perfect health and development.

Miss Kellerman an Example.

"Annette Kellerman exemplifies the fact that women are able to learn as much as men, but, of course, I have no way of deciding what she would be able to accomplish in the way of swimming a distance. She undoubtedly did some clever work, but it was the fact that she was a woman, young and well looking, that helped to make it remarkable. In her plunges, for instance, she did not make a really 'clean' dive while I was there. By that I mean she did not strike the water without making a trifle of spatter. Taking into consideration the fact that she has a different environment every week, her work was extremely good—for a woman. I have several young boys who can do everything she did quite as cleverly.

"It has been said over and over again that the best way to teach a small boy to swim is to pick him up and pitch him into water deep enough to drown him. That is not true. I have tried it, and in every case I was obliged to jump in and rescue him. It is natural for a small boy to go into the water and learn to swim; he takes to water like a duck. If little girls were trained properly, they would have the same love of outdoor sports that boys have, tempered, of course, by their finer organism. And the result would be stronger, healthier, and handsomer women in the course of time.

Should Develop Muscles.

"If I had my way I would have women live in such a manner as to develop their muscles. Swimming affords results such as are not possible in any other sport. For instance, the first stroke I teach is the 'dog paddle,' which I consider the easiest for a beginner. It is done by clashing out in front with one hand and kicking slightly with the opposite leg, and alternating—right hand and left leg, left hand and right leg. You can readily see that it will be necessary to have equal strength in leg and arm to swim successfully, and to have this one must live and dress properly. When women do that they may be able to compete with men in swimming, as well as they have done in other things."