

"I Wish I Could Make Beautiful Backs a Fashion"

—Dr. Millard

Why the President of the League for Spinal Curvature Is Heartily in Favor of the Season's State Slogan, "Backs Instead of Legs"



"Venus and Cupid," by Velasquez, in the National gallery, London, one of the most famous backs in art.



At right, Dr. R. Kendrick, chief examiner of the contest recently held in Boston, taking measurements of Adaline Valerio's "perfect back." Miss Valerio is 17.



A delightful photograph of Virginia Pearson's, apraised "the perfect back in America," and awarded the \$1000 prize.

- VIRGINIA PEARSON'S "PERFECT BACK IS:**
- 1—Without overdeveloped muscles or excess flesh.
 - 2—Without ridges of bone protruding at the sides.
 - 3—With a spine curved in at waist and out at shoulders.
 - 4—With shoulders in perfect alignment.
 - 5—With hips level as shoulders.
 - 6—With the spinal column deflecting neither right nor left.

STANDARDS of beauty run their gold on day and wear out just as do styles in hats. In the day of Sheba the cloud of hair was test of feminine charm. Marie Antoinette was loveliest of her time because her waist was smallest. The stately line ruled longest, perhaps, as shibboleth of elegance.

Now it is the back! In America the shoulder-blade territory was established as the new test of attractiveness when Dr. F. P. Millard, specialist in ailments of the vertebral column, announced a contest to run through 60 cities for the purpose of discovering the most perfect back in this country and Canada.

"I wish I could make perfect backs a fashion!" declared this president of the national league for prevention of spinal curvature, which announced the contest.

Meanwhile, in England, the back suddenly attained the pulchritude prize when Delysia betook her French spine to a London reception and so overwhelmed everybody present that she was engaged on the spot to star in a new London musical comedy. And so great is the rage for back comeliness in that country today that producers no longer greet the chorus with a "Pull aside your skirts!"

What they say now is: "Show your back!" And the strange little interesting feature of this new fairness fall is that all authorities, English as well as American, agree the nearly-as-is-possible perfect back is to be found among Uncle Sam's daughters!

The American woman with her splendid figure strengthened and balanced by

exercise has, as a rule, the finest back in the world! The flesh covering it, like her figure, is evenly proportioned. She is neither too lean nor too fat. Many times she could be put into the list of really classic figures!

This is the word of Hoppe, the English artist, who has photographed more beautiful women than any other man in the world, among them thousands of Americans, on his visits to this country.

And Dr. Millard, after going over the backs of 100,000 feminine citizens of the United States and Canada, settled upon Virginia Pearson, the actress, as the one possessing the most nearly perfect back in the Western Hemisphere.

"No back is 100 per cent perfect," Dr. Millard stated. "But Miss Pearson's is as nearly so as any can be. That is why the league has awarded her the thousand-dollar prize and paid her all honor."

He then went on to tell what the perfect back is:

slip, with the head set directly over the spine. Shoulders level; one, that is, no fraction, of a degree higher than the other. Hips level as the shoulders so the column is deflected neither to right nor left.

Everyone, the specialist explained, at some hapless time, wrenches the back, and the wrench registers in the vertebral column. No careful watching from the first day of birth would prevent spinal imperfections, since these appear as the vitally important portion of the body goes through various stages of development till reaching adult proportions.

Hoppe, authority from the art standpoint, as Dr. Millard is from the physiological, gave further witness concerning back elegance.

"It is lacking, as a rule, because of over-developed muscles and an excess of flesh, or because of ridges made by protruding bones.

"Still, beauty of backs all too often goes unclaimed as it is unseen, since

in painting lovely backs, as they painted beautiful women. The work of Rubens, Rembrandt and Van Dyck shows their regard for a finely moulded back, since they painted it many times."

The famous painting, "Venus and Cupid," by Velasquez, which hangs in the National Gallery in London, is declared by art authorities to show one of the most beautiful backs, if not one of the loveliest figures, in all history of art.

Taking it all in all, it is quite possible that the new standard of beauty which the world has set up for itself, is actually a very old standard, honored by the greatest artists of all time long ago!

At any rate, while America pursues the handsome back craze largely on ground of the physical perfection it represents, England is all wrought up over its artistic aspect. So mad has gone the London Rialto on the matter that dancers and singers and hitherto unknown personalities have been imported from every corner of the globe, popped into the limelight and dangled there triumphantly for no other reason than that their backs resemble those in the Velasquez painting, and in that other famous picture by the Irish artist, Thaddeus, "The Temptation of St. Anthony," which is owned by Hoppe himself.

Delysia's back, it is said, figures all the way through the book from which her play was adapted. Teddie Gerard is another owner of a bewitchingly fashioned spine and she is exhibiting it to best advantage at the Prince of Wales theater.

However, according to Mrs. Maurice Francis Egan, wife of the former American Minister to Copenhagen, the perfect back is no novelty among Danish women. They obtain straight, strong backs and artistic carriage through court etiquette, which demands that they stand reposefully throughout the long court balls!

Such deep hold on the popular imagination has the notion of running to earth and then running up into public vision the perfect feminine back taken that even Boston, dear old grandmother that she is, has passed the word to her fair granddaughters.

They are having their spinal points tallied and with great credit to them-

selves, according to Dr. R. Kendrick, who is doing the measuring. A trifling prize of \$1500 will be turned over to the victorious Boston beauty.

The ultimate object of the monster perfect back contest is to institute daily exercises for spinal strengthening and developing in the public schools. Such a course, it is said by medical men, will correct tonsillitis, eye ailments and adenoids in children, and will insure a nation of healthy men and women.

Nara, Ancient Capital of Japan.

NARA, ancient Japanese city, is a classic center of Shinto worship, and was the first capital of Japan. Much of the building and beautifying begun in A. D. 709, the "Golden Age of Japan," still is intact.

During the early days of Nara prosperity, the Todaiji, one of the seven great temples, was the head of Buddhism in Japan, and the buildings covered some 29 acres.

Of all its glories there today remain but few, chief among them being the Great South Gate, Nandai Mon; the great Hall of Buddha, and the ancient and most interesting old shrine called Kaidan-in. The Great South Gate was built in 752 A. D. and remodeled in 1199. On either side are two gigantic figures of Nio, or the Deva kings, carved by Tankei and his pupil Unkei. With the two stone lions close by, excellent specimens of twelfth century Chinese sculpture, they are listed and protected as "national treasures."

The Nara-no-Daibutsu, the vast bronze Buddha cast in 749 A. D., is the largest of the kind in Japan, if not in the world, being 52 1-2 feet in height.

The Kaidan-in is remarkable for its unusual construction and arrangement inside—a series of platforms rising one above the other to support the images of the Deva kings, Indra and Brahma, which are said to be among the best examples of the art of Nara era, and also are counted among the "national treasures."



Delysia, whose importation from Paris started London's stage demand for perfect backs.

that portion is one of the least exposed of the body. "The old masters vied with each other