

ATHLETICS IN OHIO COLLEGES.

BY E. W. FORGY.



THE athletic spirit, like the famous "star of empire," westward takes its way. The older, larger and richer colleges and universities in the East were, of course, the cradle of athletics. In them we of the West still look for the greatest development, the widest range and the completest systems of athletic training and culture.

But, though more inchoate and with less regularity and system, and largely unrecognized, there is enough athletics in Ohio colleges, and enough that is peculiar to them, to warrant the attention of the readers of *OUTING*. There is a strong athletic spirit in Ohio colleges, and, what is of more import, the spirit is growing and spreading, just as the standard of the colleges themselves is being gradually raised to the level of Eastern colleges. There is an evolution going on in athletics. A vigorous interest in athletics in all branches is growing. The irregular, spasmodic efforts are gradually developing into systematic and scientific training for well-regulated field days. Oberlin, the largest college in the State, with an enrollment of eight hundred gentlemen and nine hundred ladies, and Buchtel, a growing young college, both had field days last spring for the first time.

Lawn tennis has become a popular game in some Ohio colleges, but even now in some of our best colleges this excellent game is unknown; no tennis courts are found on the campus, and a man with a "blazer" would be a curiosity. Baseball is slowly bending the rules and regulations into flexibility, so that college nines are occasionally even permitted to organize and meet a sister college on the diamond. A few faculties have been so concessive as to allow the "barbarous" game of football, with restrictions as to the num-

ber of games to be played. But in two or three of our largest colleges the faculty still holds its heel on this game.

In most of our colleges good, substantial and even costly gymnasia have taken their place by the side of dormitories and recitation halls. All of them have been built within a very few years, and most of them are the results of the labor and money of undergraduates and recent alumni. In those colleges which are not at present blessed with gymnasia a strong and healthy agitation is noticed and plans are maturing for raising the money necessary to build them.

Thus, in all branches of athletics, except boating perhaps, we see that system is replacing spasticity; life and vigor are entering in the place of "deadness;" intolerant regulations are gradually giving way to a recognition of athletics, and in a few cases a cordial support even is noticeable. The privileges enjoyed for athletic contests and the absences allowed for intercollege games have, where obtained, been granted by the authorities only after repeated importunity and reiterated demands from the students themselves. The whole force of the college press had to be brought to bear, meetings held and committees appointed until the petitioners were heard and answered. The spirit of athletics fuses the students into a unit in desire and action, and the college which refuses to admit its demands will surely suffer a diminished enrollment.

The powers that be in our Western colleges sadly need the catholicity of spirit with which those more experienced in the East regard athletics, and the president of Cornell did yeoman service for us in a recent contribution to the *Forum*, wherein he showed how athletics are an essential branch of college work, looking at them from the point of government. He pointed out their influence for good upon the department and moral tone of the student body. There is an overflow of animality in the undergraduate which will expend itself, if not with the consent and encouragement of the faculty in vigorous exercise and manly sports, then without them, by making "night hideous" by unaccountable freaks and ungovern-

ble escapades. It should be policy for college authorities to recognize athletics as a factor of college life, and to direct and control it so that the most good may come from it, and not to attempt to suppress it or confine it entirely in the gymnasium. It may be true that too much time is absorbed by athletics in some of the larger colleges of the East, but it is truer that they do not receive their due share of time in Ohio colleges.

Ohio has almost as many colleges as she has counties. As a college State her rank is first. But many, though bearing the name of colleges, can be ranked scarcely higher than advanced academies. And while the invaluable educational work in reaching a large number of young people who would never get to a larger college is not overlooked, we cannot for obvious reasons consider this class of Ohio colleges in this article.

The seven principal colleges, so far at least as they are necessary to be considered in relation to athleticism, are: 1, Wooster, a co-educational college controlled by the Presbyterian Church; 2, Oberlin, Congregationalist and open to both sexes; 3, Delaware, Methodist, also co-educational; 4, Buchtel, Universalist and co-educational; 5, Denison, Baptist, open to men only; 6, Kenyon, Episcopal, only for men, and 7, Ohio State, not sectarian but co-educational.

It will be noticed at once that co-education is the rule in Ohio colleges, and this may have had an indirect influence on the college authorities in their attitude toward athletics. Many of the restricting regulations were based on the idea that athletics had a tendency to make boys rough and wild. The idea is, of course, without ground, but it is nevertheless a fact that many of our good doctors and professors are unable to dissociate athletics from roughness and toughness. And when they admitted ladies to their institutions on equal terms with gentlemen they considered it an incumbent duty to burden conduct with a long list of rules and regulations intended to make the company of these ladies and gentlemen more endurable each to each. This notion, that there is something incompatible between the athlete and the gentleman, has modified the general tone of college government, even where it has not been expressed in written rule. The authorities of some colleges, indeed, consider it their peculiar mission to hold in check and

turn back the tide of athletics altogether, and they refuse to allow absences from college for the purpose of playing with other colleges, and put on other restrictions which make intercollege games practically impossible. For example, Delaware allows the baseball nine to organize and play on the home grounds, but the privilege of going to other colleges to play has been repeatedly refused. The effect of this is a practical "quash" on the game, for few colleges will play where they cannot get a return game. At Oberlin it is the same, and Wooster is but little more liberal in allowing three games to be played off of the home grounds. It would be unjust to put all this at the doors of co-education, but that it results in part at least therefrom is evident from the fact that those colleges which are not open to both sexes are less particular in their regulations. Denison, Kenyon and Oxford are examples in point.

Again, the leading colleges are sectarian and strongly religious. It ought not to be necessary at this time of day to advance any facts to prove that the greatest possible devotion to athletic sports is not inconsistent with a profound spiritual life but is a valuable aid to purity; the ranks of the past and present undergraduates in the universities of the Old Country, the very cradle and home of athleticism, attest this; where nearly every bishop has been an active participator in the sports of his college and university, it goes without saying. Indeed the bench, the bar and the senate teem with instances of high morality and youthful efficiency in all manly exercises.

So long as the ideas unfortunately prevail in the West that the moral tone of a college is necessarily lowered by athletics we can count on little encouragement from those holding them. If the faculty refuses all support, it not only increases the tendency to evil by taking away its own directing power for good, but it doubles the evil tendencies by keeping out of athletics those students who desire to stand well in the estimation of the faculty and who will not, therefore, engage in anything which has its disapproval. And these are always the balance-wheel class in college, whose prevailing tendency will always be for good. A faculty is taking a grave responsibility upon its shoulders when it takes the balance wheel off the machinery of athletics.

But the want of money is one of the

great drawbacks in Ohio colleges. Most of them are obliged to watch their expenses constantly in order that the books may balance.

Behind these three reasons, and rattler

go to college with a realization of what it means to waste their time. They are mostly strong, common-sensed young men, who have a nice sense of honor and could be relied upon to conduct their



SHIRLEY, '90.

MOORE, '93.

MYEKS, '91.

SCOVEL, MCQUILLET (SUB., FRESH.). FORGY, '90.

A GROUP OF WOOSTER HEROES.

the cause of them than because of them, is the *ipse dixit* of the faculty. The rules and regulations of all the larger colleges in Ohio are still calculated and intended to discourage athleticism. Yet the vast majority of students are young men who

own affairs, as indeed many of them do before going to college; the regulations of Ohio colleges contemplate these students as if they were more in need of an *amma* than an *alma mater*. An Ohio "Bob Cook" would be obliged to fall



MYERS AND SCOVEL, LIGHT-WEIGHT WRESTLERS OF WOOSTER.

back not only one class, but he would have to spend so much time giving excuses and interviewing the president that he would keep flunking *ad infinitum* before he could get through college.

Just as there are notorious examples of intolerance so, happily, there are examples of toleration, nay, even of encouragement. A little leaven exists even in Ohio which will leaven the whole mass. Witness the following from the catalogue of Oberlin, one of the most conservative colleges:

"Exercise in the open air and athletic sports are encouraged as a part of physical education, and spacious grounds, in charge of the athletic association, are provided by the college."

They recognize the necessity of taking college athletics into account. But how are athletic sports to be encouraged by a prohibition of intercollege games? Every collegiate knows that it is impossible to create a hearty interest in a game unless it is a game against some rival. The class or fraternity games will not arouse enthusiasm except in the classes or fraternities playing. But let the nine be organized and the fact that it is to meet a rival college be known, and the interest rises without effort. Touch the college pride; then players will spring up where they were little dreamed of.

The majority of Ohio colleges discourage and even prohibit intercollege sports. I took some little trouble to verify this somewhat startling and certainly depressing charge by asking a number of the presidents of the principal colleges. President Bashford, of Delaware, replied that

"our faculty does not favor baseball or football contests with other colleges," Professor Jewett, chairman of the gymnasium committee, is authority for the fact that the Oberlin "faculty does not favor nor encourage baseball or football contests with other colleges. Our students are not permitted to go away to play with other college or professional clubs. They are allowed three match games a season with outside college clubs, provided the latter come to Oberlin to play." Professor Gazenby writes that the faculty of Ohio State University "favors bona-fide contests with other colleges." President Haydn, of Western Reserve (Adelbert), answers laconically: "Faculty favor baseball? To a slight degree. As little as they can get on with, off the college grounds." Mr. Ed. F. Cone wrote that the faculty of Buchtel "has laid down no rules against football or baseball." (These games have never been played at Buchtel to any extent, however.) "To a limited extent" is the brief reply of President Super, of Athens. Writing from Wooster, where more is done in athletics than at any other college in the State, I have to say that while the faculty permits the "nine" and the "eleven" to play three games each with other colleges, it is opposed to intercollege sports, and granted the permission to play these games only two years ago, after the students had asked and petitioned and almost demanded them. Even then nearly half of the members of the faculty voted against the petition.

In nearly all of our larger colleges the students have the advantage of a gymnasium of some sort, though the buildings for the purpose of exercise range in style from simple frame sheds, fitted up with a few chest weights and dumb bells, to imposing structures of brick and stone of the most finished designs in architecture and supplied with all the many modern gymnastic appliances. The use made of them ranges from occasional spurts by a few would-be athletes to the completest systems of regular required exercise under competent instructors.

The "Crouse" gymnasium at Buchtel leads the list. It is a building of which every Buchtelite is deservedly proud. It has a well-lighted basement—being built on the brow of a steep hill—and this is furnished with bathing rooms, shower baths, lockers, bowling alleys, etc. The upper part of the building is high and roomy.



DELAWARE GYMNASIUM.

A running track projects from the walls in the manner of a gallery or balcony. The roof is built self supporting, so that the floor is not taken up with posts. The apparatus and appliances are all complete and kept in good order. Exercise is compulsory by classes twice per week. A better equipped "gym.," in a better situation for light and air and drainage, could hardly be mentioned. It was erected in 1888.

Adelbert has a good gymnasium, built in 1888. The president, in answer to the question of how the money was raised, says, significantly as well as humorously: "Funds? Not stolen; begged." Adelbert must have had good beggars, for \$13,000 is the value of their labors.

Delaware has a neat little gymnasium.

It is too small for a college as large as the Ohio Wesleyan. But considering the fact that most of the \$7,000 invested in it was raised among the students and at a reunion of the alumni one Commencement, it does remarkably well.

"The professor" writes that Oberlin is not proud of her gymnasium. And surely a college with 1,600 students and such buildings as Peter's Hall and Spear Library should have a better gymnasium than "a simple wooden building, built fifteen years ago and valued at about \$3,000." Exercise is required of the "preps." one hour a day, five days in the week; with college students it, is voluntary.

Ohio State and Denison are two of the unfortunates, though the latter is at work and expects soon to have a place for the boys to develop their muscle. At the Ohio State military drill takes the place of gymnasium work to some extent.

Wooster has a substantial one-story brick building, which was erected with the idea of combining the advantages of an audience hall and a gymnasium. Military drill is required of "preps." and exercise, under an instructor, three times per week, is required of seniors and those excused from drill.

Such, in brief, is the condition of athletics in Ohio colleges. To soften the regulations of the former and to give to the latter the opportunities which they will improve if permitted must be the work of time, the press and of all those who recognize the health of body and mind, the endurance and the essential qualities of manhood which will come from athletics under proper influences.



WOOSTER GYMNASIUM.