

INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS AND FACULTY CONTROL.

By Professor Eugene L. Richards.

INTERCOLLEGIATE athletics form at present such an important part of the student life at our universities, and are every year growing so much in importance that it is well to consider what are their especial advantages to an institution of learning; what are the evils to which they are exposed and to which they expose the colleges; and what are the best methods of controlling or supervising them so as to retain all their advantages with the fewest evils.

The advantages of athletics have been so thoroughly advocated that it is only necessary to mention them. The advantages are generally admitted—at least the physical advantages to those who practice athletics go without question. They furnish a physical training which is unrivaled. They afford an employment for youth out of study hours so interesting and absorbing as to divert them from harmful kinds of relaxation. They give types of physical excellence in the persons of well-known athletes, which are a healthful influence even to those students who do not regularly practice the sports. The mental training resulting from them is not so often recognized. But no one who is closely identified with college boys who go into athletics, can fail to notice, if he is at all observant, what an alertness of mind they acquire from games of skill like football and baseball. Then again, outsiders who only see a closely rowed race or evenly matched game and nothing more, do not appreciate the moral forces which enter into the struggle and often determine its issue. The long, monotonous training, the regular living, the denial of self, the denial of appetite, the obedience to authority, call for moral qualities which are even more essential to success than the skill or physical as strength of the winners.

But the advantages resulting from the present system of athletics are not confined to the athletes. They affect the whole body of students. The success of a team, crew, or nine is the suc-

cess of the university whose name they bear. Their defeat is a grief to all their college-mates. The community feeling so essential to the best development of the social life of a great university centres around these struggling athletes. And not only are the members of the institution affected by this feeling, but the whole body of the alumni are alive to the enthusiasms of the great contest and are bound by a new and lively sympathy into the common bond of the college fellowship. Neither high scholarship, nor saintly character can unite young and old alike as does this common enthusiasm for men who are striving in a contest for the honor of a common name. Well does Prof. Sloane, of Princeton, say: "These mimic battle-fields demand the same qualities as real ones, and no great game is won without the moral support of the non-combatants. Union, organization, enthusiasm, pluck, high principle—every one of them is as much the price of athletic as of material victory."

The habit of obedience to authority cultivated in all athletic organizations has a direct effect upon the order of the undergraduate body. The discipline of the field or boat aids the discipline of the faculties. It has improved the morality and the orderliness of the students in general. In the words of President Eliot, it "has made the discipline of the college easier and more effective."

With regard to the other side of athletics it must be borne in mind that athletics, like all things human, are subject to evil. To eliminate all the evils would be an impossibility. To demand that college sports should be abolished, in case all their accompanying evils cannot be thoroughly remedied, would be unreasonable as to ask that we should all cease to live, because we are all liable to the evil incidents and accidents of a mortal life.

It would be out of place here to consider in detail all the evils urged against athletics. It is sufficient for our pur-

pose to enumerate them and only to dwell upon those that are real and peculiar to the sports. There are objections brought against some features of athletics which are due to the spirit of the times, such as extravagance, betting, the love of show, the desire for notoriety. The age is extravagant. There is more wealth in the country than there was when the sports were in their infancy. The constituency of the colleges has changed materially, due to a change in the character of the population. The attendance from the cities has increased at a very rapid rate, because the people who have means enough to send a boy to college generally live in the cities, and the cities have grown at the expense of the rural districts. So the vices which are seen to the greatest extent in the cities are the vices which tend to attack the colleges. There is no question but that these vices would be greater in the colleges if there were no athletic sports, for the discipline of the sports is against them. So that extravagance and love of show are not peculiar to athletic sports. Neither is betting a vice for which they are accountable. Betting would exist and with worse accompanying results, if there were no game played and no race rowed by students from one year to another. The stakes would simply seek some other event capable of a doubtful issue, where the attendance and surroundings would not be as morally healthful as those which are to be found at the river and on the field.

But there are evils alleged and which, if true, are peculiar to athletics. They are not due to the spirit of the age, but rather to the immaturity of the members of the student body. They are, for instance, the mistaken standard of excellence, the waste of time in preparation for an event, the absorption of the attention of the non-combatants, and the crazy joy of the adherents of a winning team or crew. It is undoubtedly true that athletic excellence often does bring to its possessor social honors both in college and outside of it, which high scholarship fails to attain. But as Prof. Hadley has remarked: "What the critic deems to be preference for the body over the mind is in no small measure preference for collect-

ive aims over individual ones. It may be a short-sighted view of the matter to think of the high stand man as working for himself and the athlete as working for his college. Yet it is one which contains a large element of truth; and the honor paid to college athletes is based on a healthful recognition of this half truth which the critic so often overlooks."

The evil of waste of time in preparation of an event is real, but applies to but few men. It is an evil, too, which works its own cure, for the very good reason that the man who spends too much time in training over-trains and thus loses what he strives for.

The absorption of the attention of the non-combatants is an evil which has another side. It is too much to expect of the students that they should be always thinking of their studies out of study hours. If they must have some common topic of conversation, what more natural subject than the exploits of their fellows? And what more healthful and recreative excitement than to witness a contest in the open air?

The crazy joy over a victory with the excesses which naturally accompany it, though at times a real evil, is readily held in check by the known determination of the governing bodies to put an end, for a season, to the sports which cause the outbreak. Some demonstration of feeling ought to be permitted, for that is only the natural outcome of young life.

All the evils hitherto enumerated are external. Besides those spoken of, others of the same nature might be mentioned—like the danger of injuries; the tendency to over-training, strains, and, in football, the tendency to brutality. We are all liable to accidents, and in intercollegiate sports I venture the assertion that, with the modern system of training there are fewer accidents and fewer injuries among students in proportion to their numbers, than among the same number of young men not in the sports; and that the standard of health and morality is higher among the whole student body on account of the sports.

The charge of brutality is such a vague one and often made without thought or knowledge, that to one who is personally acquainted with the young

men against whom it is made, it seems unnecessary to even try to meet it.

But there are evils which might be called internal; two in particular which threaten the honor and integrity of the sports, and which therefore deserve more than a passing mention.

One is the offering of scholarships or other "inducements" to well-known athletes at schools or at other colleges to come to a particular university to strengthen its athletic force. The other is the "board" evil. When a man is taken to a training table, the rule, I think, is a general one with all colleges, that the athletic organization should pay the price of his board over and above what he paid before coming to the table, and that he should pay his ordinary board price to the organization. This rule is obeyed by most men without objection. When the organizations were poor, even if there were objection, the bills were collected. But since the great games have brought in more money some dishonorable men have at the last moment in their last year refused to pay their bills, claiming that amount as their due for work done, thus putting themselves on a level with professionals. The evil is easily checked by requiring satisfactory bond for payment of board from every man as a prerequisite condition of his being admitted to the training table. This is done by the committee on athletic sports at Harvard, and is a rule now under consideration by the Financial Union of Yale—the student committee which regulates the expenses of all the sports. Unless measures are taken to remedy these two evils, the words of Dr. Smythe in the April *Forum*, with reference to athletic sports, though more dismal than true, generally, are applicable here: "College athletics are threatened in this country with the same peril which is said to have contributed to the decline of the great games in Greece—they declined as they became mercenary."

Some faculty control of athletics there must be. The only question is how much and in what way. Too much is worse than none at all, for excessive dictation from college authorities has a tendency to destroy that sense of responsibility which goes with free will. All the freedom which can be given

students to manage their own affairs outside of required college work should be given them in their athletic sports. A certain amount of liberty is necessary to the development of mind and character. This is especially true of students in a democratic country. Every college which is worthy of the name is a little republic in miniature. The more varied the interests, the better training-ground the college is for the civil life of the larger republic, into which it yearly pours its contributions. It destroys the autonomy of these little republics to have college faculties or even graduate committees interfering with the elections of captains or presidents, or dictating rules for sports or places for games. The very choice of these things forms part of the education of mind and character, which is a far more important result than the training of the body or a victory over a worthy rival. If the young men make mistakes, the consequences, either in the form of defeats or in the expression of disapproval of an enlightened public opinion, are better safeguards against their repetition than the fiat of a committee, whose judgment after all, may be wrong. To have to defer to an authority always weakens the judging faculty and destroys the spirit of independence and of self reliance.

To regulate gate receipts, or the size of the crowd which is to see a game, is no part of the business of a faculty. The men who have to spend the money are the best judges of how much ought to be charged in order to meet expenses. And, in these days of newspaper enterprise, to say that a crowd of ten thousand people, will be less likely to have a demoralizing effect upon the sport and upon the players than twenty thousand spectators, is to calculate the publicity of the exhibition without counting the work of the industrious reporter and picture maker, who lay the whole scene before millions of readers almost before the crowd has left the field. And why should college grounds be prescribed as fields of play? A contest to be fair should be held under the fairest conditions. The enthusiasm of the non-combatants is a potent force on the side of either team. To locate the contest so that the enthusiasm should be

almost one-sided is to make the contest so far uneven. Neutral grounds are the only fair places of meeting for decisive contests.

And what is all this fear of notoriety? Is not the very fact that a man, even a young man, will have all the blaze and glare of the public press turned upon his actions—a good thing for him to know early in life? If he has the right stuff in him it will make him circumspect. He will carry himself more honorably, for the sake of the college if not for his own sake—he will take good heed to his conduct that there may be no good ground for adverse criticism. But suppose he has a committee with its rules and regulations back of him. They may bear the blame if anything goes wrong. He does not act for himself. They have told him what to do and what not to do. The managers and captains, though they may be men of mature years, cannot take a step without consulting the committee, or, if they do, may have to submit to the humiliation of canceling engagements not approved. What sort of a training is this for young men who in after life will have to act for themselves, and have also to bear the consequences of their actions?

Faculty control should limit itself to the requirements of the college work, and hold each man liable for that. Whatever in the sports interferes with college work or order should be made to go, but it should be clearly shown that it is the sports and not the man who is to blame. To hold each man whether athletic or not up to his work and judge him by that test is the best kind of faculty control. To make this kind of control efficient it is necessary to require that the schedule of games does not involve more than the number of absences usually allowed. It might also be well to exact a list of the candidates for teams, nines or crews, in order to be sure that none but bona fide students represent the college. But of late years the students themselves are so jealous of the places on a University organization that there seems to be no necessity to take this step. In colleges where there is no required physical examination for all students, a certificate of physical soundness of candidates for places on University organizations should be exacted.

Still, though this control by requirement of work, attendance and observance of law and order is all the control which ought to prevail, there is something to be said in favor of faculty advice and supervision. The magnitude of the interests involved, and the amount of money handled, call for more business ability and executive talent than fall to the lot of most undergraduates. Hence they wisely seek the assistance of older heads. At Yale the interests are consolidated in a Financial Union with a graduate as treasurer and adviser. This graduate, besides being a business man, is an authority on all athletic sports. The arrangement would be a complete one if he were at the same time a salaried officer of the college. He could then be in a position to do more good, by representing both sides completely; the faculty side in their requirements of work, order and gentlemanly conduct; the student side in their necessity for recreation and even healthy excitement. He could relieve the overburdened dean of some of his cares by keeping track of all the athletes. He could attend all games and races and would always be in a position to check excesses and extravagances without resort to the faculties. And whenever faculty action should be necessary, from his complete knowledge of the facts he would be able to point out the best measures to adopt. Finally, if all the universities would throw away their "committee" plans, with their endless rules which are continually changed from year to year, and appoint to a Directorship of Athletics a graduate of the requisite knowledge, experience, and character, to help the students to manage the sports according to the requirements and traditions of each university, the sports would be better managed, and the students themselves would be better satisfied. Moreover, whenever joint action by the several institutions, looking to the improvement of the rules or the elimination of evils, should be desired, there would be a body of men fitted to act with the students as capable advisers, and able to propose sensible measures to the several faculties, if faculty interference were necessary.