

how does all this prove that muscular sports are injurious? A man if he will only misuse it sufficiently can make a means of injury out of any pursuit whatever. For every amateur who thus injures himself, there are twenty or thirty who adapt their work to their strength instead of recklessly trying to force their strength up to the level of other men's work, and thereby increase their chances of health and longevity instead of lessening them. Many even of the injudicious ones escape serious injury for the human lever bends much oftener than it breaks, and has plenty of inherent elasticity to restore it to its original shape. In any view of the matter, the enthusiasts forming but a small percentage of the amateurs while both have themselves entirely to blame for any mischief that happens, it does seem absurd to pick out these exceptional cases and hold them up to the public gaze as specimens of the effect produced upon all or even a majority of those who cultivate athletic sports as a recreation. Yet this has often been done by both popular and scientific writers who ought to know better. If their conclusions were correct, the rate of disease and mortality among athletic amateurs between the ages of 20 and 40, ought to be very high as compared with that among sedentary people of the same age. It is in reality very low. There is but little wisdom in preaching the hurtfulness of muscular pastimes to a generation which amuses its leisure with cigars and brandy-and-water, and which turns from the field and the gymnasium to the bar-room, the billiard saloon and the bagnio—fit training for fit exercises. Admitting the truth of all the charges that we have just denied, exercise will still be a better tonic and a safer than sensation. If a young man will make of his amusements a means of injuring the health which they should recruit, let him at least choose those which are innocent and manly.

The experience of amateurs then yields no sound argument against the healthfulness of training or athletic sports. They get but little injury from their exercises, and that little self-inflicted. How is it with the professional athlete? No disease from which he suffers can justly be attributed either to his training or his contests. We have already seen that during the training process, bodily health attains to its highest vigour. It is almost an unheard of thing for a man to die or even fall dangerously ill while under the care of a skilful trainer. Nor are the contests themselves such terrible things. It is true that they try wind and limb to the utmost, but how often do they break them? "Constantly" say the anti-muscular writers, but where are their cases? We verily believe that two or three prize fighters killed in the ring, and an unfortunate oarsman who died in our neighbourhood last year, comprise the whole of them. This last case excited so much interest at the time and has since been made the text of so many false inferences, that we shall offer no apology for turning a little aside from our immediate subject to lay a few words concerning it. The death of a powerful and experienced oarsman after less than four minutes of active exertion, is a phenomenon so startling that our readers may well demand an explanation of it before they believe our statements that athletic contests do not involve necessary danger to the lives of those who take part in them.