

RUGBY FOOTBALL IN CANADA

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RUGBY football is rapidly becoming the most popular game in Canada for the autumn months, and anyone who was present in the crowds that flocked to see the matches last season would be at once impressed by the interest taken in it by the people at large. The love of manly sport and a close and exciting contest is inherent in the Saxon nature, and any game which shows these qualities so well as football does is sure of appreciation in a country like Canada, even if the spectator does not understand or value the game as an expert would.

A recent game was reported by a French writer in a daily paper as follows: "The sides precipitated themselves upon each other; arms and legs were dislocated and collar bones broken. * * * Anon the game (?) was resumed amidst howls and execrations from both sides, and fragments of clothing, torn ruthlessly from the bodies of the rivals, strewed over the field. It was a spectacle terrible and affecting, and I turned away with tears in my eyes."

What a disturbance an account like that

would cause in the breast of a fond mother or solicitous father.

The game as now played in Canada has few points of resemblance to that of the middle ages, from which it is evolved by a "survival of the fittest" and by a destruction of the most barbarous of its features.

In England it has been popular ever since it was first played by the country people on the village green on Shrove Tuesday, which was a sort of football festival. There are no records to show under what rules, if any, these first football battles were fought, but it is probable that they were more or less "go as you please," and he who survived the annual conflict was, and deserved to be, the pride of the village.

The game advanced, interrupted by the wars of the Roses and the Civil war, which, besides giving men other subjects to think of, sensibly reduced the number of players, and as civilization advanced the play became more scientific and less chaotic, and the dangerous and brutal practices in vogue, by which men were frequently seriously injured, were eliminated. The last of these savage tricks to go were "tripping" and "hacking," or kicking an opponent's shins; which gave splendid opportunities for paying up old scores.

The number of players at Rugby school, as described by Tom Brown, seems to have varied from 50 to 120 a side, and sometimes more, when one house contended against another.

The present English Rugby Union was formed in 1865 to rid the game of its objectionable features, and its subsequent development has been guarded by this union, everything being done to make the game more gentlemanly and to raise the standard of play.