

The centre and quintessence of the student life is mental work and achievement. In playing student, if I may use the term, there is, or may be, a great deal of outfielding, and the player may have to make many a zigzag run, but all the play finally tends to the goal, the winning of knowledge and wisdom at the end of the course. The interest and the issue of the game are mainly intellectual. But here we must drop the figure, and go back to the physical basis of our mental process. The brain does our mental work. It is the centre and crown of the nervous system. To keep the nerves strong and responsive to all the demands of intellectual impulse and volition, the whole physical environment should be at its best. A lapse of vital force, the impoverishment of the blood by the diminution of its supply of oxygen, mean the withdrawal of nourishment from the organs that do the work of the mind. Many a noble fellow has cherished the mistaken idea, not sufficiently combated by the old educational systems, that time devoted to exercise is time lost to the ends of study. He has paid the penalty by a crippled or shortened life, to the unspeakable loss of science and society. The melancholy reflection has to be made that the man who would do most for himself and his fellows if he regarded the fundamental principles of mental hygiene, is usually the man who ignores them most. We should preach, in season and out of season, the saving doctrine that regard and care for the mind not only require, but actually include, regard and care for the body as well, and that a good physique is needed to "carry" a good brain to the end of its race.

As to the means of securing this end, we must remember that here again special advice and training are necessary. It is so very easy to misunderstand one's own constitution, its susceptibilities and capabilities, that it is every student's duty to see to it that he chooses the right kind of exercise, the right mode, and the right amount. This must be left also to the individual and his counsellors. But there is one aspect of the case which must not be overlooked, even in a general review of the subject such as the present. Those forms of exercise should be selected, which, in the first place, are of themselves interesting or entertaining, and which, in the second place, require the exercise of intelligence in their prosecution. It is an almost indispensable thing for the mental and emotional health of the student to have some regular pursuit which takes him for a time out of his main sphere of interest and exertion. And it is doubly advantageous to him, when such an avocation tends, at the same time, of itself, to mental development. Both of these ends are secured in a high degree by athletic competitions of one sort or another. Apart from the moral benefits of these contests, the mental training which they afford is not inconsiderable, and, as a rule, the brainier and more alert the contestant is, the better will be his play when the conditions are otherwise equal.

This phase of the subject comes close to the third aspect of college athletics—that which regards them from the point of view of the moral and spiritual nature of the student. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this side of the subject. We must consider that whether the student takes the matter to heart or not, he is making himself more or less of a man by all that he does as a member of his college, and by the spirit in which he does it. The remark applies to the use made of all forms of athletics; but I am thinking

mostly of the various forms of sports which involve a contest.

All that we do at any time brings its obligation with it. But this sphere of action brings special responsibilities of the gravest moment. A member of a club or team must have the most delicate sense of honor, not only towards his commilitants but towards his opponents. His very employment demands for its success, not only mental self-command, but emotional and moral self-control. Some forms of competition—notably Rugby football, the greatest out-door game ever devised by man or boy—require a high degree of both physical and moral courage combined. On the field impulses come swift and decisive; and they are sure to do a large part in the make-up of the player at the formative period of his life. It is a fine thing not to flinch in the mass play or in the rush. But magnanimity is as noble as physical daring, and one can only measure the moral value of a refusal to take a mean advantage of an opponent, when one considers the temptation and the opportunity.

Again, as a rule, those who have most depth and strength of nature are most quick and passionate, and the inclination to resent a seeming or actual unfairness is the most common and irresistible of impulses. Hence, the self-control that is required even by the rules of the game, and that is inwardly promoted by its moral discipline, will keep possession of the soul by virtue of the very force with which it makes sure of its grip. These trials and tests of the inmost nature contribute in no small degree to develop or foster the courtesy, generosity, and self-command, which are the attributes of the Christian gentleman. Hence, college sports ought to be and often are a magnificent moral discipline.

Finally, the comradeship and good-fellowship of the athletic clubs are among the best things in college life. That they are a grand thing for the university goes without saying. But they wonderfully affect also the spirit and temper of the individual member. His devotion to his club affects his feelings towards all his environment and reacts upon his whole inner being. Among his most cherished associations through life will be those of the struggles and triumphs of his athletic career. And his admiration of the skill or prowess of either his comrades or rivals will tend to develop in him an enthusiasm for what is high, difficult and worthy in the tasks and pursuits of later years.

These delights and passions of our youth are not trivial or ignoble; and the college athlete will lose nothing, but will surely gain much by bringing them within the sphere of heart and conscience. It was a fine thing that St. Paul said to his pupil Timothy: "Let no man despise thy youth." Let no university student despise his own youth, its energies, its capacities, its possibilities, its opportunities.

#### PRIZE COMPETITION.

Any of our graduates, who have a bent towards literature, should take note of the offer of the Century Magazine, which gives three prizes of \$250 each, for the best piece of verse, best short story and best essay, written by a college graduate of not more than one year's standing. Last year all three prizes were won by young women, two of whom came from Vassar. Details regarding the competition may be had on application to THE VARSITY.