

Editorial

PRIZE-FIGHTING

TO the average small boy, to the majority of men and even to a great many women, one of the events of interest all through America was the Willard-Dempsey prize fight. The interest was as varied as the individuals who manifested it. There was the fond admiration of the small boy who is ready at all times to pay tribute to physical endurance, bodily skill, and ability to knock the other man out, and on the other hand there was the supreme contempt and righteous indignation of those who perceived in the contest only brutality, coarseness, human degradation, and an appeal to the lowest human instincts.

We may as well admit very frankly that there are two sides to this question of fighting, and perhaps the best way to get at the truth is to place the merits of boxing as a form of sport over against the evils of the prize-ring.

The Fighting Instinct

Man is endowed with certain instincts such as inquisitiveness, constructiveness, artistic expression, fighting, mating. None of these is in itself wrong, but anyone of them may easily be perverted.

The fighting instinct manifests itself very early in life. In the struggles for little playthings, for positions of advantage, for sharing of things to eat and in countless other ways, the fighting spirit shows itself in every normal child. Even where there is nothing to fight for children delight in rough-and-tumble activities just for the sake of the fun. Probably they are testing their powers by matching themselves against others, and possibly they are destructively preparing themselves for the struggle of life, or running off the surplus energy that is so abundant. At any rate nothing is more certain than that the fighting instinct is just as fundamental as the instinct for play or imitation.

Boxing in Itself Not Wrong

It is not the fighting or striving that is wrong. Indeed, struggle is necessary to all living organisms in order that they may attain to the highest. But when there enters into the struggle dishonesty, meanness, brutality or anything unworthy then the activity is not to be countenanced. Scientific boxing as a means of self-development is one of the finest forms of activity. It promotes bodily strength and vigor, gives training to the eye and hand, calls for the exercise of caution, good-judgment and courage. Above all it puts a man on his mettle. One of the best things that any man can do for himself is to take lessons in the art of self-defense.

When Fighting is Wrong

But there is always a negative possibility in the fighting game. One may break the rules. He may strike below the belt. He may hit a man when he is down. He may dope his opponent. And when any one of these things is done of course it is not real fighting at all. Nor is it fighting if men are angry with each other. Real boxers go into the game just in the same spirit as golfers, base-ball players, or contestants of any kind.

Evil of the Prize-fight

Now, when it comes to a professional prize-fight the boxing art is prostituted. The contestants put their art second and the money consideration first, and the onlookers are as interested in the betting as they are in the display of science. Almost to a man they are more interested in the result than in the display of skill.

A National Weakness

The American people, including Canadian are fast becoming mere spectators of sport rather than active participants in it. Nothing could be more deplorable than this. One can welcome the return of the olden days when every boy belonged to a ball-team, and can hope for the time when every man will rather learn to box in a friendly way at home, than travel across a continent to see a champion deliver a knock-out blow.

Boxing in the gymnasium, as part of a course of physical training is excellent for all. Boxing in the prize-ring, associated with betting, and the low-grade conversation is neither elevating nor inspiring. Young boys who take part in friendly contests of any kind are all the better for it. They are only made coarser by reading about such exhibitions as that at Toledo. Our censors are wise indeed in prohibiting picture shows in which the battle is repeated. It is a national duty to encourage manliness, courage and physical development, and to discourage brutality, vulgarity and the obnoxious display of animal powers and passions.

Industrial Fighting

The fighting spirit crops out in business of all kinds, and incidentally it may be said that there was nothing more sordid or more brutal in the big prize fight than there is in the struggles which take place day after day in the stock exchanges and in the markets of the world. Prize-fighters must of necessity play according to the rules. Business men labor under no such necessity. A man can overcharge, use child-labor, adulterate his goods—in other words can hit below the belt, and it may go unnoticed. There are men in Canada who during the last four years have been fighting unfairly and they have been patted on the back rather than ruled out of the contest. Business competition is

under existing conditions necessary and perhaps may be a spur to worthy activity. But nothing can more readily cultivate greed, dishonesty, uncharitableness and envy, than a too-zealous and selfish striving for industrial success. Competition may easily become anti-social. When its objective is monopolistic control as in the case of the big five meat-trusts then it is more threatening to social stability than the presence in the land of a host of anarchists.

What is Worth While

The only thing that is worthy in life is that which can be made universal. Kindness and good-will can never become too common. But anger, coarseness, selfishness, brutality, are unworthy of humanity and must be discouraged.

And so it comes to this, that in sport as in business, there are practices to be commended and practices to be condemned. Personally and nationally the only way to success is the Christian way.

THE REAL BOLSHEVISTS

A STORY comes from New York. In various parts of the city are forums for free discussion of social religions and political problems. One of the down town clergymen thought the church might do this kind of work and so announced as his topic for Sunday afternoon: "Shall Trotsky be invited to govern America?" He would introduce the subject and opportunity would be given for discussion.

Needless to say the church was crowded. The preacher began by saying: "America is the greatest country in the world. Its people are freest. The workingmen are happiest and best paid. The laws are the most just. The prospects are the brightest." And so on.

Next he pictured conditions under the Bolsheviks in Russia—the poverty, the crime, the lost morale, the degradation, the robbery, the condition of womankind, the lack of government, and the black outlook.

He concluded in his own emphatic way by saying that under the circumstances he would be — before he would assist in supplanting the free ideal of America by the Bolshevik ideal of Russia.

Then came the discussion. A young man with a foreign accent arose in one of the galleries. Said he, "Mr. Preacher, I have listened very patiently to all you have said, and am almost afraid to speak lest I come under your displeasure. I am no Bolshevik, though I know Russia well. Yet I cannot agree with all you have said, and I'll tell you why. Here in my hand is a copy of last night's paper. In it is a picture of a certain Mrs. G—, a beautiful woman. I understand she is a member of this church. There is also a picture of an ermine gown that was presented to this lady by her father. It is valued at \$75,000. There is also a statement showing how many people assisted in making the gown: I need not go into details. What I want to ask you Mr. Preacher, is this: Will not the flaunting of wealth in this way, and this is only a single instance, will this not do more in one hour in New York to spread Bolshevism, than all the preaching of Trotsky in three years? What say you Mr. Preacher?"

Then there was silence, after which the young man pressed for an answer.

The preacher replied by saying that it would be unbecoming to discuss the lady's affairs in public, especially as she was not present at the meeting. Then he announced the meeting closed.

And that was the last meeting of a forum in this particular church.

Now there is a lesson here for more than the people of New York. It is easy for those in comfortable circumstances, and in affluence to sit back and condemn such agitations as we have lately witnessed. It is dead easy to call attention to Canada's progress and her prospects, yet who will deny that one of the causes of unrest to-day is the obnoxious display or the more objectionable hoarding of wealth by a few soulless speculators and bloodsuckers. Until we get rid of this breed there is no possible peace for Canada, by force or by any other means. The punishment and deportation of alien mischief-makers is right, but it is no more necessary than the punishment and imprisonment of those who are making illegal profits. There is nothing to be gained by shouting democracy unless we possess the spirit and follow the practices of true democracy. The essence of democracy consists on this that "each man love his neighbor as himself."

LOOKING FORWARD

VISITORS to Western Canada cannot fail to notice the number of flourishing concerns, now established or in the course of establishment.

There are great mills, factories, stores, banks, distribution centres and storage plants. Yet it would be mistake to imagine that these alone will ensure national prosperity. Germany had everything of this kind and more, and yet she failed because of moral instability. So, for us as for all truly ambitious people, there is imposed the necessity of taking steps to cultivate in the minds of our growing children the habits, tastes and moral qualities which are the foundation of all excellence.

The reason for calling attention to this is that official pronouncements have over and over again called attention to the fact that our schools and churches are in a bad way because of lack of leadership. Where religion and education are inefficient the people perish.

It is said that the reason why men do not enter teaching is inadequate payment, and the reason why ladies move round from school to school or remain on teaching only a few years is the same. It is also said that Alberta is the most liberal of the three prairie provinces, and that she is gradually securing the greatest percentage of fully qualified teachers.

Now it is time for all our citizens to awaken. There is little to be gained in building up industrial and financial concerns and handing them over to people who are unworthy to manage them, and whose spiritual gifts have not been cultivated. Better culture and poverty than ignorance and wealth. Western Canada should be known not chiefly because some of its people are wealthy, but because all of its citizens are intellectually and morally of a high type. Whatever else we do we should make full provision for educating the children. As one of our leaders has said: "We are as yet but playing with this matter."

WHEN SCHOOL OPENS

BY the time this issue reaches its readers the children will be returning to school. There is nothing in which subscribers to a home journal should be more interested than the education of young people, and probably there is as much hope, sorrow and mingled feeling experienced on opening day as on any other day of the year. Yet, one can hardly shake off the impression that the general public have not quite the same confidence in the school that they had fifty or twenty-five years ago. The children are sent, because it is customary and legally necessary, and because there is something given them that they all need, but there is a more or less general impression, that a great deal of time is wasted and that a lot of the feeding that is done is useless.

There is reason for this. In the olden days the school stood for something very definite—instruction in the three R's plus the giving of a little useful information. All of this counted in life. But to-day this much alone is of very little value. A man may be able to read, write and cipher and yet be a very useless person and a very undesirable citizen. The school can no longer follow the narrow programme it is always folly to attempt to put old wine in new bottles. By this, it is meant that as social and economic conditions have completely altered in the last fifty years, as the home has ceased giving the culture that it formerly provided for both boys and girls, when it taught them trades and industries, and as there have arisen in these later times many and complex class distinctions, it is very plain that if the school is to prepare pupils for life it must follow a programme vastly different from that of the past.

How should a programme of school work be determined anyway? Does it not seem that everything that is done should help the pupils to a fuller, richer life, and make it easier for the people of the community to live together in a friendly way? A course of instruction that merely fits pupils to look out for themselves is miserably inadequate. It is, indeed, dangerous. The only reason for fostering ability in an individual is that he may use it for the good of his fellows. But the individual who is likely to be the most useful among his neighbors and likewise the most happy in his own life and most respected in his community, is he who has his powers developed to the utmost. Three things education should do for one. It should fill the mind with ideas and inspire it with high ideals; it should give some control over the material world; it should create a right attitude to society. If this be true, one can understand how important it is to study history, music and literature, geography, science, hand-work and mathematics, and how necessary it is to practice right behaviour.

The school is naturally conservative. Probably the parents as a class are a little more conservative than teachers. If we are wise we shall adapt educational methods to meet modern conditions. The starting point is to see clearly what can be accomplished. Really, if it were properly encouraged there is nothing the school could not do for individuals and community. But that would require radical measures. The chief trouble lies in the attitude of the public to the teaching body. Long ago in ancient Persia, the teachers were chosen from among the oldest, wisest and sanest of the citizens. Only those who had proven their ability in public service were allowed to instruct the youth. We hand the work over, very often, to young boys and girls, and they change around from post to post. The result is, of course, very unsatisfactory.

The greatest God-send to this country is not a fixed price for wheat, nor a forty-four hour day, but a good school system, in which young people are actually prepared for life and for living. This may mean, and will mean, reorganization and the discarding of old ideas, but it will also mean the salvation of the community.