

INTRODUCTION

EVERY American boy, a hundred years ago, lived either on a farm or in such close touch with farm life that he reaped its benefits. He had all the practical knowledge that comes from country surroundings; that is, he could ride, shoot, skate, run, swim; he was handy with tools; he knew the woods; he was physically strong, self-reliant, resourceful, well-developed in body and brain. In addition to which, he had a good moral training at home. He was respectful to his superiors, obedient to his parents, and altogether the best material of which a nation could be made.

We have lived to see an unfortunate change. Partly through the growth of immense cities, with the consequent specialization of industry, so that each individual has been required to do one small specialty and shut his eyes to everything else, with the resultant perpetual narrowing of the mental horizon.

Partly through the decay of small farming, which would have offset this condition, for each mixed farm was a college of handicraft.

And partly through the stereotyped forms of religion losing their hold, we see a very different type of youth in the country to-day.

It is the exception when we see a boy respectful to his superiors and obedient to his parents. It is the rare exception, now, when we see a boy that is handy with tools and capable of taking care of himself under all circumstances. It is the very, very rare exception when we see a boy whose life is absolutely governed by the safe old moral standards.

The personal interest in athletics has been largely superseded by an interest in spectacular games, which, unfortunately, tend to divide the nation into two groups—the few overworked champions in the arena, and the great crowd, content to do nothing but sit on the benches and look on, while indulging their tastes for tobacco and alcohol.