

The Ministry of Athletics

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WE believe in athletics with all our heart. They have a use, and he who would prohibit them not only goes counter to honest Nature's spoken plan, but disregards the lessons of history and tries to deprive the greater half of mankind of what may become a real means of grace. It is as natural for healthy and normal young people to engage in games of strength and endurance, and to arrive, in those games, for mastery over each other, as it is for them to sing, or laugh, or speak. In such modes the primal instincts of human nature find an expression which cannot without injury be forbidden. Happily in these days few folk think of singing. "Thou shalt not" in this connection. On the other hand, the Church lifts up her voice to bless where formerly she only interposed to ban. She goes even further than mere endorsement, and this, often with the happiest results. To-day Methodism, with her sister churches, both gives and receives help from a wise participation in these things. Everywhere at her sanctuaries and Sunday Schools clubs of young people find joy, fellowship, and health in the sports indigenous to their respective countries. The writer, living in England, can testify to the excellent consequences which have often followed the formation of the cycle, cricket, football, hockey, and other clubs which are so common a feature of English religious life. "Yea the Church is all the better for her interest in the amusements of the young. It prevents her from growing old and crabbed, as sometimes the Church has been known to do. The juniors are quick to appreciate this interest and learn to look upon the Church as a place of understanding and of human sympathy. It is well for all parties in the sanctuary when the veterans find it difficult to realize their years and the striplings are not afraid to be young.

A PHYSICAL BLESSING.

The ministry of athletics to the well-being of the physical frame is manifold. It touches all round and is felt all through. A good game, where nerve and muscle, foot, and eye, and hand, are compelled to swift and harmonious activities, ministers to the unfolding and increase of every power called into motion. More quickly flows the blood, more brightly flashes the eye, swifter becomes the foot, more dexterous the hand. To make the best of these members, to bring to perfection the powers with which they are invested, is part of the business of life—of religion, in fact. That clearness of head, that ruddiness of rounded cheek, that suppleness of gracing limb, that gleam of swiftly clung eye—these also are beautiful to Him who fashioned man in His own image and taketh delight in His handiwork.

A MENTAL STIMULUS.

To the mind, too, athletics have a ministry. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." "Sickled o'er with the pale cast of thought," the scholar is apt to find his mental grip grow weak. The mind lives in the body, and suffers if its house falls into disrepair. Brain has better opportunity to flourish when all is well with brawn. This is now so well known that in the great public schools of almost every country, a master seeking an engagement must be able

THIS is the third of our series of articles on World-wide Young Methodism, and will be found particularly appropriate to the present season, when sports naturally occupy so large a place in the life of every normal young person. And nowhere in the world are winter sports more healthful or more universally enjoyed by the youth than in Canada. We must confess that young Canadians generally, and our youthful readers in particular, will appreciate the sane and wholesome sentiments of this admirable and timely paper.

—ED.

to set his pupils an example in many sports as well as in bookishness. A young man must not assume that the sure result of allowing his chest to remain narrow will be that his head will grow long. The intellect is weak or strong the physical life ebbs or flows. Expand the chest for the brain's sake. God is on the watch for golden thoughts and noble plans from that brain of thine. Give it a chance!

A MORAL UPLIFT.

There is a high moral ministry in judicious athletics. They tend to create what in England is known as "the sporting spirit," and that is a spirit of fair play, of give and take, of anti-meanness and of good courage. Possessed of this spirit, a man will scorn to hit "below the belt," he will "play the game," he will deem it beneath him to take an unworthy advantage of an opponent, he will "face the music" when the band tries to play him down. Very important, too, is the fact that athletics teach a youth not only how to win, but also how to "take it smiling" when he loses, and, at the end of every game played in a fit spirit, there must be one, at least. In Britain there is no compliment more valued by the recipient than that contained in the declaration, "He is a good loser." It is evidence of a moral triumph, and proves the acquisition of a moral quality, when a youth can take a defeat with a laugh and a promise to "come again" and reverse the issue.

A SPIRITUAL HELP.

On the physical, mental, and moral sides, then, athletics rightly followed do great and unmistakable good. Have they any spiritual use? Again the answer is on the side of the athlete. It should never be forgotten that everything that does a man good in any way may do a man good in every way if he only will that it do so. If athletics bring fitness for physical and intellectual work, if they strengthen us for moral endeavour, then they minister to the accomplishment of those services, prepare the instrument for spiritual usefulness and enjoyments. Here, too, a clear head, a sharp eye, a tight muscle, a trained hand, and a nimble foot are needed. More than one foreign missionary has confessed that not the least valuable result of his training was received on the field, where he wrestled with his youthful comrades in mimic strife. Wonderfully useful have been found the qualities thus gained in many a smoky and perilous corner of the Lord's battlefield. So, then, youthful athletes may enter into his games for the glory of God and with a prayer for the Divine blessing upon them. He may do so, and he ought!

A POSSIBLE DANGER.

For even games and exercises, innocent in themselves, have their perils and

are sometimes turned from a means of blessing to evil ends. This happens when athletics are overdone, when a young man permits them to make him careless of the Lord's Day, of his work, his studies, or his prayers. Athletics are not life, but a recreation, and must always be considered as subordinate to the task each man is sent into the world to perform. "Let your moderation be known unto all men"—these words may furnish an excellent motto for athletes as well as others. They contain the secret by which our games, our trials of manly strength and prowess, and many another occupation and gift of God can be made to yield up the very best that is in them.

WHAT SOME MEN IN THE LIQUOR BUSINESS HAVE TOLD ME.

(Concluded from page 50.)

as well as any man could know, that the whole environment of the liquor business is bad, bad without one redeeming feature. True, the bar is no place for boys, but without boys to grow into its habitual frequenters and become patrons of its liquors, no bar could long do a paying business. Hence the slogan, "Banish the Bar," is in every way expedient and wise.

Talk Right Out

When minister of still another church, I had felt compelled to say, in my sermon one Sunday evening, some very severe things about the drink traffic. A woman and her child had suffered severely through the drunkenness of her husband. The story is too long to recount here, but I felt compelled, in common humility, to say some very strong things about the business, and, as a Scott Act vote was soon to be taken, I appealed to every citizen to do his duty. On the next day, I met on the street a man who had spent years in the liquor business, though he was not then engaged in it. "Pretty straight talk you gave us last night," he remarked. "Yes," I said, "how did it strike you?" "It was very word true," he replied; and, say," he continued, "talk right out, minister; that's what you're there for." Often since then have I said to myself, when I had seemed necessary to say hard things about "the trade"—"That's what you're there for!" He was right! Our business is to exterminate the unholly traffic in the least possible time, and in this campaign for righteousness we should unite every possible agency and employ every available force. There is nothing good, nothing uplifting, nothing worthy, in the liquor business, and the men conducting it know the fact full well. Let us do our best to put them, not "out of business," but into another business that is good for them and for all whom they serve in it.

Refrain to-night.

And that shall lend a hand of easiness
To the next abstinence; the next more
easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of
nature,
And either curb the devil, or throw him
out
With wondrous potency.

—Shakespeare.