

The Varsity

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TAST year's magazine literature dealt large with the vexed question of college education, those individuals who have never been at a college having naturally the most to say on the subject. It is our purpose to look at one or two phases of our student life which can, perhaps, best be seen from the inside of the university, and by an undergraduate. We are not given to painfully precocious habits of introspection. We cannot stand in wrapt silence listening to catch the faint beatings of our own heart; but yet there are certain characteristics of ourselves which we, as students, can most easily understand and interpret. One of these is the undergraduate department of sport—more especially football. It is a strange thing that while the philosophers of our century have been finding the direction and source of every minute current of mental activity, have been turning little rays of side-light on every habit which leads to thought and action—particularly such as emanate from the university—while our mental microscope specialists have mounted us innumerable psychological specimens and made them translucent with copious watery rhetoric, one of the most manifest expressions of the character of the growing race has been persistently overlooked. A revival of original racial instinct has gone almost unnoticed. The wonderful advancement, the conquest of consideration and care, which the body—as represented in manly sports—has made in the last decade, the records broken on every field, the astonishing multiplication of baseball, football and hockey teams, the omnipresence of the bicycle, the increasing numbers of the patrician golf club—all this surely means something. What can it mean, but a renewal of delight in a strong and active frame, a pride of the flesh, if you will, but none the less a very real and powerful pride. And that sport has rooted itself most deeply in the university,

can hardly be interpreted otherwise than that mind and body are beginning to understand and value one another as they never have since the time of Socrates and Phidias. Matthew Arnold would have called it the union of the Barbarian and the Cultured. But this manner of saying the thing is needlessly pompous. Let us descend from the stilts of the abstract to the surer, if less dignified, foot-gear of the concrete.

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Most representative and most wide-spread of sports is Rugby. If it be not too impertinent for one who does not play the game to speak on the subject at all, we will try to say what the majority of undergraduates seem to think about this sport of sports. We have read much hostile literature, by "old ladies of both sexes," and have heard many hysterical anathemas shrieked at "a game which endangered life and limb for an end which is utterly silly and trivial," "which is both brutal and brutalizing," "which reminds one of the gladiatorial shows of the time of Nero"—all of which is very good, and is sure to make the "gladiator" chuckle immoderately while he judiciously applies the advisable arnica and sticking-plaster. Let us stand for a while with the overcoated line, which borders the campus on a chilly November afternoon, praising or criticising as we please, shouting hoarse enthusiasm, or muttering "things which we had better have left unsaid," if too strong emotion overtake us. The champions daudle out of their dressing-rooms, sloughing off their ulsters and jerseys. They toss the ball about disinterestedly—with only occasional touches of animation. Old opponents greet one another with knowing grins, their meetings afore-time having been memorable. They are all there on the basis of pure manhood, like tourneying knights in the days of chivalry. Some of them, too, may be wearing ladies' favors; for the college girl has won many famous matches—that is another story. But the ball is moving in earnest now. The line of overcoats begins to sway in and out, and surge internally. A long roar goes up which only stops at half time. Now, comes the brutality. These young heroes—or bull terriers—whichever you please, *do* handle each other most rudely. They pitch each other on their faces in full career by crafty duckings. They work dire damage by attempting to go through the scrimmage by ram-like buttings of the head. They trample the fallen. They shed blood. Not uncommonly they break fingers and ribs and collar-bones; even worse things happen. Often there are hot personal combats on the field; men roll over and over locked together like fighting dogs, and are ruled off till the cold douche of helpless inaction chills the devil out of them. Is there anything more we can say against the game? Why, yes—it takes much time and not a little money. All this is "for an end which is utterly silly and trivial," a hard case to argue against surely! But we fear the fighting masses in the field and the shouting, heaving lines which *will* at times burst into it, would never think of arguing the case; to them there is nothing to argue about, so thoroughly are they benighted!