

Athletics-Then and Now

By Professor H. W. Caldwell

In the last thirty years a remarkable transformation has taken place in the form and organization of our colleges and universities. It almost seems as if the very spirit and point of approach has been reversed. Doubtless this is not quite true of any school, and is approximately true only in the great universities, leaving the smaller colleges practically unchanged in many cases. Whether this change is mere change or whether it marks a process of improvement it is not the purpose here to discuss. The movement in athletics is more remarkable even than that in general university life.

Taking Nebraska University as an example, we find the point of departure about 1890. In the early days, individual initiative controlled absolutely. There was no organization either on the part of the University itself, or within the student body. The forms of athletics were simple and in the main without definite aim or end. Running races and running against time were indulged in at irregular intervals, but in no case was there an attempt to train regularly. The events were not planned ahead, but entered upon as the result of banter or fun. The same lack of organization ruled in jumping contests, croquet and lawn tennis games. Little groups near some boarding house pitched horse shoes somewhat regularly as an after dinner dyspepsia antidote. For some two or three years after 1881 a group of S street professors, instructors and students played prisoner's base nearly every pleasant day in fall and spring for an hour or two. Except for baseball, this came the nearest having an organic life of any sport in the University. Even baseball had no regular system of determining membership, electing captain, if indeed there was ever one who held office for more than a single game in the first ten years of the University's life. Games were played with the Lincoln city nine, which had its first semi-professional catcher in 1876, but these were arranged for in a very informal way. By 1884 a little regularity came into the baseball field, but not until 1889 does there seem to have been any regular series of games arranged for with a fairly definite organization to manage the business. December 28, 1891, the Western Interstate football organization was perfected; the same year a field meet was held, and the University Athletic Association was fully established. But this article is not intended to be a historical resume, so it may simply be noted that since 1891 the growth has been towards definiteness of organization and community management, away from the individualistic and towards the socialistic. In early days the University as such felt little or no interest in the success or failure of any "event," for it was only the individual who had anything at stake; today the failure or success of a "team" is regarded as bringing honor or disgrace upon each individual, since it touches him as a part of the greater whole—

the University—for which the "team" battles.

The development of the last fifteen years has brought with it much good and some evils, although I know there are those in our midst who would reverse the statement. In early days there were few or no evils, for there was no sufficient nucleus around which evil could gather. That the simple life of the early times has much to be said for it cannot be denied, but in a complex organization such as exists today it cannot be reintroduced, so there is nothing to do except to accept the intense life with its close organic being and make the best of it. The old life gave no opportunity for "graft;" the new affords it a lodging place. The remedy—a more perfect organization and a struggle for higher standards, so the power of resistance may triumph. In the formative days there was no undue pressure from without to lead to an over-emphasis on winning. Today the stake is so great that there is danger that "rotten" methods may be resorted to, that roughness will triumph over manliness. The remedy is doubtless two fold—in cases where the man is lacking, enforce definite rules unflinchingly; in cases where manhood is true, aid it in keeping true by a sensitive public conscience. The earlier form of athletics was so informal that there was relatively little danger that the serious work of the University would be neglected. Today the demand is for science in play as well as study. This calls for thought, time and effort. There is danger that it may cease to be a means and become an end.

There was no call for money in the old days—you simply took off your coat and plunged in. Expensive fields, bleachers, suits, training tables, etc., were unknown. The modern athletic contest calls for money in two great quantities. Extravagance is creeping in, and with it danger to both the contestant and the public. The betting problem is no small one, and its corruptions may eat into the very heart of the moral tone of University life. These evils, and doubtless others, must be recognized. However, they may be and must be minimized. Destruction of athletics is neither desirable, nor possible even if it were desirable. Reform, then, is the only alternative. Those who are condemning all athletic contests would be worth more to the University world if they would aid in reform—a possibility, instead of devoting all their breath to "knocking"—aiming at destruction which cannot be. Courage is necessary, and a good solid backing to those who show that they possess the courage and at the same time the common sense to use their courage in such a manner as to be efficient. A more perfect organization—not a return to disorganization—is the need of the hour. A Jerome, a Folk, a LaFollette or a Roosevelt is needed in every University. The student body is in the main sound; it needs strong leadership and it will rally to any standard that means decency and as few evils as this imperfect world can hope to realize till it has had more than one regeneration.

THE COVER PAGE.

For the cut on the front cover page of this issue the management is indebted to the Rudge & Guenzel company. This firm has always been a loyal supporter of University enterprises, and this kindness is only one of the many it has shown us.

The Game of Foot Ball

By John D. Rice

Springing from a multitude of sources, the swelling column of criticisms of the game of football may well be viewed as the incipient stages of what might develop into a sweeping propaganda. The numerous abuses connected with the game, though standing in the relation of the part to the whole, have brought it condemnation from influential sources. The taint of professionalism, insiduously fostered in spite of strict rules, has made itself apparent by the infection it has wrought. Unwarranted brutality through the impression that it leaves has lowered the standard of the game in the eyes of many.

However a diatribe against professionalism and kindred abuses is not necessary. They are self-condemning. But it is the intention of the writer of this sketch to show that football as a game should maintain its place at the head of the list of college athletics. No attempt is to be made to disguise the unsavory elements that have crept into the game as it is often played. Only by taking full recognition of these can the game be discussed comprehensively and with a clear understanding.

In rushing to the defense of the game it is naturally the first impulse of the loyal student or alumnus to call attention to the material good resulting to his college when it has a winning team. Such a view is pardonable, but if left unsupported, its refutation readily seems a matter of fact. Yet such a view is not only pardonable, but it is justifiable.

The devotion of the student and alumni body and of the faculty to their institution is a power that furthers its progress. Hand in hand with intellectual and spiritual development should go physical development. It is ever the glory of man to pride himself upon his powers of endurance, agility and strength. Even among the most athletic people are these qualities admired. In no game more than football are they effectively called into action. Representing then, the best of the physical development of the college and by no means divorced from its culture, in the football team are centered the pride, interest and best wishes of the student body.

Wearing representative colors the team lines up against the players of a rival institution, imbued with the same sense of loyalty and ambition to win as themselves. It is then that the student feels the thrill of personal interest and lends his voice to the singing of songs and to the clamor of inspiring yells. Fully awakened, it is his sense of loyalty to his institution and its interests that is finding a vent.

Can it, then, be denied that football serves to create a devotion and loyalty among the students for their college? The impressions are lasting and the graduate going forth upon the world's highway carries them with him. The conclusion can readily be drawn that just as a united and loyal people make a nation strong, just so does a united, loyal and active student body give strength to its institution.

Right here is a good place to call up a few other considerations. The sceptic will argue that, granting an increased prestige for the college, such an influence might in reality be based upon an infected athletic system,

which may or may not be known to or fostered by the students themselves. Yet he finds his answer in the very fact that little credit falls to the portion of the college that violates the ethics of the game and does not preserve a spirit of fairness. We do not have to go far to find examples, but to call up the most open of these would be but to stir up past unpleasantness and to repeat what is now public knowledge.

Football works its own vindication. The professional or semi-professional player loses caste in the eyes of his fellow students, and it is seldom that he is not sooner or later found out. The abuses as represented by him are ultimately corrected, though not often without an upheaval that shakes the reforming institution to its foundations. In fact the searching light of investigation has already exposed infected systems of athletics and wrought their purification. Such results are helpful to football. Only when abuses, though known, are allowed to continue does the game suffer.

Brutality exhibited in the game is repugnant to practically everyone. It is condemned wherever exhibited and the odium caused by indulging in it ought to deter any player contemplating it. A player indulging in it descends to a lower plane. His is but the outbreak of a savage nature, which the rules, the instructions of the coach, the caution of the officials and chivalrous instincts strongly forbid. It is unnecessary and therefore all the more at variance with the game.

Just as abuses may creep into any system and yet be unable to spoil it because of the solid underlying principles, just so may football be made to suffer and come out of the ordeal better and stronger than ever.

A scruple of sceptic calls attention to the fact that there are other athletic sports and other things that may promote interest in the college as well as football. This is readily admitted, and no attempt will be made to specify as to kind or degree. All that is contended in this regard is that football fosters interest in a college and may increase its prestige.

A parting thought. A sport like football is a good indicator of the energy, aggressiveness and hardihood of our race. Ultra-civilization and great refinement induce passiveness and a tendency to the path of the least resistance. It is well that men have ideals to strive after other than the mere pursuit of gain. Clean, healthy exercise is the buoyant factor of human activity, and it falls to the lot of everyone to encounter hard knocks.

Besides moral and intellectual development, our race needs stamina, strength and endurance. Do not, then, seek to discourage football. Properly played it is a test for all of these qualities. But let brutality and professionalism be weeded out and let the game continue as an honest American sport.

The Registrar is preparing to issue a special edition of the University calendar. Heretofore there has been a large demand for the calendar during the second semester and in order to satisfy the demand this edition will be issued next spring.

A new edition of the High School Manual, containing suggestions from the heads of departments concerning arrangement of courses of study, etc., is being prepared for publication.