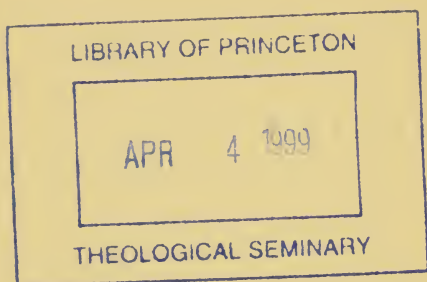


The Place of Athletics in College Life.

ETHELBERT D. WARFIELD,

PRESIDENT OF LAFAYETTE COLLEGE.

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college life



THE
PLACE OF ATHLETICS
IN
COLLEGE LIFE.

A PLEA AND A PROTEST.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

These little papers appeared in the New York *Independent* for January 25, 1894, and the *Forum* for January, 1894, and have met with a reception and a demand which seems to justify their publication in pamphlet form. They are, therefore, now sent forth, with the consent of those periodicals in the hope that they may do something at once to justify and safeguard the manly sports of our American colleges.

November, 1894.

The demand for these papers has been so steady that they are again printed. The original form is retained because it is interesting to observe what reforms have been made and what yet remain to be accomplished. It is especially noteworthy that the taint of professionalism continues to be the greatest evil, and most persistent in connection with baseball. No solution of this difficult question can be reached which does not start from the position that all forms of sport must be the recreation of gentleman in order to be classed as amateur. To play ball for money is not dishonorable, and may be highly laudable. But the man who does it is not an amateur. Nor can it be expected that the boy who seeks recreation in games can compete on equal terms with those who make games a means of livelihood. College games should be limited to those who devote no more time to them than can be spared from the serious pursuit of College studies.

August, 1908.

THE PLACE OF ATHLETICS IN COLLEGE LIFE.

THE PLEA.

In an article on "Football as a Moral Agent," in *The Nineteenth Century* for December, Mr. H. H. Almond, Head Master of Loretto School, says:

"When the complaint was made to a well-known head master that British boys talked far too much about football and cricket, he answered: 'And what do French boys talk about?' "

The question was highly pertinent and it is worth while to compare existing conditions in our American colleges resulting from the interest in athletics with the conditions which might exist, have existed, and do exist elsewhere. Athletic sports have done so much for English and American school and college life that we may well be careful how we assail them. Let us mark well the current abuse of athletics in a few great schools and colleges, let us press for reform in existing methods, let us discourage newspaper notoriety, and insist on the maintaining of municipal authority; but let us not allow abuse to forever filch from us our outdoor games.

Let us inquire what are the conditions of university life in other countries where we hear of no football or baseball or cricket, and, following the lead of the quotation above, let us first look at France. I quote, and in quoting largely condense, a part of a paper on "The Latin Quarter" of Paris, from the December number of *The University Review*, by Post Wheeler:

"The great institution for amusement in the Latin Quarter is the *Bal Bullier*—the student's ball. . . . It is held three nights in a week and every one goes. . . . The floor of the *Bullier* is ten feet below the surface of the street. The door in appearance is a narrow hole in an innocent-looking garden wall, and at first sight one wonders how it can swallow the hundreds who go in thereat. Once in, however, you walk down a broad carpeted stair into a room whose very size makes you stare.

"Imagine, if you can, an immense hall whose roof is supported by a single row of pillars, etc. . . . At the right the whole side is thrown open to a grove and gay canopies, and set full of tables for drinking. Scattered here and there are games of chance, and all the devices in which the French grisette delights. At the upper end of the hall is a miniature theatre, where one can sit and listen to a fair vaudeville performance without extra charge. The girls—at least in summer—are in a large majority, and even the most bashful of men need have no fear of not finding a partner. Indeed, if you do not take the initiative you may be fallen upon bodily and carried into the whirl. And so the evening goes on till by midnight the gaiety rises almost to a frenzy of hilarity. . . . On some of the crowded nights the noisy crowd overflows or spreads itself in little pools and whirling eddies in the street. The staid old *Sorbonne*, France's ancient college of letters, has seen some queer sights. Surely if the ghost of its founder haunts his marble statue above the entrance, it is his purgatory to witness such desecration of that classic spot."

It is not necessary to quote more. Our writer tells us that for the girls "it is a jolly life while it lasts," but with needless particularity he goes on to say: "But beneath this glitter and apparent jollity there is too often heartache and despair." This of the companions of the students' revels; but of the students nothing; nothing of their wasted lives, of their growing habits of dissipation, nothing of heart-broken parents in provincial homes, nothing of the moral leprosy disseminated throughout that lovely, but luckless, land. Alas! for generations of youth who have haunted the students' quarter at the University of Paris and have gone forth into the world, till

"Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well
undone,
Death came tacitly and took them where they never see the
sun."

Can men reared under the blight of such moral influences ever become the safe repository of free institutions? Will they ever grow up to be worthy of that higher freedom wherewith Christ doth make his people free? What wonder that a mad materialism rules wherever papal absolutism fails to satisfy with penance and absolution!

But how is German university life; is it much better? Surely not much. It is less fascinating, appeals less to the high spirits of fun and frolic, and has less of the marks of public dissipation and dissoluteness; but the standard of life is un-American, and beneath the ideals received from our stalwart ancestry. Beer and tobacco are the inevitable concomitants of German student life. Not merely beer and tobacco, but as the little German

boy is said to have replied, when asked what he wished Kris Kringle to bring him at Christmas: "*Wurst, wurst, immer mehr wurst.*" So it is beer and tobacco, in season and out of season. Allowing room for a strong personal prejudice against both, they must by all candid persons be admitted to be a poor foundation for both physical and moral health. Thus, as a recently returned American student naïvely remarked, it is necessary, in order to accomplish the best results, associate with men in the same line of work, and get the important knowledge of just how to prepare for the final examinations, to become a member of a students' *Verein*, or club; and all clubs have their *Kneipe*, or drinking bouts, and a new member, or *Fuchs*, may at any time be required to drink as much as any older member may desire him to drink. Such are the meetings of the hard-working, earnest-minded students, meetings often prolonged till morning, and giving color to the best thought among the students.

The other side of German student life, the side which is in close parallel with our athletics, is found in the clubs which countenance, if they do not actively encourage, dueling. The present Emperor, reversing the policy of his honored father and grandfather, openly advocates dueling. He sees the need of cultivating a manliness which is not to be found in close and stuffy rooms where the fumes of beer and the smoke of reeking pipes becloud the brain and enervate the heart. He has no knowledge of any better way to stimulate personal courage than by setting men padded to the chin to slashing at each other's faces. What a mockery of manhood it is! What a travesty of personal competition!

These are typical scenes from French and German college life. The same wholesome return to country life in the eighteenth century, which gave England the poetry of the Lake school and the prose masterpieces in which nature freely breathes from the Sir Roger de Coverley papers of Addison to the essays which Ruskin penned at Coniston, inspired the renaissance of field sports. These sports have run off into many foolish and hurtful vagaries over and over again; but have been as often reclaimed. What we must now do is to reclaim them once more.

The reason for the existence of most outdoor games is twofold—the pleasure which men take in them and the good which they do to men both morally and physically. We have nothing to do with the first of these reasons except to mark the dangers which spring from it. It is because games are fascinating—that they overdevelop the love of personal emulation, that they too greatly stimulate competition, and lead to betting, gambling, and professionalism—that they must be watched. But it is only human nature, as ever, asserting itself. Lawyers become shysters, physicians patent medicine quacks, authors bitter, envious egotists, under similar circumstances. To win by all means, to put money in the purse, to have a great name known to rumor if not to fame. These and their like have undone many men. The great bowler and the great beau haunt the cricket ground and the ballroom long after their contemporaries have settled down upon more real fields of contest; the man who has made a life work of play still treads the cinder path and the comic stage. Extravagances must

be reckoned with, but must not too quickly be declared the normal result of any given course of action.

With the second reason for the existence of athletic sports we have much to do. We live in an age of returning enthusiasm for outdoor life. The summer is eagerly looked forward to by nearly every man who can hope to save a tiny mite that he may have a run into the country on his bicycle, a row down the river in his boat, a quiet week's fishing in some favorite stream, or just a brief, idle sojourn, doing nothing and yet much, in close communion with Nature as she is met in mountain and forest. Vigorous hours in office and in shop are the reward of these things; hopeful hours take the place of timorous days, as the blood full of red corpuscles once more tingles to the fingertips. Men, finding these things so, rightly conclude that in the economy of education, when the great thing is not how shall we make this shapeless hobbledohoy a scholar but a man, there must be a place for the things which minister to an abounding vitality. Athletics, field sports, spread the chest, deepen the flush upon the cheek, quicken the step, brighten the eye; are they not the proper instruments for the accomplishment of the desired object? Yes, and no. Neither into athletics nor into learning may we tumble, helter skelter. I knew a lad who with deeply stirred ambition, but no knowledge of algebra or geometry, bought a trigonometry and fell to master it. Need any one be surprised that his assault failed? The choice of boys is apt to depend upon the excitement, brilliancy, and popularity of this or that sport. In all things they must be guided, in athletics, not more, but just as much as in Greek.

Our boys need and must have the outdoor life. We want them to find their place and fill it. Football shows a better sight a thousandfold as the match goes on, with the cheering hundreds shouting their approval, than the French *Bal Bullier*. A sight infinitely better for spectator and participant, though but twenty-two boys get all the good the game supplies—though those twenty-two get, also, all the evil the game occasions. Compare that evil with the evil of the German *Kneipe*, or compare that open-eyed, open-mouthed, open-hearted crowd with the secret assembly which watches the *Schlägerei* at Heidelberg or Bonn. Those who look on and only shout are getting so much outdoor air; and have their places on scrub or class teams, on baseball nines, or boat crews, or only play in a “picked-up” game on the back campus, or in a game of tennis; or, finding the outdoor life the pleasant and profitable thing it is, take up regular tramps into the country round about. Boys must not dig at books all the time; boys must grow to men, big-limbed as well as big-brained. Fill the chest as well as the brain with fresh breezes from the crests of the Appalachians as well as from the heights of Helicon.

All of these things minister not merely to the physical but also to the moral nature. Most outdoor games not merely strengthen the limbs, give certainty to the movements, make skilful the hand, and sure the eye, but also give a great command to the will over the actions of the body. The well-trained will in a successful ball-player is as important as the steering gear in a line-of-battle-ship. Not merely courage, which is often cited, but all forms of self-control are put at a premium.

The true athlete cultivates that *σωφροσύνη*, which to the Homeric Greeks was self-control, prudence, discretion; and which later also set the high virtues of sobriety and chastity in its constellation.

What we want vigorously to protest against is the overdoing of games which spoil the games and spoil the men—against the tendency to make a great spectacle of our youth. Alexander the Great scornfully refused to compete in the Olympic games, while the dissolute Roman emperors fought as gladiators in the Coliseum. The scene of a competition may greatly change its character. Sometimes the “hippodroming” is carried so far that the successful athlete draws perilously near to the dime museum freak. The gambling and the gate-money evils ought to have such attention that no man may see any analogy between a gentleman’s amusement and a horse race or a traveling circus.

These things aside, we must safeguard our games; for in them lie the best protection we possess against the social sins of France and the gregarious vices of Germany. They afford, moreover, a clean subject for common talk, a subject in which teachers and taught can claim an equal share. I wonder how much young men everywhere talk about such things as are focused in the *Bal Bullier* scene; talk which they do not repeat to father, mother, or sister, which they do not share with teachers or respected friends. Some, surely, but how much more would such things be spoken, and speech translated into deed, if it were not that athletic interests afford a safe and sure ground of common discussion!

Every gardener knows that but few soils will carry a complete sod of a single variety of grass. Interstices always remain. Into these, other seed fall and spring up. Hence it is usual to make a sod for the lawn for several kinds of good grasses, otherwise rank weeds would seize the tempting opportunity and quickly hide the good grass, and even eradicate it. So with college life. Men are not intellectual animals only, but not less social and physical beings. Into the life filled to satiety with lessons, recitations, lectures, and all forms of intellectual effort, relaxations must come. The safest relaxations thus far found by faithful and anxious seekers are those which center about the athletic field.

In our righteous warfare against abuses, let us practice the temperance for which we plead, and not yield to the temptation so fatal to reformers to become fanatics.

THE PROTEST.

College athletics, with all the objections that can be raised to the conditions just now so plainly thrust upon public notice, are an unqualified good. They have done more to purify, dignify, and elevate college life than any other influence brought to bear in the past quarter of a century. No man who is conversant with the inside history of the public schools and universities of England and the colleges of America can question this. Many forms of disorder, "barring-outs," "stacking rooms," and so forth, have almost disappeared since the animal spirits of our youth had a systematic outlet. Good morals have been vastly benefited by the strong appeal which systematized athletics make for outdoor life, by the constant testimony which they bear to the close connection between frugality and regularity of life, and vigorous manhood. Vices—some of which cannot even be named—which exist wherever men, especially civilized men, are brought together, have been greatly checked. Clean living has found a great coadjutor. Let any man of fifty compare the college escapades of his own day with those of the present time, and he will confess that the rare exception of to-day was frequent then. College life is not to be charged with these irregularities. Put a number of men together, with human appetites, vitality, and a love of freedom, and they will do the same things in city or country or college. Neither parental nor collegiate restraints have ever prevented, or ever will prevent, these things. Something better must be laid before our youth, and a stronger attraction must take the place of the attraction to evil.

While I am a strong believer in college athletics, I am not at all of the opinion that they are the best form of bodily exercise. I fully agree with the view expressed by Professor Mahaffy in his "Greek Thought," that not athletics of the gymnasium and the *paloestra*, but "field sports—hunting, shooting, fishing—have produced the finest type of man." The virtues of horsemanship, shooting, and fishing are more akin to mastery of self, and the close relation of man to nature. They beget the larger and the broader man. But they require time and money beyond the scope of college life. Even at Oxford, tandem-driving has long been reckoned the eighth deadly sin, and fox-hunting, which my reverend tutor indulged in each Thursday during the season, came next in the *index expurgatorius*. Field sports being largely out of the question, let us weigh the things which are available for the bodily training of our students.

Among the college sports, football, baseball, and lawn-tennis are practically universal; track athletics, boating, and lacrosse are next in order; while cricket and other games are played but little in American colleges. Tennis is the game which makes the strongest claim for genuine popularity. Its clean and wholesome nature, its moderate demands upon the strength of the player, and its sufficiency as exercise, give it a high place in the list of games. Its weak point is its comparatively private character. It takes no place as a factor in class or in college life; it enlists no large number in its games; it has no gregarious, no communal force. This is a serious lack. Men need in college, as in citizenship, a focus. The town-meeting of the student body is found on the athletic field.

Football has many claims for popularity. It has all the dubious but powerful attraction of a contest between man and man. This is an element in human nature which must be directed, since it cannot be suppressed. It shows itself in the competitions for honors and in oratory, in every form of sport, in every phase of human life, at the bar, the hustings. It is a force which may lead to mere envy, strife, or cheating, or may make men emulous of all virtue. Football, when properly played, is a school of morals and of manners. The man who loses his temper in the scrimmage will be surely outplayed. The man who plays an off-side and unfair game may at a critical moment lose the few yards which will give his opponents victory. As for the brutality of the game, the element of opinion intrudes here. I do not think it brutal. Its brutality will depend on the men who play it, the referees and umpires, the men who from year to year make rules for the game, and on the alumni and faculties who tacitly or otherwise approve the rules. This much must be admitted. Football is a game for boys or very young men, and it requires careful training for hard games. It may be, therefore, a dangerous game. It exposes younger men to injury from mature men. The untrained boy is out of place in the contest.

Is this necessarily an argument against the game? Certainly not. There are few sports which do not require some practice or training. It means, first, that if it is to remain a college sport it should be guarded on the one hand by excluding mature men—in short, by a strict undergraduate rule; and on the other hand, by keeping back undeveloped boys—for example, by refusing permission to members of the Freshman class to play match

games. Again, there creep in from time to time phases of play which, while not at all brutal, are dangerous. Thus, the "wedge" is simply a test of pushing power. When the wedge breaks, the men are so entangled that sprains are of frequent occurrence. After playing the old open game in this country, I played the old-fashioned wedge game at Oxford, and was at once impressed with its clumsy and dangerous character. It was with the utmost regret, therefore, that I saw it introduced into American football, in a more effective and scientific form, but only rendered more dangerous thereby. Keep football to the undergraduates; eliminate the younger element of the Freshman class; have the medical director omnipotent in excluding boys weak in heart or suffering from strains; see that there are enough umpires to check sudden gusts of temper (boys are human, but should be taught the penalties of too much human nature), and not only enough umpires but men of resolute love for fair sport; do all this, and football is a game to hold to. Let professionalism creep in, let men take post-graduate courses in order to play football—nay, even encourage graduates to play—and the game may soon be tabooed.

Of baseball, less need be said, though I am convinced that baseball is a more serious problem within college walls than football. The special skill and the special danger of the positions of the pitcher and catcher make the temptation of professionalism greatest just there. A man brought to college to play in a position of this sort is a moral canker long before he is known, for some of these men are beyond detection at first, and when known to some who ought to care more for college morals than

for college games, are not always unmasked. More than this, baseball has a longer period of training and a longer season, and more games played away from college. Football occupies from about the first of October to the first of December; baseball from the middle of January to the middle of June.

The time that such sports occupy may be only what is properly given to physical training. It may be half the day. In Lafayette College the time is practically just what is required in the gymnasium, and at the same hours. The loss of time is more in the talk and discussion which spring up around a topic of absorbing interest. A football season, for this reason, may become as bad as a presidential election to the country at large. Ordinarily, however, this is no great evil, and football is a better subject for social talk than some things that used to intrude into such coteries as now waste time over athletic possibilities. The real student is not distracted. The average college man, who will not "talk shop" any more than the average business man, is not materially injured.

When we come to consider the evil influences engendered by college athletics, we face a different condition of affairs. There is a great and crying need of reform. The sore spots are "foreign games" (games played away from the colleges) and gambling.

My personal convictions are that college games should be played on college grounds, and only on college grounds. Further than this it is not necessary to go, if training on the part of the team is what it should be, for it should be borne in mind that, if the players are well managed, it is not they, but the camp-followers, who are respon-

sible for the dissipation which takes place after games; and I am confident that I am within bounds when I say that the more serious acts of a bad nature are caused by young alumni and former students. This latter class is a large and always an aggressive one, especially when they have been dismissed from college. The small colleges are not much troubled with the evil of "foreign" games. They feel, however, that their athletic interests suffer from the ill report which proceeds from the aftermath of the great city games. I especially hope that Christian education may soon be cut off from any part in the awful desecration of our great national feast-day.

And desecration it is. We think of the day as one set apart for the giving of thanks to God for national benefits. The memories connected with it make the home the first of these benefits: the Christian home with its self-respecting manhood and womanhood. Next to the home, citizenship is the most precious of these benefits—free citizenship which imposes the duty of observing the law and proving the right of men to govern themselves. Upon such a day to find great institutions founded for the training of our young men in the highest manhood turning them loose upon our greatest city to lead it in a very carnival of vice, is shocking in the extreme. Make as much allowance as we can, we cannot excuse it. Streets ringing with rowdy cries; theaters stormed and interrupted; houses which no young man should ever enter—saloons, dance-halls, and worse—thronged with excited, overwrought young men, who would never have come in contact with such scenes but for the conditions of this day—are such circumstances the proper avenues to happy homes and useful lives, or

the first acts in lives of temptation and vice? Not all are college men—not a majority, not even a large minority, it may be; but without the college element, without the fluttering ribbon of blue, or crimson, or orange and black, without the college game, the Lord of Misrule would not walk the streets this night.

And how much gambling in and out of college is caused by these great games? In college the feeling with most men is sober, and opposed to the thought that lies at the basis of gambling, whether it be the calculating desire to get something for nothing, or the reckless desire for excitement. But in the hotel corridor, on the field, or in a shouting crowd of irresponsible unknown men or rivals there is only character to steady the half-developed boy. A bluff, a taunt—and the bet is made that eventually makes one man a gambler and deprives another of his proper spending money for months. And then it is surely a shame to feel and know that a college game is as much a gambler's field as a race track.

The question of gambling concerns the small colleges but little. Few men learn to gamble where they have nothing to stake. Poverty is a blessing in such a case. More money changes hands, it is said, on the Thanksgiving game of football, than all the boys at many a college of three to four hundred students spend in a year. Gambling is a universal vice, however, and a most fatal one. Anything which tends to lessen it will be a boon to the country.

What has been said of gambling applies also to the question of gate-money. It is the lack of money which seems to our struggling colleges to be the root of all evil. They stand agape when they learn from the pub-

lic press that the income from the Thanksgiving game of football is greater than the total annual expenditure of their trustees for the support of twenty-five professors and the education of three hundred boys. What does this imply? A wild extravagance in athletic outfits, in traveling with special cars and stopping at expensive hotels, in hiring trainers—an extravagance which communicates itself to the smaller colleges and leads them dishonestly to contract bills for athletic supplies which they can never pay.

Public opinion demands that there shall be an end to this. The way to stop it is to play all games on college grounds. Not only must the games be played on college grounds, but on such college grounds as have about them the college atmosphere. A city ground used by a college will never have this. How many parents have read with wonder, and alarm for their boys, of teams going to Springfield several days before the game, and of the preparation there? How many have wondered why it was that, despite a widely published proclamation requiring students to report at one college at midnight on Thanksgiving, or at noon on Friday at latest, that the team remained at a New York hotel till Monday, and then returned in a triumphal procession? Had the team ceased to be students? Or were they, as some newspapers said, too battered and bruised to return? If the former, why? If the latter, then the game as played is brutal, and its grave should be prepared.

Whose is the responsibility? Let us not shirk our share. College life is as important as college learning. The teaching which instructs the mind, but leaves the

man an uninformed and half developed being, is radically wrong somewhere. No college can say, "We *teach* the students, and our responsibility ends there." The colleges must be tried, as other institutions are tried, by their fruits. Wise parents expect their sons to be taught by example as well as precept, and to be made men as well as bachelors of arts.

There are, therefore, real abuses connected with these games. But shall we abandon the manly features or reform the abuses? It is a question for the large universities to answer. The small colleges will be able to hold their boys within bounds for the present. The small college is still democratic. Its president and faculty and students are still the closely knit fabric of a simpler time. There are no distinctions of rank and wealth. The president relies on the love of the boys, and wins it by seeking to aid them in all right ways. No high wall of affairs shuts him off from them; no intrusive demands of the outside world draw them away from him. The influx and efflux of a great university make the voice of the public more potent. What are the people saying?

(1) *Football is become too dangerous; accidents too serious.*—Let the colleges heed the cry. Let the alumni and faculties put on foot a radical revision of the rules. Let games be only between college *boys*. The Eton-Harrow cricket-match is a greater function in England than any university match. Everywhere the youth of a country are dearer and more influential than the brutal manhood. Make football a fine sport of manly boys, and there will be fewer prize-fighters, "toughs," and men of doubtful character at the games, but more mothers and sisters and wise and prudent gentlemen. Drive out

the professionalism, bring in the spirit of fair play, and revive a love for the distinctive spirit of each college's own breeding.

(2) *Games in great cities have become the occasion, if not the cause, of vice.*—Let games, then, be on college grounds. Then if this or that college cannot, or will not, suppress drinking and gambling, it will remain with public sentiment to decide whether they deserve support or not.

Let us all, as citizens, as well as teachers or preachers, seek to build character on a sound basis. Let us relegate every brutal sport to the limbo to which our Puritan forefathers sent bear-baiting and dog-fighting, and to which we are trying to relegate the survivors of such barbarities, as prize-fighting. But do not let us lose our heads and throw away our manly sports. We might as well abandon a democratic form of government because Tammany Hall has grown up under it. Reform, and not destruction, is the need of the hour. What we need is to combine to urge the naturally studious to cultivate their bodies; the naturally vigorous in body, to cultivate their minds. Such efforts will only partly succeed. But instead of the sharp line between the stoop-shouldered student and the riotous or negligent loafer, there is now a large and well-ordered majority of men who study well and take a reasonable amount of physical exercise. As college elocution centers on contests in oratory and debate, as college literary work centers on college papers and college essay-prizes, so college athletics center on teams and match-games. Prizes and teams and match-games all have their evils, evils of distraction and attraction, but they are indispensable until some better plan of stimulating and perpetuating effort is devised.