

# The Lutheran Visitor

GOD'S WORD, OUR RULE; CHRIST, OUR PATTERN; A PURE FAITH, OUR WATCHWORD.

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## Editorial.

We think the strong words of Professor Recklessness and Brutality. Stevens of Washington and Lee should open the eyes of those in authority to the growing abuses of the brutal sport of foot ball. We are in favor of all manly and elevating forms of athletics, boys at college need wholesome exercise, but when any form of sport is known to be injurious and debasing it should be abandoned. Hear his judgment on foot-ball:

"The idea that springs most promptly into consciousness about football is its reckless brutality. Yet this is the special feature that seems above all others to ensure its popularity. The element of savagery in human nature that makes cruelty the pastime of the small boy remains latent throughout life among perhaps the majority of men. The knowledge that blood may be shed, that danger to life or limb must be incurred, has an indescribable charm for a large proportion of the spectators at the football field. Everybody knows that life may be lost by railway accidents, or by summer bathing, or even by paralysis due to long sermons in church; but the number of such casualties in proportion to the number of persons directly concerned is too small to produce any excitement. Risks must be taken in everything we do, but it is only the obvious and dangerous risks that bring pleasurable agitation. There is then a widespread and enthusiastic demand for football because it is dangerous, because it is war, even though on a small scale. One of the best known of medical journals, the London Lancet, chronicled 23 deaths due to football in England during the year 1892, and 28 in 1893. The number of casualties that escaped notice is not known, but 109 were serious enough to require hospital treatment, including 34 broken legs, 20 broken collar bones and three cases of concussion of the brain. During the season just ended, despite improvements

in the rules of the game, there have been at least seven deaths due to football in the United States, and over 70 recorded injuries so severe as to require surgical treatment, with a large number unrecorded. Within sight of the writer's home there have been two cases of concussion of the brain requiring hospital treatment.

"In comparing football with other sources of danger we are not concerned so much with the absolute number of casualties as with the ratio of casualties to participants. At West Point in 1893 a careful statistical comparison was made by local medical officers between gymnastic exercises, horseback riding and football, as sources of injury to the cadets. Of the 80 cases 9 were due to the gymnasium, 17 to riding, 54 to football, or six times as many to football as to the gymnasium. Of the days lost from scholastic duty 11 were due to the gymnasium, 54 to riding and 277 to football, or 25 times as many to football as to the gymnasium. The average enrollment of cadets that year was 260. The percentage danger due to football, more than 20 per cent of the enrollment, is thus seen to be extraordinary. But in reality to obtain the comparative percentages of football and riding those of football should be multiplied by three, since football was played only once a week and riding was done three times a week. To obtain a comparison for football and gymnasium accidents, the football percentage should be multiplied by six, since gymnasium exercise is taken six times a week.

"It may perhaps be said that all cases of brutality in playing football are indirect violations of the rules of the game. But if this must be granted, the actual result in deaths and broken limbs and shattered health is a stubborn answer. No game is civilized that requires the presence of surgeons and hospital equipment. Intercollegiate football is as merely collective prize fighting for championship and gate money. Its essential brutality can never be true. The victim of slugging feels bound to

avoid informing on his assailant because he would be regarded as pusillanimous for doing so. Slugging generally passes undiscovered by those whose duty it is to prevent this evil, since the very conditions of the contest make it impossible for one man to see or control the actions of nearly two dozen in the confusion of such play. Despite its roughness, it may be reasonably tolerated among students in the same college; but so soon as the intracollegiate feature is replaced by intercollegiate competition a Pandora's box of evils is opened. It may seem as if a competitive game between two colleges ought to involve no principle different from that of a contest between classes in the same college. But experience has shown that the difference is great. To quote the words of Dr. Wiler, who at Cornell university has had exceptional opportunities for information, between the intracollegiate and the intercollegiate forms, the distinction is substantially as between recreation and destruction, liberality and extravagance, emulation and hostility, zeal and ferocity, music and noise, enthusiasm and hysterics, hilarity and rowdyism, moderation and excess.

Ferocity in competition and recklessness in rivalry are evils inherent in contests that are intercollegiate, but absent to a large extent from those that are kept within the college. The question of the control of these evils is beset with difficulties. Perhaps the greatest is the attitude of college faculties, whose members regard athletic success as an important means of drawing students. Recognizing the universal demand for athletics on the part of the students themselves, both actual and prospective, they believe that as a business proposition it pays to encourage what seems to arouse the enthusiasm of young men far more than any scholastic attractions that the colleges can offer. No one college feels strong enough to prohibit the participation of its own students in intercollegiate matches, unless most of its competitors agree

to do the same. So strong an institution as Harvard prohibited intercollegiate football in 1885, but the prohibition lasted only a year. Regulations for the control of intercollegiate athletics have been drawn up by committees organized for that purpose, but what suited one college failed to suit another; and general agreement has thus far been impossible.

The fundamental idea that should be grasped by all college authorities is expressed in the following words by President Schurman of Cornell university, who says, (Forum January, 1894), "A limitation which will, I think, be deemed fair and manly, is that these contests between students should be regarded as exhibitions for students, and not primarily for the public. They are prostituted when they are treated as money making shows. The proper place for them is the college field; and in cities this should not be given up to the crowd. The aim of athletics should be to give every student a round, harmonious physical organization, not to train a dozen or two semi-officials to win matches."

A writer in the Advance on "Deaconesses in Methodism," says: "Methodism is but a pioneer in the movement. Other denominations are inquiring. Some are even moving. God hastens the day when in all our allied ranks the women who publish the tidings shall be a great host."

The Lutheran World makes a very appropriate addition to the above when it says: "This is a queer sort of a history. It was Theodor Fliedner, a German Lutheran minister in Germany, in 1836, who was the first in modern times who called women to a deaconess sisterhood, trained them for work and organized them into bands. He is the true 'pioneer in the movement.' It was a Lutheran minister also, the late Dr. W. A. Passavant, who in 1849, in company with Fliedner, introduced the deaconess work into this country. 'Credit to whom credit is due.'"—The Lutheran.