

KNOWLEDGE VS. FOOTBALL.

It was the Duke of Argyle who contended that there are evidences of barbarism in every highly civilized community. He judged men as he saw them in action, striving to get the better of one another. Life, as he interpreted it, is a continual struggle for mastery over men and over nature. There is, too, something always fascinating in a struggle for supremacy, whether it be physical, intellectual, moral, social, political or commercial. Many of these efforts appeal to the very highest motives of man's nature; but mere physical prowess, if employed in a brutal manner, creates disgust and revulsion of feeling, instead of admiration. Intellectual and moral superiority are always admired when used in the interest of noble purposes.

As two illustrations conspicuous in every respect, we select two distinguished scholars, Professor Blake, of the University of Kansas, and Professor Allen, of the University of Missouri. As a lecturer on electricity, Professor Blake is one of the most successful and entertaining that ever graced a public platform. His apt illustrations, his pleasing style, his gentlemanly manner, his freedom from envy, mark him not only as a scholar, but as a true man in every respect.

Professor Allen, in the department of English at the University of Missouri, is another of nature's noblemen. At once an authority, a true gentleman, possessed of critical and comprehensive scholarship, a sensibility as tender as that of a refined and cultured woman, a character that never stoops to little things—a man who is respected and loved, by all who know him, he is the embodiment of dignified manhood. These two professors represent knowledge, ability, power, different in every particular, it is true, from mere physical or brute force.

Now another contrast. There is such a thing as "football." It is called an athletic sport. It is not exactly a "boy fight," but that is what it is when reduced to plain English. Broken bones, bruised bodies, blackened eyes, are the most important trophies after one of these fistie encounters. Surgeons are on hand to treat the wounded, to set broken bones, to straighten flattened noses and take care of the disabled generally. Yet this is called a refined sport, a something over which men and women gloat. It is simply shocking, brutal and inhuman! It proves nothing except bulldog tenacity in a not very worthy cause, and serves only to incite the very worst passions in the human heart. It is a disgrace to a civilized and intelligent people.

Is there not a higher plane than that of "football" upon which the students of educational institutions can give exhibitions of their skill, knowledge and mental power? Why not have competitive examinations in the most difficult studies pursued in colleges and universities? There is certainly a broad field for intellectual contests of a high order. Let ten students be selected to answer questions against ten other students of another university or college upon such a subject as all had studied, and how keen the rivalry would be. Take ten Greek students and pit them against ten Greek students, and then let some one not connected with either institution conduct the examination—a fair field and no favors—how much more satisfactory such a contest would be and how different the feelings engendered, compared with the brutal instincts intensified by a "football fight!" There would be a keen intellectual struggle connected with such exercises, and the stimulating influence exerted along the line of sound scholarship and profound learning would be more than doubled in all such competing institutions.

A new impetus would be given to the teaching in every department of study or investigation. What we most need in this country is thorough scholarship rather than a smattering of learning, and an extended series of competitive examinations, in all branches pursued in college and university, would tend to develop all those qualities in which our institutions are deficient.

It is a common complaint among college and university men that the students just entering upon a course of study cannot write the language correctly, and it would be an admirable discovery to ascertain the degree of their expertness after a four years' course in college or university.

There is one class of students, however, that might be safely entrusted to play at "football," or "fight-ball," and that is the theological students, who are freed without reincarnation from the passions which fire the ordinary mortal. These students need something of the kind, not only for their physical culture, but because of their supposed frequent encounters with his "Satanic majesty" under various guises. This is the only class of students that "football" can be any advantage to. The English idea that "football" makes boys more manly and more independent may be classed very properly with their old-fashioned "bear-baiting, whistling and grinning matches" of the last century. In fact, since the reign of intellect and gun-power, mere physical prowess counts for little except in breaking mules and fighting at Democratic primaries.

Let us get away from the remnants of barbarism as soon as possible, and substitute the reign of intellect for that of mere brute force.