

# THE CITIZEN

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1893.

## THE DEGRADATION OF MODERN ATHLETICS.

### SPECTACULAR FOOTBALL.

Year by year, as the partisans of football increase and multiply, so (says the "National Observer") is the distinction between its two varieties more and more strictly defined. On the one side is the game played for itself, to the bodily and mental profit of the players; on the other, the game as a spectacle designed for the attraction of gate-money.

The essentials to this end are gladiators of the finest quality in the market and the style of play best calculated to excite the spectators. Inasmuch, moreover, as it is incumbent on both sets of hirelings to do their utmost to win the match — and the bets that depend thereon — brutality and unfairness are recognised features in the pastime. The pernicious influence of a crowd that is lavish of applause and disapproval may even be experienced in a match between amateur teams.

In America, where the craze for watching football has reached a point unheard of hitherto, the game has become more brutal and less scientific than it used to be; a development responsible, as among ourselves, for more than one fatal accident.

From Melbourne, too, where the football show is patronised by thousands, you learn that the size of the "gate" is largely dependent on the referee.

For this one will suffer the ring to thrill as its soul desires, whilst that other will secure the very tamest of exhibitions by a too-too pedantic attention to his duties.

The "National Observer" goes on to pass some strictures on the latest developments of the Rugby game in England, stating that in Yorkshire veiled professionalism abounds in the Rugby game, and "gates" are an ambition, and there the old sportsmanlike spirit is very noticeably diminished.

It is also the fact that among the Rugby clubs in the London district, whose matches have begun to attract their thousands, the number of accidents and disablements during the present season is altogether without precedent; and there can be little doubt (it adds) that loose play to the gallery is the chief cause.

[*Further down, in the same edition...*]

### **A SCOTCH [*sic*] MINISTER ON THE GAME.**

The Rev. William McDermott, minister of St. John's Episcopal Church, Glasgow, lecturing to a crowded congregation on the debasement of football, spoke in the highest terms of out-door sports as aids to the physical improvement of man, but he denounced the football of the present day, which was becoming debased through the introduction of professionalism, followed by the brutal conduct of the players and the profanation and blasphemy of both the players and spectators. He predicted that the present debased football would soon have "*Ichabod*" written over it.

In conclusion, he offered a donation of £10 per year to assist in paying for the rent of a field for the young men of his congregation to practice all kinds of manly games conducive to their physical improvement, the conditions being that there be no swearing on the field, that the games were not to be discussed on Sunday, and the members of this games guild were to attend church at least once every Sunday.

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*[In the Citizen issue of the very next day, Wednesday, December 13, the following report appeared...]*

## **FOOTBALL IN AMERICA.**

### **ONE DAY'S DAMAGE.**

In crossing the Atlantic, football has clearly not lost its perils. An American writer has taken the trouble to gather from the New York papers of a single day a list of reported mishaps.

It opens with Captain Frank Ranken, of the Montauk team, who had his leg broken in two places in "one of the early scrimmages." James McNally, of the same team, had all his lower teeth knocked out. Mapes, of the Cleveland team, had a severe shoulder strain. Robert Christy, of the Wooster University, died from a kick in the stomach. (His widowed mother was at his bedside.).

"Captain Waters, of the Harvard team," continues this account, "will never play again owing to a wrench in the knee, to say nothing of a bad bruise over one eye and a blow on the head which laid open the scalp." It is also observed that the conduct of Prentiss at the Crescent-Orange game at Eastern Park is much reprehended, because, when he sees a mass of men on the ground, he "runs and jumps on them, feet first."

At the game at Springfield, Mackie punched his head into Stillman's stomach. McCrea was for several minutes under "a mountain of men," and, after extricating himself, was "badly winded," and took some minutes to recover.

Beard stepped "unconsciously" on Wrightington's head, and Acton hit Beard a smart blow on the chin. It was thought at first, after Thorn was "thrown down harshly and a dozen men had fallen on him," that his nose was broken, but it was only badly damaged.

It appears that the American teams are supposed to play under Rugby rules.

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