



The Meteor.

Edited by Members of Rugby School.

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ANOTHER term is passing away, and nothing is being done towards the formation of a Debating Society. Often as we have brought the subject before the School, we have never heard a single cry raised against our proposition. True we have been met by a stolid acquiescence, which augurs badly for the success of our scheme; but the worst it can possibly mean, as far as we can see, is "Try it yourselves."

The truth is that many of the School think we could not keep up such a society; that our debates would be poorly attended; that a vast amount of common place would be talked; and that none of us would be the better for it.

To all this our only answer is "Try." If Rugby cannot keep up what Harrow and Eton keep up with such success, the sooner we know it the better; if common place *per se* is a bad thing,—and, of course, all debating societies are liable to it,—how is it that every old member of such a society looks back to his time spent in debate with real interest?

But it is almost a truism to say that we can only get readiness by passing through the stage of common place talk; readiness, we mean, not only in speaking, but in seeing the points of a speech, in weighing two sides of a question, in giving weight to our convictions and persuading others of them. Most of our readers can see this, but what they cannot see or will not confess, is the want of interest in general subjects throughout the School, the tendency to be indifferent to politics, as if we could hope to be superior to these paltry questions

which so excite the newspaper writers. The genuine Rugbeian, if he cultivates his mind, likes to write an essay for the "book"; if he cultivates his body, he likes to win a goal for his side. In either case immediate pay is what he aims at.

The Etonian or Harrovian, in many cases himself born to a political life, is not content with talking football shop all the evening, but feels an interest in what his father and his brother have discussed in his hearing all his life.

Now, however, that the power of the country seems less likely to be vested in a few governing families, it is possible that Rugbeian homes may hear more politics talked and have them in every way brought more before them. If we are wise we shall seize the opportunity, and determining at once to have a debating society of some kind or other, only discuss now what form it shall assume. And here, again, let us consent to learn something from the examples of Eton and Harrow. Let us admit old members of the School and any masters who may wish to join us. So alone shall we secure our society from the rise and fall which is so fatal to most school institutions. Nor is there any fear that our seniors will crush us either by long speeches or freezing silence.

At any rate let us try at once to get together a society of some twenty-five members, pledged to begin debating next term, and let us ask the President of the last School Debating Society, who fortunately happens to be one of the masters, to assist in re-establishing it on a similar basis.

It is, perhaps, with diffidence that we should return to a subject that has so often received our attention, but nothing in truth is ever beyond improvement with us, and to scorn advice is but a sign of weakness. On the 14th of November a match was played, as we all know, between a School XX, and a XX of Old Rugbeians from the Universities. It is to this then, as a specimen of Football as now played, that we wish to refer. The first thought that occurs is that it was an excellent match, played with great spirit, and showing much good individual play. At the same time it might have struck an observer that with the exception, of course, of the actual scrummages, there was not enough *Football*, which is after all the fundamental principle even of the Rugby game. When that *vexata questio* arises between a Rugbeian and another Public Schoolman, about the respective excellencies of their two games, the Rugbeian indignantly rebuts the charge of too much *handling* of the ball and of the players' persons, by expatiating upon the dodging that is thereby brought into play. Now there might be yet another, and a very skilful, element of dodging introduced, or rather revised, if "dropping" were more prevalent behind the scrummages. All will acknowledge that a good drop from the middle of a loose scrum is an artistic performance, and most will, with a moment's thought, see that it brings much more advantage than a blind run, which results in the delay of forming and dissolving a scrum. Undoubtedly a long run with a clear ground carries the ball further than a drop, but where the run would be short, and where the forward players can rush on almost simultaneously with the drop, as would be the case in a loose scrum, then by all means let any one who gets the ball in his hand take his drop-kick in the direction probably of the opponent's goal. Even a long and uninterrupted run of a back or half-back would, except for the frequency of it, seem but unfinished play if no drop were secured at the end. Practice in dropping from awkward positions, almost from between the arms of one player tackling another, would be a desirable acquisition, and would perhaps cause goals to become more frequent, and final decision of House Matches more clearly marked,—an improvement much wanted. And such practice might begin in Big-Sides where players do not feel themselves so sternly frozen into caution as in a House Match, owing to the feeling that heavy is the stake,

and every motion is the "cynosure of neighbouring eyes," and every step in the game is to be so rigidly discussed at the Hall fire in the evening. We have taken the occasion of saying thus much, principally because the above-mentioned match was a good criterion of the state of Rugby Football; and while thus suggesting a few weak points to be corrected, we are quite conscious that the game has taken a decided turn for the better since last year, and merely hope that our remarks will be received with that good feeling with which they are offered.

Your esteemed correspondent "Cosmopolitan" has done much service to the cause of the new "Lower Middles:" I do not think he will do as much for the old. No one can do them a falser kindness than the person who recommends them to make frequent visits here after leaving. "Cosmopolitan" himself confesses that their natural instinct, if they come at all, is to come when most of the fellows they know are gone; but he goes on to talk about bright associations and friends in the same breath as he confesses to this revolting sentiment on the part of his protégés. I wonder what are the associations of a Lower Middle. In school hours, inky fingers, blotted exercises, books with half the leaves torn out, cute new fellows perpetually going up, endless talk of parasangs, Gauls, and other barbarians. Out of school they have to talk football or cricket, whilst they hate both, and even their walks in the country are embittered by the necessity of having to carry more coats than are required for their own personal convenience. Their greatest happiness is when they show their own superiority by hearing the new fellows hall-sing, or by asking them their names, or when, on a Saturday night, they gather round the eight o'clock repast which some wealthy acquaintance has provided for them. They leave with Lower Middle ideas in their heads, with Lower Middle slang on their lips. They come back and find their former associates in the Upper Middle, with fresh ideas, fresh life, fresh hours, fresh masters to discuss, fresh interests of all kinds. They are perpetually afraid of opening their mouths for fear of reminding their friends of their own inferiority. If they meet a fellow in the XI. or otherwise a School swell, they shrink from him as from some superior being. It is not their acquaintances but they themselves who are the "snobs." If they meet one of the Masters,

they put "Sir" in at every comma. To the Vith they talk of Exhibitions as Scholarships, and betray an ignorance of the value of Speech Prizes; to Caps they display a total want of knowledge as regards the football rules; with cricketers they cannot talk on Averages. And all this might be spared them, if the most moderate powers of football or cricket enabled them to cultivate the dignified silence of English games. In the bat or the ball they would have a congenial friend who never changes, who remains in the same form where they leave him, who always takes them up where they last left him, and remembers their friendships and adapts himself to their phraseology.

I fear I may seem cruel to your Lower Middle readers; but I must defend the majority of the School from the imputations of your correspondent. And my answer shortly is, stated in its plain brutality, that a Lower Middle Old Rugbeian, who has not frequented the Close, cannot possibly have enough associations to induce him to revisit Rugby often. The "vulgarest beasts on earth" are objectionable here, but can escape notice in a Big Side. But a Lower Middle "with a loud tie and a cane" appeals to our sympathies in a way that challenges observation.

H.

EVER since the reception of that somewhat bitter letter from "F. R. A.," we have been subject to certain qualms of conscience as regards the prominent part we took in urging the engagement of a Racquet Marker. True all doubts on the subject have been sufficiently cleared up by the letter from the Head of the School published in our last, but on seeing our suggestion so suddenly adopted we cannot but feel somewhat staggered at our own audacity; and the question "Has Diver been fairly dealt with?" has occasionally come home to us with disagreeable force. These qualms, however, have latterly been completely set at rest by a remarkable—nay, we may add, a miraculous dispensation. It was some three hours past mid-day on Tuesday, Nov. 9th, when to some observant bystanders in the School Close a Meteor was seen to shoot, with fiery track, across the heavens, and to explode when at its full brightness immediately over the Racquet Court. We are not superstitious, we are not credulous, we do not pretend to a knowledge of astrology,—but who could shut his eyes to such a portent? We can here picture our readers contemptuously remarking "A mere

Meteor! why, there is nothing in that." But we repeat there is a great deal in that. Who has ever yet seen a Meteor in bright sunshine? Was it not specially sent at 3.30 p.m., when the Close was certain to be crowded with those waiting to begin Football? Lastly (and this is no mean climax), why should it dart so swift and so sure, and bury its dying energies in the Racquet Court, if that was not the goal to which its mission was directed? Such an appearance requires no Daniel nor Raphael as interpreter. If an ancient Mexican had wished to express in writing "The Meteor sheds its bright influence over the Racquet Court," how else would he have done it than by a picture such as that which was seen in the heavens on that auspicious Tuesday? Thus it is that Nature prompts us to read. In a word, from the line taken by our brother Meteor we are led to argue, or rather confidently predict, a brilliant future for Gray and the Rugby Racquet-players.

Q. E. D.

NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

Meetings of this Society have been held this Term on Sept. 26th, Oct. 10th, and Oct. 24th.

On the 26th Sept. the Report of the Marlborough Society for the last half-year, and other presents, were exhibited.

A paper was read by J. H. Davies, "On the *D. Cuscuta Hassiaca*," a species of dodder lately found in Lucern, in Herefordshire.

The Rev. T. N. Hutchinson exhibited and described the *Hippocampus brevirostris*, from the Mediterranean.

A satisfactory statement was given of the accounts of the Society.

Dr. Farquharson was elected an Honorary Member; J. D. Lowe, Geological and N. Masterman, Zoological Album Keepers; C. T. Clough, A. Napier, J. Armitage were elected Members, and G. H. Harris Associate.

On the 10th Oct. the President read a botanical note on a perfect flower of the *Lycanis dioica*, found at Rugby.

A paper promised by one of the members on the Japanese silk-worm, not being forthcoming, an article on the same subject, in the *Naturalist's Circular*, was read by the Secretary.

A rule was passed by which all Old Rugbeians can be elected corresponding members of the Society, and W. C. Eyton, late of Mr.