



The Meteor.

Edited by Members of Rugby School.

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It is an unfortunate propensity of human nature to do most things by fits and starts, —to feel a violent passion for one thing one week, and in the second week to find a new attraction, and utterly disregard the favourite amusement of the last week. This spasmodic mode of proceeding is perhaps seen in a Public School more than any where else, and certainly Rugby has frequently shown itself given to such a common weakness. No doubt it is one of the proper arrangements of nature that various pursuits should have their turn, as perhaps if we gave our attention wholly to one subject we should not know the delights of many other occupations. Had there not been an oratorical spasm much might have been lost during the last Term or two, when the Debating Societies flourished so generally. Who knows but what the *Meteor* is a but a spasm; its name at any rate pretends nothing but a momentary flash? The interest in the Rifle Corps burst forth again with a sudden start, and it seems that it has almost as suddenly collapsed, though perhaps there is some comfort in knowing that they can still muster a twelfth man for their shooting matches. But we have other instances to keep us in countenance for our apparent vacillation. A society came into existence last Term under the most distinguished patronage of all our scientific stars, who held their meetings and no doubt ventilated weighty questions at certain stated periods. But even the energy of these learned people has grown lax, and their meetings have dwindled as the fit of inquiry and research died out. Should they not try to resuscitate their

fading spirit? The *Meteor* is aiming at making its momentary gleam into a steady burning flame, and why should not the Natural History Society overcome the proneness to fits and starts, and become an established body? More interest would be excited were the members to write papers for themselves, and not trust to the occasional kindness of a Master. We have been told that beyond an exhibition of stray specimens, there is but little to occupy the attention, or raise the curiosity, of either members or strangers. If only papers were to be read, an audience, surely, would be always found, and by a small amount of trouble on the part of each member, a Society could be maintained with as much success as such Societies meet with at Harrow and Marlborough. There is a new inducement to the acquisition of knowledge now that the Arnold Library is thrown open; and at any rate under the influence of the as yet fresh mania for the opening the door of that retreat with our own key, and of sitting in our own compartment, it is fair to expect that something can be produced to instruct us. And it is, perhaps, more reasonable to expect this, when we see unhappy sufferers under the torments of a "copy," fly with their lexicons and such paraphernalia to the comfortable fire and chairs of the Arnold Library, there to seek the inspiration that their studies never could have given. But let the members of this would-be Society pay speedy attention to their perishing powers, and above all let them remember the proverb

Aide toi, et Dieu t'aidera :
then, perhaps, they may show to us that they,

at least, are above spasmodic propensities. It will be seen that we take for granted that those who belong to the Society are capable of writing papers; and certainly but little credit would be reflected upon them, if there are no fruits from all their learning. At the end of a School list, where the sets are arranged, we find in the place of the old-fashioned three subjects, no less than nine. This is progress indeed; and of course there is corresponding progress in the pupils. Let them then impart to the world what they have gleaned in their sets, and thus, by contributions, each writing according to his *forte*, let the Natural History Society be both amusing and instructive.

OUR last impression contained a protest from apparently an Old Rugbeian, against the monopoly of Fives Courts at a certain hour of the day by one of the Boarding Houses. The protest is seasonable, as, naturally, at this time of year,—amid the attractions of Football and the impediments that weather puts in the way of players in any open Court—new arrangements can be matured so as to be put into practice when the season for those games returns. But not only does there seem to be some change required in connection with the Fives Courts. A rumour has been floating about (for which, of course, there is no responsibility resting on anyone) that there is an idea of an Inter-Public-School contest in Racquets. Should such a proposal ever become a reality, Rugby, of course, will send its two representatives; and then would arise the difficulty,—how are the favoured two to be found, and how are they to be trained? In the case of the crews for the University boat race, we know (for Mr. Skey has told us) how strict is their discipline and diet, and how constant their practising. Though, perhaps, the School would not need to regulate the diet of its champions, still it would have to feed them with Courts, and to see that they did have a proper amount of practice. And in that case something would seem requisite to allow of respectable players getting more practice by more frequent Courts. The present system is probably very ingenious; but unless the Master of one's form closes first lessons early (and even then a seat near the door of the School is essential) or a friend is occasionally charitable, the pleasure of a Racquet Court is almost unknown. The numbers are too large: the competition

too great. There must be some line drawn which will exclude a number of small boys and non-players, so that not even their names can be of use to take up the hours. One's first idea is, of course, to cut off all the new boys and Lower School, and such parts of the School as we are, perhaps, too apt to consider as totally inferior creatures. But we must not forget that, in addition to the awful plague of wearing a black hat, every new fellow has to pay £1 to the Racquet Court; and it seems but fair to allow them at least the nominal privilege of playing on the Court, especially as we can hardly imagine a new fellow to be very pushing in taking Courts. Moreover, it is not the case with the Racquet Court that it is with the Bat-Fives Court. In the latter, the Upper School can always appropriate the Court of anybody in the Middle School; having bought that right originally by paying for the Court. But the Racquet Court was essentially a public undertaking; and, as such, ought always to be open to the whole School, as far as possible, equally.

We then beg humbly to make some such proposal as follows, by which other and wiser people may frame a new plan. Should any such change ever be adopted, we might hope that the play of the School would improve, and improvement is naturally always acceptable and probably possible among any class of players at any game. Let three days out of the week be given up to a certain number of players, say 80, who should be chosen from all the Houses, and who might not have their names down in the book on two consecutive days out of their three. For instance, if Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday were given up, there would be, on an average, 17 available hours per week to be distributed among 20 sets of four players. Then there would be more probability of a larger number of fellows playing decently; and then, too, the method of choosing a partner before being drawn in ties for the Racquets would be very useful; for one pair would learn how to play together, and mutually supply each other's deficiencies, and, by having the chance of playing more frequently, would, of course, make the better match when the ties are drawn. It is needless to mention that the winners of the School Racquets would be the proper representatives of the School at any competition, and it would evidently be far better for them to have always played together. We are, however, taking for granted that the School Ties would be finished and

decided before the time for the Public School competition, and we conclude that this would be the case; however, the Ties could, by proper attention, be finished within a very reasonable time. Supposing three days to be engaged for these 80, the other three ought to be left for the whole School promiscuously, and not divided among different parts of the School, as the contrariety of circumstances generally permits one to get out of first lesson very early on a morning that belongs to another division of the School.

Such, then, is a rough sketch of what might be arranged, and we hope that this subject will not be allowed to drop unnoticed, as we feel sure that some improvement is necessary in the general style of Racquet play in the School, and such improvement can only be acquired by practice, which at any rate leads to, if it does not make, perfection.

“GOOD Americans, when they die, go to Paris,” says someone. Granted: and good Rugbeians, when they leave, go to Oxford. Well, perhaps some to Cambridge as well, but our remarks must be taken to apply to Oxford only. There are two things for which Rugbeians are rightly noted—fellow-feeling and football. We have plenty of proof, when they come down here, that they do not lose these attributes, but we cannot help thinking that they must have rather hard work to avoid doing so; for, in the first place, when they get to Oxford they find no Rugby Club, and in the second, they find no Rugby football. They hear of Clubs of other Public Schools, and they envy: they hear of Football of other Schools, and they sneer, or worse, they go and play an Amalgamation game. An Amalgamation game! All the intricacies and difficulties of real football swamped in a huge round ball. You cannot go wrong; there are no rules to violate; “a child could play at it.” Rugby football professes to be somewhere in footballs, but it is at present unrepresented at Oxford. We should recommend the present generation (we make no recommendation to the past, but merely bear their grumblings); we should recommend the present generation, we say, to see to this when their time comes, and to make it all comfortable and ready for the next.

No one will deny that the tendency of the present age is to be accurate in its measurements.

To know exactly the relative quality and magnitude of everything on the face of the earth, and to value it accordingly. It is hardly surprising that in science the word immeasurable is in every sense almost unknown; that men of science know the distance of Saturn, and the motive power of a comet, with the same ease as ordinary men do their own height and weight: that there is, in short, hardly any extreme which cannot be accurately measured, and reduced to black and white. But the rage has extended far beyond the limits of science: everything around us falls under the same sway; we know precisely how much one town is more healthy than another, how much more popular one church than another; nay, even we ourselves (at least a large and increasing number of us,) have been subjected to the measuring process and have found, by competitive examination, our relative value to the rest of the world in tens and hundreds.

Yet, amidst all this, one thing has entirely escaped, in one branch of knowledge we are still as utterly ignorant as the cannibals of California; it is the measurement of our own sensations, and above all our own likes and dislikes. Years have been spent and volumes written in trying to determine how these sensations are produced, what they are; they have been classified and analysed; you will find numberless philosophers who will tell you when you feel pleased, that it is due partly to a sense of harmony, partly to a sense of the beautiful: but no Aristotle, no Locke, has been found to give us, what we may term, our “Sensationometer;” to give us the means of knowing, in actual numbers, the intensity and magnitude of our feelings. And, alas! we seem to be absolutely without the first elements of knowledge which might lead to progress in this direction; there are points indeed, the laughing point, the weeping point, the shrieking point, at which our sensations reveal themselves, and which might be thought, at first, to serve as maximum and minimum points in our scale. But these are, it is clear, so different in different persons, so subject to variations of time and extraneous circumstances as to be utterly useless.

Yet imagine, reader, for an instant that the great discovery has been made, that you possess the coveted instrument, and consider what intense gratification the use of it would afford you, and the number of interesting problems it might help you to solve. You would have the power, when a sobbing sister assured you that she never felt so miserable, as this letter or that disappointment had made her, of saying: “My dear, you are quite wrong; your sorrow is now just 89°; a week ago, when you were in the midst of the dying scene in ‘Kate’s Revenge’ (3 vols), you were over 92°.” Imagine how consoling, when plucked for your degree, or jilted, or ruined in Agra and Masterman’s, to know for a certainty that your friend Smith, when he underwent the same calamities, was

far more struck down by them, and yet is now himself again. Yet, endless as would be the variety of the questions you might decide, there would be none more interesting than that we purpose to speak of now: the relative discomfort of Business and Idleness, of having too much, and having nothing to do, of being behind Time, and of wishing time to go faster a head.

We are tempted, at first sight, to set Idleness down as a curable, and over-work as an incurable evil and so to assign the latter by far the higher reading in our measurement; but many instances may be brought, without straining the point, to show that it is the rarity of the evil rather than its actual nature which leads to such a conclusion.

None will deny that the number of men in the world who have too much to do, is far larger than of those who have too little; but the disease exists though the sufferers from it are few. Of course there is a conglomeration of evils in solitary confinement—four bare walls to look at, nobody at all to speak to, a prison dress to wear, a stone slab to sit on—these are no small ingredients of the punishment; but, (we scarcely speak from experience,) there can be no doubt that the perfect idleness it involves is one of its greatest miseries. Let us put the two cases side by side. Take a thoroughly busy professional man—a man who has to read his briefs while he eats his breakfast and who at six o'clock has half-a-dozen more that must be known before morning—or a man whose consulting room is filled from nine till four, and who has then a hundred more patients to see before night. Set him down in a small country town or a small watering place with no briefs, no courts, no patients, no hospital, and afterwards compare that man in his present self and his past self in respect of happiness. Naturally enough, for the first few days there will be a reaction, but when the immediate effect of toil is over, and he is thoroughly immersed in his idleness, will he be happier than he was when he had never five minutes to call his own? For our own part we think not.

How does the question affect us? Which of the two would be found to be most irksome to us? There is no difference which more strongly marks the beginning and the end of a school career than its relation to Time; we come to school with very little to do, with work that we can manage with tolerable ease, with very little to think about, very little to look after, with abundance of time for "punt about" or an "end"—we leave school (that is, unless very prematurely superannuated) exactly the reverse. We have a dozen different interests to look to, possibly we are just going to matriculate, or worse still be tortured for Scholarships, we are in the Rifle Corps, we are in the Choir, or we are very eager for our House Football or Cricket, in a word we have almost more than we can do. When the grand discovery of the sensation-

ometer has been made we shall know which of these is the most disagreeable. For the present the decision must be left to individual taste. Certainly the old truth that we like what we have not better than what we have, goes a great way. The perpetual combatant with Time must envy the freedom, the idleness which he possessed two years ago, and the small new-boy—if he ever thinks enough to form any ideas at all—the interest of being busy.

It would certainly influence our decision in favour of the idle life being preferable here at least, inasmuch as those who share it (among ourselves at least) are gifted with the most insensibility to its disagreeableness. There is a real bother in being always behind, in the thought of books not read, grim unseens not prepared for, House twenties or elevens not sufficiently practised, recruits not enlisted, simply from want of time; but it is also really painful to look at the clock and long for bedtime, to wander disconsolately in the close and wonder when the next lesson will come, even though those afflicted with the latter pain may be the more insensible class.

It would be absurd to have written all this and yet end with no moral. Yet it is a simple and one-sided one, and hardly deduced from what we have said.

Here at least, if no other, there is one marked difference between the two classes of sufferers: for those who are entangled in a multitude of ties, who are really busy here, nothing can be done—the multitude of ties cannot reasonably be dissolved; but for you whose complaint is over-freedom, the cure is easy. Read papers at the Natural History Society, join the Rifle Corps, win Drill Prizes, visit the Arnold Library, write to the *Meteor*, and rejoice in your freedom; for the day may be coming when a dozen other things will have to be done than that you wish, and you will be the slave of Time and business.

NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The first meeting of this Society was held on Saturday, the 26th October, the President in the Chair.

Mr. Marshall presented a water-colour sketch, representing the glacial action in Borrowdale.

Mr. Lawe showed the fish which he has been the first to discover in the Lias-shale at Newbold.

After other exhibitions, the President showed wood, bones, and a Mammoth's tooth from the fossil forest at Cromer, Norfolk, and explained the position of the forest, and the beds above it.

It was announced that the Rev. J. W.