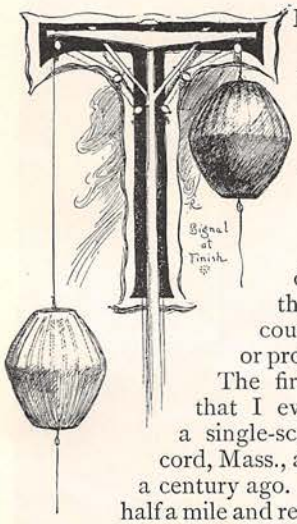
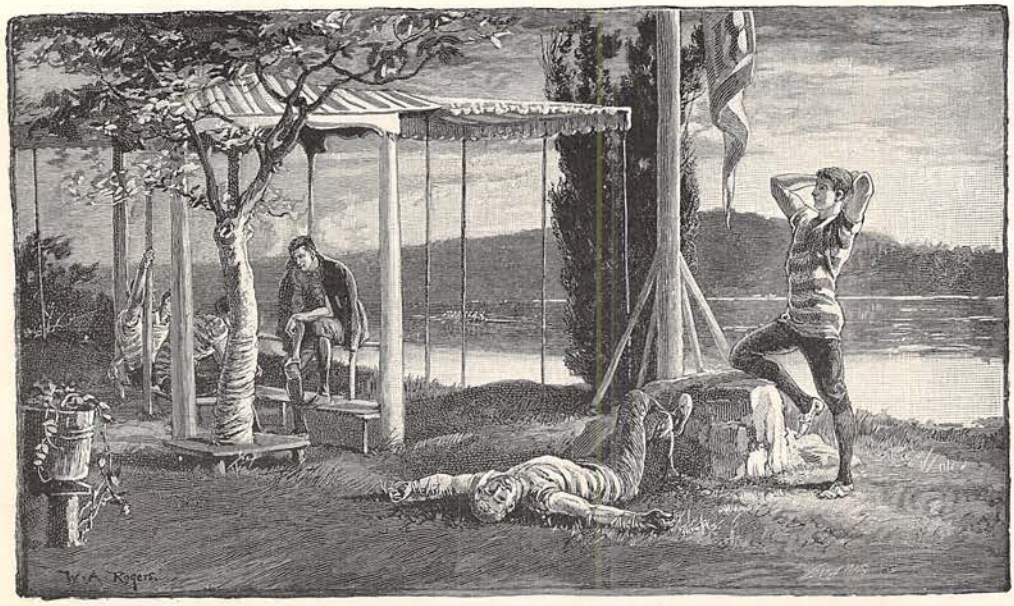
COLLEGE BOAT-RACING.



THE course at New London is four miles straight away; and except that there is a tide, which makes impossible any accurate comparison of the "times" made in different years, there is not a better course in the country, or probably in the world. The first rowing regatta that I ever witnessed was a single-scull race, at Concord, Mass., about a quarter of a century ago. The distance was half a mile and return; and the start was from the old red bridge. It was a hot, bright day,— a Fourth of July, I think. The first to appear was Sam Hoar, in his skiff, *The Pickerel*. It was a flat-bottomed craft, about ten feet long, by two feet in greatest width: short outriggers, and straight ash oars. Sam was a slender, wiry boy of fifteen; as he came pulling up to the start, with a long, lithe stroke, he was greeted with applause from the crowd assembled on the bridge,— the Grand Stand for the occasion,— which he acknowledged with a grin. He seemed quite at ease, both with his boat (which I believe he had built) and with himself: and everybody wished him well, though nobody expected him to win. There were three or four other contestants, but the only other that I can remember was Wilkie James. Wilkie was the favorite against the field; he was strong and robust, with superb chest and arms, and he had a new varnished keel boat, very light and graceful; he wore a crimson silk kerchief on his head, and, except for a perceptible nervousness, looked all over a winner. His stroke was different from Sam's,— it was short and vicious, and more rapid than the other, and I, for one, could entertain not the slightest doubt that it would easily bear him to victory. I was glad of this, for I was very fond of Wilkie; but I was also sorry, for I had a great regard for Sam, and added to that was the sympathy which one always feels for the smaller boy in a fight.

The next moment, the entire Grand Stand was delirious with excitement. Mr. Sanborn, in a stentorian voice, had given the word "Go!" and the boats were off. Grace Mitchell, her lovely face flushing with emotion, screamed aloud, and frantically waved both her parasol



HEADQUARTERS OF COLUMBIA FRESHMEN ON THE THAMES.

and her handkerchief at Sam, who had caught the water first, and was doing well; Maggie Plumley, her glorious eyes fixed steadfastly upon Wilkie, uttered not a sound, but it seemed to me that her look, could Wilkie but have seen it, would have carried him to the front with the flight of a hawk. All the boys were shouting themselves hoarse. Meanwhile Wilkie, in his eagerness to settle the matter off-hand, had missed the water with his left oar, and his right had wrenched the boat out of her course. His efforts to straighten her jerked the left oar out of the rowlock; and before he could get it in place again, Sam was unmistakably ahead. Both of them were already some distance down the river; and the three or four other contestants, falling behind, obstructed our view of the leaders. Several of the spectators, including Willis, the champion runner of the school, had taken their places along the bank of the stream, and were running abreast with the boats, waving their arms and hats, and shouting madly, "Go it, Sam!" "Stick to him, Wilkie!" but which was in front, we of the Grand Stand could not tell. All was a wild, blind turmoil of enthusiasm, suspense, and outcry; in the midst of which I caught a glimpse of Sam pulling his long stroke with apparent ease, and of Wilkie digging his oars desperately into the water, and steering somewhat wildly. Of the other boats, two had fouled each other, and a third oarsman had caught a crab and upset himself, and was swimming ruefully ashore. The flag on the distant turning-stake hung downwards heavily in the still, sunny air. Who was that who was even now turning it? He wore a white kerchief, yes, it was Sam! and he was already stretching out for home when Wilkie came up and turned after him. Would the leader be overtaken? Most of us thought he would be: but Grace was clapping her hands and laughing wildly in triumph; and Maggie's cheeks were crimson, her delicate lips were pressed together, and her charming eyebrows were contracted in a frown of anxiety and disappointment. On came the competing boats; and now it was evident that the wearer of the crimson scarf was hopelessly behind. His great strength and his varnished boat and the fact that he was the most popular fellow in school, could not give Wilkie the race; for there was Sam, lithe and easy as ever, rowing in a dozen lengths ahead. When he passed the line, and backed round his boat so as to face the cheering crowd on the bridge, he was a boy to be envied, even leaving Grace out of the question entirely. Wilkie did not finish the course; he pulled aside, and landed on the bank in a state of great dejection, for he had shared the general anticipation as to the result. This race, perhaps the most exciting to me of all that I have witnessed, proved that skill, and not superior strength, is the essential element in oarsmanship; and that the long, swinging body-stroke that Sam rowed was, easy as it looked, much more effective than the short, jerky arm-stroke adopted by Wilkie. Thinking over the matter by the light of the practical experience of later years, I have inclined to the suspicion that Sam, in addition to having some familiarity with the art of rowing, had been doing a little quiet "training" for the race. He certainly looked remarkably cool and comfortable at the finish, whereas Wilkie was deeply flushed. That was twenty-five years ago: it does not seem nearly so long. And yet Sam, maintaining his winning stroke through life, has reached the winning-post of the Bar, as formerly on the regatta. Wilkie, after having been wounded in the front of the gallant charge at Fort Wagner, has since gone to another world: while as for Grace and Maggie, I make no doubt that they have long been the objects of the adoration of loving husbands, as they were then of romantic school-boys, and have sons as tall and hardy as were the victor and the vanquished of that summer-day's boat-race. But, as I sit here and remember them all, I can almost fancy that we are all young again together.

Regatta-rowing is a modern luxury; it was unknown forty-five years ago, and less than a generation has passed since it attained any considerable vogue. It is the best substitute ever devised for the old Olympic and Isthmian games. Of late years, the mechanical appliances have been greatly and ingeniously improved, until one would almost think that the boats might row themselves. The crews, perhaps, have not improved quite in the same ratio; but the issues are still tried on their merits, and the boys make fast time. The simplicity, the primitive methods, and something of the Spartan zeal of the old times are gone; but other good things have taken their place. It may be said now, as before, the races are rowed by gentlemen, for gentlemen (and ladies); and we may be confident that — in spite of certain tendencies which will be noticed further on — this will always continue to be the case. It is a glorious sport, beneficial alike to the outer and to the inner man; and, notwithstanding the easy witticism which is every year lavished upon it, it is fully worth the time and importance given to it by its disciples.

At Harvard, in 1863, the newly entered Freshman Class heard much about the famous Caspar Crowninshield crew, which had defeated Yale at Lake Quinsigamond, making

under nineteen minutes for the three miles with a turn. And this was really good time, even compared with what is done nowadays. The "turn" occupied at least twenty seconds; there were only six oars in the boat; the oars were straight (instead of having spoon-shaped blades as at present), and the boats lacked much of the lightness and good modeling they have attained since. Moreover, there is no tide on Lake Quinsigamond, whereas the tide runs from two to three miles an hour on the Thames at New London. Finally, the art of rowing was then in its infancy in this country, and the science of training was not even born. At all events, Caspar Crowninshield and his men, if not giants in reality, were so in our eyes, and apparently their victory had discouraged Yale, for no race between the universities had taken place since that day.

In 1863, however, a challenge from Yale was received, based (as we afterwards found out to our cost) upon a very reasonable hope of winning. The challenge was accepted with enthusiasm, and with a confidence at least equal to that of the challengers; for the (then) Sophomore Class of '66 thought great things of itself, and really did contain an unusual number of muscular young men. There were Fred Crowninshield (brother of the heroic Caspar), Charley MacBurney, Ned Clarke, and (unless I am mistaken) Bob Peabody,— all from this same redoubtable '66. Then there was Horatio Curtis, the Hercules of the University. I suppose no man ever was or will be so strong as we thought Curtis was. We firmly believed that he could have thrashed Molineaux. Now Molineaux was the college professor of athletics of that date. He was a gentleman of color, and an ex-prize-fighter; at least, he had once fought in the prize-ring, and it was understood that he had been victorious; though I am not so clear as to that matter now as I was then. He was certainly a clever boxer, and a man of most agreeable and cheerful manners; his weight was about one hundred and ninety pounds, and his biceps, besides being as hard as a hickory log, measured eighteen inches in circumference. A blow from that arm might have made a hole in a steam boiler: but Molineaux was lazy, and he was fat; and one theory was, that Curtis would first "wind" him, by dint of superior activity, and then go in and finish him as opportunity might serve. It was a daring conception, and is mentioned here only in order to afford a measure of the popular reverence for Curtis.

The autumn term was spent in exercising in the gymnasium and in trying men for the crew. Besides Curtis, there were few or no rowing men in '65, and the Freshmen, though containing some material that promised well for the future, was as yet immature; while as for the Senior Class, they had grown up during a period when athletics had fallen into disuse. So the choice was practically confined to Horatio Curtis and to the Class of '66. Blaikie was one of the best-known athletes of those days, but he had not yet received his diploma as a bachelor of oarsmanship; he could put up the ninety-six-pound dumb-bell — we used to go down to the gymnasium to see him do it — but he lacked the quickness and elasticity needed for the boat. He was a '66 man, and so was Tom Nelson, who, by natural constitution, was a rival of Curtis himself, if he were not even better than he; but he was as indolent as he was strong, and never could be induced to take regular exercise in the gymnasium or to row, if he could avoid it. Ned Fenno was strong enough, and was a zealous gymnast, but he was not handy with his oar; and Wilkinson, in addition to being one of the wittiest and most charming fellows in the college, was superbly developed, and as active as a cat; but he was not then thought to be superior to some others, though, a couple of years later, he proved himself equal to the best. The second-rate men were put together in the Class crew of '66; and the Freshmen formed a practice-crew of their own, making use of the old lapstreak which had conquered in 1860. I remember little of the constitution of this crew, except that Harry Parker pulled bow and Bill Ellis stroke, but I have not forgotten how we blistered our hands and barked our knuckles; or that we caught many crabs, and occasionally steered into the bridge, and carried off an outrigger or two. At that epoch, and for a good many years afterwards, it was the custom of American crews to dispense with coxswains, and for the bow-oar to steer by pressing his feet against a yoke attached to wires, which extended the length of the boat, and were made fast to the rudder. There was a Yankee ingenuity and economy in this device, and with practice, the steering was remarkably accurate; but after all, it is better that some person in the boat should keep a constant eye to the boat's course, and that that person should have nothing to do or to think of but steer. Of course, this is still more the case with an eight-oar than with a six-oar, and when (as generally happens) the coxswain weighs less than a hundred pounds, he is not worth considering.

Our boat-housing arrangements were primitive. The boat-house was a long shed, built on tiles over the water and destitute of a floor. A narrow platform ran around the walls inside, about half-way above the water, and the

boat was suspended at the same level by ropes running through pulleys attached to the roof. After we had assumed the proper boating-costume,— an old pair of trousers and a ragged undershirt,— we lowered the boat into the water, and then let ourselves down into her, hand under hand, by the rope. Our return was accomplished by an inversion of these proceedings. It was not always agreeable scrambling up that rope, with blistered hands, after a long row; and occasionally a feeble brother would stick half-way, and have to be dragged up by the neck and shoulders.

A new boat — a "shell"— was bought for the University crew. This craft was the object of our respectful admiration. She was built of cedar, and polished, and was about fifty feet long, and she looked, with her shining spoon oars, as if she could win anything. She would have appeared very rude alongside of the ships they build nowadays, made of paper, with sliding seats, pivoted rowlocks, and stretchers to fit the soles of the feet. As regards the paper, we came to that ourselves in the course of two or three years; but the sliding seats were long after our time. They were first invented, I believe, by some ingenious single-scull oarsman, whose name I have forgotten. I should like to know precisely how much difference they make in the time of a boat. Not many seconds, probably. They lengthen the stroke, of course; but, on the other hand, they make it slower. The spurting stroke in those days used to go up as high as forty-eight to the minute, and be pulled through at that. At present, forty or forty-two is the maximum; and as the strength with which the oar is dragged through the water has not increased in the same ratio as the distance through which it is dragged, the gain must be limited. Perhaps it is greater in the case of the single-scull than of the eight-oar. But there can be no doubt that the comfort of the oarsman in his seat is much augmented. We used to suffer a great deal in that way, and nothing in the way of cushions or paddings was a relief.

Not much in the way of practice on the river was accomplished that first autumn: we set ourselves to building up our muscles in the gymnasium. This was a circular building with a conical glass roof at the eastern end of the Delta. The Delta (where the great football contest between the Sophomore and Freshman classes used to be held, and where base-ball was played) has vanished now in all but name, and, for aught I know, the old gymnasium has disappeared also. It was nothing to compare in point of luxury and completeness, with the elaborate structure which Mr. Augustus Hemenway has since erected; but some of us contrived to get pretty strong there. There were rings, weights, bars, clubs and dumb-bells, and there was a bowling-alley in the rear. The dressing-rooms of the four classes were at different parts of the rotunda, those of the Freshman and the Sophomores being farthest removed from each other. Twice or thrice a week, in the evening, a lot of the Freshman would assemble to be instructed by Molineaux. We stood in a circle, and our burly instructor took his place in the midst, and drilled us in calisthenics. It did not amount to much, if the truth must be told, and it was continued only during the first month or two of each year. After that, the boys were allowed to do as they pleased. But Molineaux was always ready for a chat or a laugh, and he was very popular with us all. His great forte was taking the dimensions of our chests and arms, and writing them down in a book. This ceremony was performed at least once a week for every one in the gymnasium class, and we soon knew to a fraction the girth and biceps of all the athletes in college. What an arm Bill Poor had! but was not Farnham's about as large? If Jim Hoyt and John Greenough were to fight, which would come out ahead? If Tom Ward would only consent to row, what a bow-oar he would make! Will Ed. Perkins the Fresh-Sophomore go on the crew? He measures sixteen and a half, and they say he used to row at Exeter. Such were the speculations of our tender minds in that far-off time. I dare say similar conversations take place now. What a happy time it was! how pleasant to see our muscles grow, and to feel our powers increase, and to believe that, in time, we could become the equal of any gymnast that ever lived!

Rowing-weights were not invented until two years later. They were considered a grand discovery. I understand that a much more realistic contrivance has taken their place since, so that the chief difference between rowing with them and rowing in a boat is, that there is no chance in the former case of getting a ducking. Our arrangement consisted of a handle attached to a rope, which was passed over a pulley, and had a fifty-pound weight fastened at the other end. Then we sat down on a low stool, and tugged away. Perhaps we made up in diligence some part of what they lacked in mechanism. I remember that Richards, in his winter training for the crew, used to pull on his weight for two solid hours at a stretch; and his back and shoulders were a spectacle for the gods. After half an hour or so, a little puddle of sweat would begin to form on the floor between each man's knees. The parallel bars was another favorite exercise of the rowing-men. We used to go through the various dips one

after another, until our pectoral muscles came to resemble those of the statues in the Vatican at Rome; and the triceps, at the back of the arm, got so tough that we could "dip" fifty or sixty times in succession with ease. Altogether, by the time spring came round, we doubted whether any amount of boating would give us exertion enough to make us feel comfortable.

With the spring time the training began: the walking, the running, the rowing, and above all the dieting. Rare beef and mutton, potatoes, bread, spinach, and one pint of liquid a day. A canter of three or four miles before breakfast, a longer walk and run later in the day, and at least twelve miles of hard rowing. They say now that we overdid it; but I don't know. The diet, especially the sudden and almost total deprivation of liquids, may have been a mistake; it had a tendency to make the men feverish and irritable, and to impair their appetites. Young fellows, most of them under twenty, lose weight too rapidly under such circumstances. As regards the exercise, however, I greatly question whether we exceeded wise limits, or even reached them. With plenty of sleep, and plenty of food, a healthy man ought to be able to row hard six hours a day (two hours at a stretch thrice repeated), and be all the better for it. Something like that is the only sure recipe for winning crews. It will even counteract, so far as anything can, the evil effects of a bad stroke; because, in the first place, it will insure the men rowing "together," and secondly, because it will develop and toughen the requisite muscles. This latter point is too much neglected. Those large muscles below the shoulders should be as hard as oak. I remember examining Bill Simmons after the Harvard-Oxford four-oared race in 1869. He was well set-up all over, an admirably proportioned man, but these particular muscles were phenomenal. And yet he was not a man of strong vitality, and he had been ill during the greater part of his English training. But it is the tendency now, and to some extent it was so then, to put "form" before everything else. You are given endless lessons how to hold your hands, how to feather your oar, how to get forward and back in exactly the same style; and meanwhile the essential matter, that the boat should be made to go fast, and to keep going fast, for four miles, is lost sight of. But if you put six or eight solid and sensible men into a boat, and let them clearly understand that their object must be to throw the weight of their bodies as much as possible into that portion of the stroke where they have the best purchase upon the oar; and if you explain to them that they must not dip their oars into the water one instant later than it can begin to do good, nor keep it in one instant after it has ceased to do good; and that the oars must remain in the air as short a time as possible; if you can get them thoroughly possessed of these three or four fundamental principles, and keep them up to it, then you need not bother to teach them anything else. They will learn the refinements themselves. Or if they don't it is no great matter. It is impossible for eight men to both pull and look exactly alike. Each man will have (within certain limits) his own peculiar way of getting the most work out of himself. If you force him to adopt any one else's way, that of the stroke-oar for instance, the appearance of the crew as a whole may be more harmonious, but the pace of the boat will suffer. One or two or three men perhaps will be doing their best; but the rest will be shirking in one way or another. This fellow with the long arms will not get forward far enough; he with the short arms will overreach himself; and so on. Let the crew take long and repeated pulls together, however, and sooner or later they will instinctively and inevitably so accommodate their various styles to one another as to produce the best general result, and they will acquire the endurance without which no style is of much avail.

This truth was impressed upon me many years ago, when I saw for the first time the famous Ward crew of professionals. This was undoubtedly the best six-oared crew that ever sat in a boat. They came down to Boston to take part in the Fourth of July regatta on the Charles River or Back Bay course; and our own University crew of that year were their only noticeable competitors. We extended the courtesies of our new boat-house to them, and they staid with us about a week. Our early impressions of them were not especially favorable. They were rather a rough-looking set; they were shabbily clad; they did their pulling in dirty old red and blue flannel shirts; they did not seem to take much stock in bathing, or even in rubbing down. The boat they brought with them was not a particularly wonderful affair. As they did not strip, we had no opportunity to critically examine their development; they appeared to be a lean and wiry lot; but their average weight was hardly equal to that of our University crew, though their average age was a good deal more. But what chiefly struck us was the circumstance that they did not seem to know how to row. Their appearance when in motion was ragged and inharmonious. "They're not together," was our general verdict; and our own crew was so beautifully together that we had little doubt as to the issue of the race. "They can't win

with that stroke," we said. Not but what, individually, they pulled well enough and hard enough; the trouble was that each man maintained his individuality. There was vigor, but not science. Instead of fearing them, we were rather amused at them, and a little sorry for them; for were they not poor men, to whom the loss of a race meant, not loss of glory merely, but of the means of livelihood as well? Possibly some of us may have gone so far as to think that our fellows would act gracefully in letting them get ahead just at the finish, after having shown to every one's satisfaction that they could beat them if they chose.

As it turned out, however, there was no necessity for putting these compassionate designs into execution. Perhaps the Ward brothers rowed in bad form; but it was abundantly clear, before the race was half over, that they could have pulled four miles while we were pulling three. And the worst of it was that they could not be induced to exert themselves; but, after an initial spurt, during which they appeared more like tigers than men, they paddled along at their ease, and passed the goal leaders by a few lengths only, instead of by two or three minutes; and it was evident, at the close, that they had not had half exercise enough to give them an appetite for supper; while our men had been tugging their hearts out all along. Nor must it be forgotten that the University crew of that year was one of the best, if not the best, that Harvard ever sent forth; and that it beat the Yales without difficulty at Lake Quinsigamond the same summer. What was the secret of the Ward brothers' victory? In the first place, they were stronger and tougher than our men,— a strength which they attained by constant hard work in the boat; and secondly, they neglected the æsthetic and graceful side of the matter, and devoted themselves exclusively to rowing each one with all his might. Of course their oars all entered and left the water simultaneously; of course they all applied the "lift" at the same moment; but apart from this, the bow-oar's style of getting his work in appeared quite different from that of the stroke oar; and number three was unlike both. Good rowing is like good acting; it can be attained only by constant rehearsals. Practice, practice, practice, together and continually; and then you will row like one man and yet retain your separate individualities at the same time.

This terrible experience with the Ward brothers was subsequent to a still more humiliating one with Wilbur Bacon's famous Yale crew. Rumors of this crew came to us betimes; marvelous tales of their strength, their methods of training, and the appalling rapidity of their stroke. One of their men was reported as having complained that water was too easy for him to row on; he wanted some more solid and resisting medium to pull his oar through. As for training, they ran five miles straight up hill before breakfast every morning, ate raw meat exclusively, and drank nothing at all; and they rowed sixty strokes to a minute. Doubtless these were exaggerations; but after all deductions were made, Wilbur Bacon's crew had enough left not only to beat us easily, but to make remarkably good time over the course, far better than that of any other college crew, up to that date. And they did this with one of the ugliest and most wasteful strokes I have ever seen. So bad was it, indeed, that the reporter we sent up to New Haven to spy out the enemy, came back jubilant, and declared that there would be no race at all; such a stroke as Yale's was hardly worth while rowing against. And, as a matter of fact, that year's victory and the victory of the next year (with the same crew) probably did Yale more harm than the most overwhelming defeat would have done; because their stroke was really bad in principle, and being nevertheless subsequently adopted by Yale as the correct one, led to six consecutive defeats more or less severe. The men sat huddled up, with bowed backs, and pulled entirely with their arms. Wilbur Bacon's men, being of entirely exceptional strength and thoroughly trained, won in spite of this drawback; but if they had added the strength of their bodies to that of their arms, there is no telling what they might have done.

There was great talk in those days — and I believe there has been ever since — about the transcendent merits of the "Harvard Stroke." Where did the Harvard stroke come from, and what is it? Was it the stroke rowed by Caspar Crowninshield in the 'fifties? Was it the stroke of the English university? Was there any secret about it, unfathomable by any but Harvard men? Taking the record of all the university races rowed since 1852, I make out that Harvard has won 15 times, and Yale, or some other university, 13 times. This is very far from establishing the superiority of the Harvard stroke over all others. I greatly doubt whether the Harvard stroke has any distinct and real existence, and I think that the sooner that idea is adopted, the better for Harvard, and for the art of rowing in general, will it be. Back and arms straight — catch at the beginning — such are the traditions. But, beyond certain limits, no hard and fast rules can be given. Each man must be allowed to find out for himself how he can best put his whole strength into his stroke; and then the constant practice of the crew together must teach each member of it how to maintain his own best

form, and yet so accommodate it to the others, that each may help all, and all each. Let the aim be, not to row the Harvard stroke, or the Yale stroke, or the Oxford or Cambridge stroke, but to make fast time, and then, before long, we shall begin to have races that are races and not processions; and the winning crew will win because it contains the strongest and best trained men, not because its stroke has this or that or the other title. A little more common sense, a little less theorizing, a great deal less self-conceit, those are some of the things essential to good rowing in our colleges. The better time two crews make, the more nearly alike will their style be found to be, as may be seen every year in the Oxford-Cambridge race; and the moral of that fact is so patent that there is no need of further expatiation upon the matter. Between 1873 and 1881, I saw most of the English university races; and the difference between the crews, so far as stroke and style went, was too insignificant to be taken into account. The difference between them as regards time was never more than a few seconds, and once they pulled a dead heat. As a rule the heavier crew won. The course there is a little over four miles, and the currents and eddies and the windings of the river are against good results; nevertheless, the times made during the last ten years are better than the best at New London, where the conditions are the most favorable that can be conceived. The men themselves, on the other hand, appear for the most part inferior to our own in strength and muscular development. Stronger men than Wilbur Bacon, or Will Simmons, or even Penrose, are seldom or never seen in English university crews.

New London in June and July is a lovely town; and during the Regatta week it is full of jolly bustle and brilliance. The body of the town lies a mile or two within the mouth of the river, on the western bank; though there is a straggling line of villas along the road to the Pequot House which commands a view of the Sound and of the Long Island shore. On the eastern bank, stands Groton monument, a granite pillar that reminds Bostonians of their own Bunker Hill. In the broad harbor are anchored scores of yachts, as neat as a lady's dressing-case; others are tacking up and down, and tugs, steamboats, and numberless smaller crafts hasten to and fro. The huge clumsy ferry-boat that conveys the Shore Line railroad trains from one bank to another ever and anon makes its lumbering trips across the river; and sharp-nosed, dapper steam-yachts, with backward-sloping masts and funnels, slide up and down with heavy rollers diverging in their wake. Beyond the Shore Line railway, the river pursues a nearly straight course northward, with an average breadth of rather less than half a mile. The finish of the race (when rowed down stream) is at Winthrop's Point, a promontory jutting out into the river just east and north of the city; the start is at Bartlett Point, four miles up. The course is marked by flags, whose positions at the mile points are determined by measurements taken on the ice during the winter: standing with a spy-glass, at either end of the course, you can see them all accurately aligned. Along the western margin of the stream runs the New London and Northern railroad, which seems to have been constructed for the especial purpose of affording a moving view of the race from start to finish. The only untoward place is at the two-mile flag, where the rocky promontory of Mamacoke lifts itself stupidly between the regatta train and the crews. As this is the point where the closest races are won and lost, we have an additional instance of the fact that nothing in this world is perfect.

As the time for the race draws near, New London puts on its gaudiest attire, and rouses into a bustling and uproarious life, which must seem strange to its older inhabitants. For it is one of the oldest New England towns, and had already preserved the placid tenor of its existence for several years before it became a prominent depot of the whaling interest, sixty or more years ago. Then was its ample harbor crowded — not with gay and graceful craft of the New York Yacht Club, as at present, but with dingy and oily whalers, dropping in with the tide from a four years' cruise around the Horn, and into the North Pacific, and with their holds overflowing with oil enough to fill all the lamps of the New World. They were passed by others, setting out on their long cruise, some never to return, but destined to leave their oaken ribs, and the bones of their crews, miles deep beneath the surface of the distant sea, lower even than the great leviathan himself durst venture. Then the streets were noisy with the bustle, not of pleasure but of business; and the sunburnt faces of the passers-by belonged not to athletic college youths, trained in slender racing-shells, but to hardy mariners, familiar with the whale-boat and the harpoon, who had confronted death and deadly peril a thousand times. And the female element of those days was represented, not by lovely girls, laughing in silk and muslin, and fluttering in the crimson and blue ribbons of the colleges of their choice; but by lean and sober matrons, accustomed to long months and years of loneliness; and some in black garments, whose loneliness would never know relief. Little thought they of railways or regattas; life for

them was anxious and severe; and it was joy enough if, at the end, when old age came, they could see their weather-beaten husbands beside them, and their children round about, and know that there was money enough in the strong-box to eke out the remainder of their days.

People are still alive in the old town who have seen those times; but they must often feel as if they were walking in a dream. Here are the same streets, the same harbor, the same hilly shores, many of the same houses; yet all is changed; hardly can they recognize the home of their youth. Where did these ferry-boats and huge beam-engine steamers come from? Who built those new piers and wharves? What means this rumble and shriek of trains? And during what night did these fine hotels sprout up like mushrooms, their gables waving with flags, and their lobbies thronged with clamorous guests? The noisy thoroughfare of the town is broad and brilliant; the shops which line it on either side are rainbow-hued with every sort of badge and decoration that the enthusiasm of college youth can be supposed to covet. Here are crimson and blue hats, jerseys, and sack-coats; dresses for Harvard girls and dresses for Yale girls; sashes, ribbons, bonnets, banners, and rosettes; Harvard cigars and Yale cigars; nothing, in short, that is not either Yale, or Harvard, or Columbia. And the sidewalks are crowded with old graduates and young graduates, with freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, and even with boys who are still looking forward with hope and fear to their entrance examinations. If there be any one there who is not either a past, present, or prospective college man, he must wish he were, or be inclined to pretend that he is. It is a singular spectacle,— enlivening, comical, pathetic; a sort of Vanity Fair of youth and fun, with the dim past on one side and the mysterious future on the other. Some of these young fellows will make longer voyages than to the antipodes, and bring home larger game than whales. Some of these pretty girls will experience sadder tragedies than the drowning of a husband, a father, or a son. But now it is all "Hurrah for Harvard! Hurrah for Yale! and the deuce take the hindmost!"

Farther up the street stand handsome villas and country residences, with stretches of green lawn in front of them, and flag-staffs on their cupolas, with flags afloat. From within comes the sound of music, singing, and laughter, and perhaps, if one listen closely, of the popping of champagne corks and the click of billiard balls. The porches and verandas are brightened by the fresh dresses of girls and the summer suits of fashionable young gentlemen; and here, there, and everywhere, the one topic of conversation is the race. But if you venture into the side streets, you will find comparative solitude and silence. The few people whom you meet seem scarcely alive to the importance of what is going on elsewhere. It reminds the traveled spectator of the Carnival time at Rome, when only the Corso goes mad, and all other thoroughfares are silent and sober even beyond their usual wont. Many pretty walks lie outside the town; but the prettiest, perhaps, is along the southern bank of the river, toward Mamacoke; and the visitor to New London, with leisure on his hands, can hardly do better than to make a journey thither.

Starting from the railway-station you pass out by way of Main street. Though everything is neat and well-preserved, many of the houses are evidently old; their broad hip-roofs and thick bulging eaves do not belong to the architecture of this century. Alternating with these are brand-new villas of the modern Queen Anne type, and other houses which can only be described as American, and are destitute of any describable features whatever. For the first half-mile of the way, the road passes along the side of a creek, above the sloping bank of which the rears of the houses are uplifted on stout piles, as if they had pulled their skirts up out of the mud, and revealed an array of dirty legs,— of which, however, their decorous fronts betray no suspicion. The creek itself is picturesque with old rotten boats, lying stranded and half-submerged; an occasional tug lounges in to rest and smoke its pipe after its day's work; and even a dainty steam-yacht will condescend to pick its way between the groups of plebeian shipping, like a fine lady poking her aristocratic nose into a tenement court. Beyond the head of the creek, and so overshadowed with the heavy foliage of trees as to be scarcely visible from the road, appears a substantial elderly mansion. It stands on a slight eminence above the road, and thick grass grows tall and untrimmed all around it. It ought to be haunted, and probably it is; but fearing a rebuff, the present writer abstained from seeking information on the matter. The answers to such questions are as well left to the imagination. Farther along, the road passes into open country, beautifully diversified with hills, wooded regions, and cultivated fields. A gradual ascent reveals a wide prospect, including the town behind, the river, and the high banks of the opposite shore. Nearly parallel with the road, but much nearer the water, lies the railway; and beyond it, jutting out into the stream, is Mamacoke. Striking over the fields and crossing the track, we come in front of the rocks, clothed with trees and

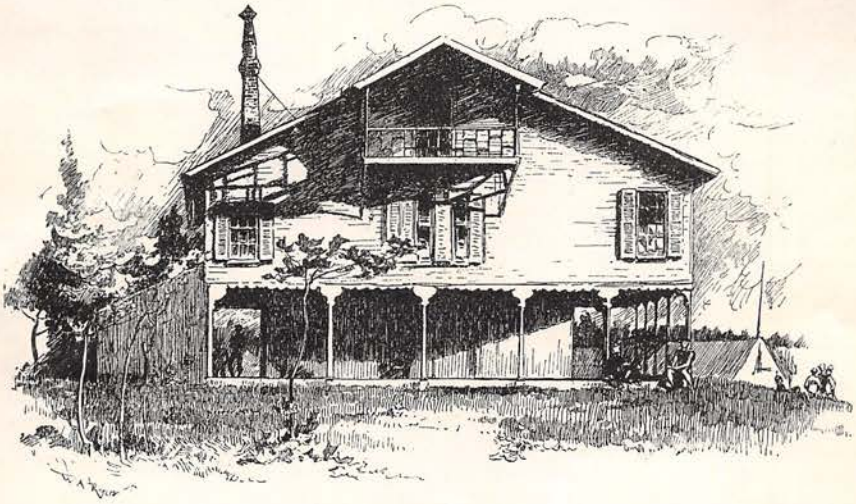
bushes, and scampered over by flocks of sheep. It is almost an island, being joined to the main land only by a narrow strip of low-lying ground. From its summit one can see up and down the whole length of the course; and a mile or so higher up stream, on the opposite bank, is the crimson-roofed cottage used as the Harvard quarters; and further still is the cluster of whitewashed buildings occupied by Yale. If it be late in the afternoon, you may see one or both of the crews out for practice, accompanied each by an active little steam-launch containing the "coach" and four or five immortals who have won glory in previous boating contests. In attendance, likewise, though at a more respectful distance, is the steamer *Manhanset*, which, with stalwart Captain Jim Smith at the helm, occupies its leisure time in affording interested persons opportunity to study the styles of the contestants. The crews, however, are none too anxious to be seen; they are as shy as a new boy in his first day at school. And if they are reluctant to reveal themselves prematurely to the general public, it is impossible to overstate the anxiety with which each shuns any risk of being spied upon by the other. They will even forego a pull rather than be seen pulling by a rival eye.

What is the reason of this excessive coyness? Suppose Harvard did see Yale taking a practice pull, or vice versa, what harm would it do? Would it paralyze the powers of the observed persons? Would it, when the day of the race came, prevent the better men from winning? Why are the "times" made in practice so carefully concealed, as if they were murder secrets? Nay, why does each crew cause it to be believed that its time is ten or twenty seconds slower than it really is? Why do they intimate that one or other of their men is suffering from severe indisposition? Why do they give it out that they are dissatisfied with their boat? Why are these and a score of similar misleading statements circulated, until, by the time the two crews are side by side at the starting-point, waiting for the word, a credulous person might suppose that both were certain to break down before they could reach the first mile flag? What, in short, and to use plain language, is the object and are the benefits of all this lying and jockeying?

Surely it cannot be possible that these young gentlemen, representatives of the best blood and culture of their country, not to mention athleticism,—surely we are not to believe that they can allow themselves to be influenced by pecuniary, by mercenary, considerations? Surely they do not put forth their strength and pledge the honor of their universities, for money? Professional oarsmen, as we know, row for money: to win a race means, for them, to put so many thousand dollars into the pockets of themselves and of their friends. We find no fault with them for that (though we are sorry that so noble a sport should be prostituted to such uses) because it is their livelihood. We may even shrug our shoulders if it turns out to have been settled beforehand that the better crew should not win. But that our own sons, the inheritors of our names, should approach even within measurable distance of such transactions would be very unwelcome news indeed.

What are the facts? The facts are that the betting on these races, among the undergraduates themselves, and leaving outside persons out of the account, has grown to such proportions, and is increasing year by year at such a rate, that every man in the crews has a responsibility imposed upon him which he has no right to accept, and which tends to distort his views as to what the race is really being rowed for. Theoretically, he rows for the glory of Harvard or of Yale; but practically, he rows because his friends (and possibly he himself, likewise, though I trust the rule still prevails that forbids any member of a crew to lay a wager of any sort) have put up all their spare cash, and a good deal of cash that is not to spare, on the result. It is for the sake of this money that they misrepresent the truth, prevaricate, invent fables, and resort to all manner of underhand and shrewd devices. If they win, no doubt it is their university and not the dollar bills that are nominally cheered; but if they lose, they have to bemoan not only the dimmed luster of Harvard or of Yale, but the empty pocket-books of those who pinned their faith to them. And money means so much to college boys on an allowance, and with their vacation in front of them, that although they may be very sorry in the abstract for Yale or for Harvard, their most pressing and palpable grief is not unconnected with a much more sordid and less honorable cause. Harvard or Yale may win next year; but what is poor Jones or Smith to do, who has lost all his quarter's allowance, and has not settled his hotel bill? And let it not be forgotten, furthermore, that either Harvard or Yale is bound to win every year (unless Columbia does), and that the losers will then have prevaricated and fabled to no purpose. And finally, very little is really gained by all this elaborate deception. The boy who cries wolf so often is at length not believed on any terms; and we have learned to discount these stories about the condition of the crews just as we discount them in the case of professionals. A gentleman who cheats another out of his money, or attempts to do so, by leading that

other to believe what is not true, continues to bear his title only by courtesy; and he will have to give unmistakable evidences of amendment before gentlemen will again receive him on equal terms. I am far indeed from saying or thinking that any university race ever has been or will be rowed otherwise than on its merits; but anything that savors however remotely of professionalism cannot be given too wide a berth. Honest men will never suspect dishonor in these young fellows; but there are rascals enough who will agree that a man who has staked all he possesses upon an event will employ any available means to protect himself against loss; and it is the duty of honorable men to avoid the appearance of evil.



HARVARD HEADQUARTERS.

But can betting on the university races be stopped? That is not to be expected; but it can be enormously diminished, and that by no one else than by the crews themselves. If they will dispense with all disguises and subterfuges, and let themselves be known for just what they are, neither more nor less, then betting will lose nine-tenths of its impetus. Nor will the pleasurable elements of legitimate uncertainty as to the result ever be absent; for, however apparent it may seem that one of the crews is superior to the other, there are a dozen possibilities that this anticipation may be defeated when the race actually comes to be rowed. One man may overtrain; another may catch a crab; the stroke may turn out more effective than it looked; or the crew that had never done itself justice in practice may awaken under the spur of actual competition, and surprise its friends and strike aghast its enemies. No race is ever won until it has been rowed. And even if the prophets prove correct, defeat will be no worse, nor victory any less sweet, if it has been expected beforehand. It is a rare privilege, too,—the opportunity to do one's utmost for no other reward than the parsley crown. It is a privilege which comes seldom in after life, as these young gentlemen will discover in due time.

There is another word to say about professional trainers. They are very honest and worthy persons, no doubt, but they have no business with a university crew; and the result last year, when Yale won under the administration of Mr. Robert Cook, shows that they are by no means indispensable. But even if they were indispensable, they ought not to be employed. We are not going to become professional oarsmen ourselves, and we do not need to learn what they can teach us. Moreover, they can teach us very little. The chief advantage that a professional oarsman possesses over an amateur is, that he does nothing but row, and therefore (other things being equal) he becomes more skillful and enduring. But this endurance and skillfulness cannot be taught; it must be acquired in the same way that the professional acquired it, by doing and thinking of nothing else. He can no more impart it than he can impart the color of his hair, or the tone of his voice. And as it is always true that it is not necessary for a good critic to be a good artist in that which he criticises, it follows that though an amateur coach may not be able to row as well as a professional, he may nevertheless be able to give just as sound instruction, and indeed much better. For the amateur will probably be more intelligent and cultivated than the professional,

THE RACE, FROM

and cultivation and intelligence are exemplified in nothing more than in the power they give to conceive an ideal and to explain it. But this is not all. Association with professionals, even with the best of them, tends to lower the social and moral tone. He is in the position of a guide, philosopher, and friend, and the young men who submit themselves to his tutelage will be liable to adopt his views on other matters besides mere oarsmanship and diet. They are at an age when susceptibility to impressions is at its maximum, and experience is at its minimum, and they will easily take color from an older companion; they will not so easily rid themselves of it afterwards. It needs no seer to tell us where a great deal of the shyness and smartness which has of late characterized the policy of the crews before a race comes from. There is a decidedly professional flavor about it. Again, as regards diet, professional advice is not to be trusted. Their knowledge of physiology and hygiene is purely empirical, and is derived, moreover, mainly from experiments on themselves. But no two men can with advantage train exactly alike; especially no men under twenty, who are much more readily depressed and stimulated than are older persons. An amateur will have broader and more liberal views in this direction, and is also likely to be better informed as to the latest conclusions of science upon the points in question.

But the main thing, after all, is the abstract, not the utilitarian, aspect of the matter. It is not good, it is not respectable, to stoop to conquer. Use with all your might the means and weapons proper to your station; but do not, even with the certainty of gaining an advantage, condescend to receive help from any lower level. If you cannot row the race in twenty minutes without professional assistance, then be content to row it in twenty-six or even in thirty. All that is necessary is that you should do your very best. I was as patriotic, in my time, as any other Harvard man of my acquaintance, and I do not know that I have

THE OBSERVATION TRAIN.

lost any of my old interest in the welfare and reputation of my university; and yet, so long as Harvard employs a professional coach, I shall never regret to see her lose the race. Indeed, if professional guides and methods continue to be used, the college races will soon lose all their interest for that portion of the public whose good opinion is worth having.

During all this disagreeable fault-finding, we have been sitting on the summit of Mamacoke; and now there is barely time left to see the race. How shall we see it? We may either remain here, or hereabouts, or we may get aboard the *Manhanset;* or we may go to the Grand Stand, or on the Observation Train. If we are wise, we will adopt the latter course. The view from the bank or from the Grand Stand is partial only, and the more exciting the part that we see, the greater is our desire to see that part which is invisible to us. The *Manhanset* suffers under the serious drawback of being forbidden to approach within two hundred yards of the last boat in the race; and it is impossible, from that distance, to know which crew is leading, unless the lead be a very commanding one. But the train shows us the relative position of the boats at nearly every half-mile of the course: we can see what each man is doing at each moment, and enjoy a conspicuous view of the river and everything on it. The cars are platform cars, and tiers of seats are built up on them, rising one above another, so that every one has an unobstructed outlook: only, if we can get a place on the central car, we shall be more likely than in any other to remain just opposite the boats during the race.

The depot is overflowing with a hurrying, excited, laughing, shouting, brilliant crowd. The boys and girls are decked out in blue and crimson finery; they carry flags of silk or cotton, as the case may be; and the peddlers of screeching tin horns drive a roaring trade. As the cars fill up, row after row, the clamor of talk and outcry increases, and becomes a

ceaseless refrain; and belated persons run anxiously to and fro, and make hurried and vehement appeals to the ticket collectors to be allowed to get where they do not belong. As we sit on the front row of the central car, two young undergraduates, standing on the platform in front of us, converse eagerly over our heads with three young ladies on the row behind us: we hear all they say, but, though they evidently enjoy saying it, it amounts to just nothing at all. They wager their fellows will win; they are afraid the other fellows may win; the Yale coxswain is going to steer without his shoes; the Harvard stroke has parted his hair in the middle; if the wind doesn't change, the course will be as smooth as glass; if the tide is high enough, the eel-grass won't matter; the race is certain not to begin on time — it never does; they hope our car will stop just opposite the finish; they wonder whether the winning crew will break the record. In the midst of this conversation, the first whistle blows, and there is a general stampede of the people remaining on the platform. The trumpet merchant blows a horrid blast on his last tin horn, and a moment after sells it at a sacrifice to the last enthusiast who is unprovided with one; the car moves, and a group of people in the next car give the first cheer. As the train moves out of the depot, we catch a glimpse of the long array of gay dresses and waving flags; and beyond, through a gap between two sheds, we see a brief panorama of the river, with a thousand vessels decked with streamers and crowded with spectators; and other crowds are massed along the banks, and every upright object carries a banner,— except only Groton monument, which stands tall and gray and undecorated above the scene, and takes no part in the excitement and suspense. As we slowly pass the long dingy façade of the factory, clusters of workmen gather in the windows and doorways, and stare stolidly at our rainbow array. Still onward we go, until at length we leave the railway buildings and the ugly coal-dump behind us, and the broad sweep of the river breaks upon our view. There is the Grand Stand, a mass of shifting color: there is the course, defined by the throng of yachts and small boats and big steamers crowding up to its straight limits, and dispersing thence to either shore. The start is to be from this end, so here we pause. Where are the crews? They have not got into their boats yet. Yes, there comes the Harvard launch, with the men on board, and their boat towing behind. Now the launch stops, and the boat is brought alongside. We can see the crimson jerseys, as one by one their wearers step cautiously into their places, and drop their oars into the rowlocks. There, the last man is in; and off they glide to the starting-point. And Yale, where is she? Oh, they are embarking from the raft; and they too pull up to the flag, dark blue every man. Two dories are moored on a line with the post; in each sits a man whose duty it is to hold the stem of the racer in position, waiting the word. They are in position, all is ready! No: wait a moment. Off come the blue and crimson jerseys, over the wearers' heads, and are tossed to their launches; and the bronzed backs and arms of all those stout young fellows are exposed for the last time to the sun. How the muscles swell and shift beneath the smooth skin, as the men handle their oars, and reach forward! How active and tireless they look! And how their hearts are beating, and their teeth set! Now, silence, and listen for the word. No, we could not hear it; and if we could, the boats would be off before it reached our ears. So there is nothing to do but to watch — ha! they are off!

Off, amidst a roar of voices, a deafening screech of steam whistles and tin horns, a thunder of guns, pistols, and cannon; off, amidst waving flags and fluttering handkerchiefs, and cheers, and laughter, and screams of hysteric girls, and cat-calls of frantic undergraduates. They are off; but they hear nothing and see nothing of the wild confusion and uproar that welters around them. Each man's eyes are in the boat; each man strives to combine iron self-control with frantic exertion. Keep

VICTORY.

time! pull! lift her! we are gaining! we are losing! Steady, boys! there are four miles in front of you; space enough to win and lose. The little coxswain keeps his eye on the approaching flag, and the tiller-ropes are taut. Together, row! pull! pull! And behind them stream along the surging steamers, crowded with men like flies; and our train, too, moves forward, keeping pace with them as they go. One of them has forged ahead,— which is it? Never mind, the others have quickened their stroke,— they draw up again. There are three miles yet, well rowed! a gallant race!

There is an old lady on the bench beside us, and the tears are streaming down her face, and then she laughs and waves her hand. She is the mother of one of those struggling young fellows; he is the darling of her heart, and there is no telling yet whether he will win or lose. And above, there is an elderly gentleman with a detective camera; he too has a boy in one of the crews, and he has come with the intention of photographing him in the moment of victory. But he has forgotten all about that, and is waving his camera madly in the air, under the impression, probably, that it is a flag; and he is yelling himself hoarse. Well, both crews cannot win; one must suffer defeat. And see! one of them has a long lead now, and it is increasing with every stroke. They are holding themselves well in hand. The others are doing their utmost, but they cannot close up the gap. Two miles! Three miles! What a race! The end is near; they all gather themselves up for the final effort. Break the record! ye winners! Defeat, but not disgrace, ye losers! And so, with glistening bodies, and heaving lungs, and straining muscles, and bending oars, they fly past the judge's boat, first one, then the other; and another year's regatta is lost and won.

Julian Hawthorne.

BOAT-RACING BY AMATEURS.

THE evils of introducing the professional element into amateur athletics are so great — they are so obvious to those who have dipped into matters of the kind without losing their faculty of criticism in the enthusiasm natural to the pursuit — that the first, the healthful instinct is to cry, Away with it all; give young men their heads; let them go to work without professional guidance and solve the problem as they best can by themselves! This is, however, the dictum of persons like ourselves who are no longer in the actual fight and can afford to assume an impartial and most wise attitude toward the contest, swayed as we are by considerations entirely different from those which met us when, boys in red and blue, we were of the battle.

Could we, however, become young again by virtue of some witch-potion and enter college once more with all the ignorance, liveliness, and ambition to succeed at whatever cost which we find to our surprise in the undergraduates of the present day, would we act so very differently after all? Would we not be charmed as of old by big, useless muscles in the men of our college class who practice daily at the dumb-bells, and prefer unwieldy giants to smaller men with muscles less startling but far greater will-power to punish themselves in a contest? And when it came to preparations for a boat-race against a college with which rivalry, if not exactly deadly, was a tradition of long standing, would it be in us to refrain from securing what advice was possible from professionals who make oarsmanship their means of livelihood? Probably not. Certainly while rowing had a precarious existence at American colleges, and there was no large body of graduate oarsmen on whom to lean for advice and from whom to beg the arduous and ungrateful services of a "coach," it was only human that professionals should be paid to look after the stroke and diet of the crews. Professionals were at least kept out of the boat. There is no record like that of the Brasenose Oxford four in 1824, which contained two college men, a professional, and an outsider of attainments unrecorded by the muse of history.

To the impetuosity of youth rather than the professional element we may ascribe whatever there is bad in the betting that goes on at college races in the United States. "Boys will be boys" is a remark which enjoys a perennial popularity in all ages and all lands. The same may be said of the spies that are sent out by two colleges to note the proficiency and faults of the rival crew: it springs from boyishness more than anything else; it is the act of half-men who a few years earlier were reading dime novels, daubing their cheeks with red clay, and lassoing their elders and betters in the semblance of buffalo, or shooting each other with arrows, in the semblance of red men. The precautions taken by each crew, not to allow the other side to see them at their best, may