

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.



HE 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 dumbbells, 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

be confidently set down to man's inborn love of outdoing his fellow by sly means as well as by the exercise of power. Every collegian is a Joey Bagstock, who hugs himself if he feels that he is "devilish sly."

Over here Yale College appears to have led off in 1833 with local races, and about New Haven there are legends of doughty crews who "astonished the natives" at fairs and Fourth of July festivities in rural communities of Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts before the year 1843, when Yale formed a regular boat-club. Harvard followed next year, and in August of 1852 the two colleges met in New Hampshire on the lonely waters of Winnipiseogee. As these universities increased in size and other colleges began to take a hand in boat-racing, the professional element could not be kept out, for this reason: four years is a short period in which to form good athletes, and few men could afford to give themselves up to any kind of athletics each year of the college course. Hence it was not possible, even if it were in all respects the better method, to put four or six men in a boat and let them row and row until they settled down to a "telling" stroke without "good form," but effective in getting the boat through the water. The "Hillsdales" or "Sho-Wae-Cae-Mettes," or some crew of amateurs from fresh water or the backwoods, could and did employ this very natural fashion of perfecting themselves, and sometimes with astonishing success, particularly when they had to compete with college crews—trained, it is true, but not always wisely trained, and in any case compelled by their studious life to sacrifice many hours which otherwise could have been employed in practice. It has been found, however, that crews of this description cannot compete with college men who are well trained, if the latter can have a tithe of the practice in the boat secured to the former by long residence in one locality near good rowing-grounds. Science, intelligence, and especially "good form" do tell in all save peculiar circumstances when rowing men are considered, just as they do when soldiers are under consideration. It is a question of drill. The species of rowing crews of which the famous Ward four is the most conspicuous example of success depend for their triumphs on a life-time spent in following the water and rowing together. Such a preparation is almost out of the question among amateurs; without it and in default of rigid coaching they can be beaten by the oarsmen of the poorest clubs, who are physically the weakest of oars. In college communities it is practically out of the question.

The record of the Oxford and Cambridge contests is instructive on this point, for it shows

how much can be done on very inadequate water by a thorough system of drill, which commences at the preparatory schools long before college is reached and is continued with increasing care as regards "form" and diet. At Eton and Harrow the boat clubs struggle with each other; at Oxford and Cambridge the crews of the several colleges are in constant rivalry; finally, out of all these crews the flower of the rowing men is picked to form the 'Varsity eight. Everything in the record of university boating goes to prove that intelligence, science, "good form," are the watch-words of success among amateurs. From another point the English record explains well enough how it is that American crews in Great Britain have scored few victories. Where have we in the United States amateurs or even college oarsmen who can pass through so many years of steady drill in the boat as Oxford or Cambridge men? The latter may be rowing with comrades who were fellow-oars at Eton seven years or more before.

There remains nothing, then, but the best kind of drill to fashion the raw material of American college youth in the course of six months into tolerable similarity of stroke; for unless this is done, defeat is certain. The writer has more than once undergone the agony of trying to shape a crew composed of young men in various walks of life, of various stature and strength, and filled with very different kinds of conceit, into a harmonious whole which should get the boat through the water at the quickest rate possible. The conclusion he came to was that each man should be taken in hand separately and forced to learn exactly the stroke of the stroke-oar; say by exercising him along with the stroke in a pair-oar, but discarding him at once if he is found too stupid or too headstrong to conform. If the club is large enough to contain a choice of good material, this can be done. No combination rowing should be allowed until it has been attended to. Rowing does not differ from other exercises in which united effort is absolutely necessary. Very often, indeed, it is the most experienced oar in a crew who does most to lose the race. He is wedded to his own ideas, or perhaps only to his own habits. Often he cannot learn another stroke even if he be willing, and his powerful efforts along lines differing slightly from those of him who sets the stroke impede the gait, imperceptibly, but very effectually, and in obvious cases cause the boat to roll. This is particularly observable when it comes to race-day; for then the old Adam rises in him, evoked by the excitement of the occasion.

Even when the coach allows the crew to sit in the boat, it is questionable whether at first long, wearying pulls, during which the

minds of the oarsmen wander and their several faults become hardened in them, are of use. It is better to make them paddle a little way and stop them — no matter how the ardent spirits among them may chafe, no matter how much cursing and grumbling is heard in the dressing-room afterwards. The great point is to teach them how to apply their strength all in the same way — at the same moment is of course. And the reason is simple. The Ward brothers bobbed every which-way, it is true, but by long practice the vicious bobbing of one was counteracted by the vicious bobbing of the other. One yawed over the side this way, but another yawed over the other. It is true that drill deadens the enthusiasm and makes some men spiritless; but the coach who is worth his salt knows when to apply the stimulus of enthusiasm, and, having first made machines of his crew, to spur them into putting their heart along the absolute lines he has obviously, however slowly, chalked out.

If I am not mistaken, this is the way Mr. Robert Cook went to work. He did not neglect practice; but he first studied the question, went where the best stroke obtainable at that time was rowed, took of that stroke whatever he thought good, and on his return to Yale played the autocrat with the utmost success. The oarsman who would not row his stroke had to get out of the boat; and in New Haven, that nest of petty politics and secret society nonsense, great was the to-do he raised by his arbitrary proceedings. But he beat Harvard every time, and the cackling of the old ladies with boy's faces, and sometimes with masculine gray hair, who potter about the undergraduate politics in Yale, was all drowned in the hurrahs of victory. In a less perfect way the same was true of Mr. Wilbur Bacon, the Yale stroke who achieved a series of victories at an earlier period. For his time he rowed the best stroke there was — short, it is true; with the body, it is true; mostly arm-work, it is true. But then everybody used their arms too much at that period, when the slide, gradually evolving itself from a pair of well-greased breeches that rubbed up and down a long seat made so that the grain of the wood ran fore and aft, was turning into a thin board running on oiled runners — an American invention quickly taken up in England and never discarded since.

If the old idea that putting college men into a boat and making them row ten miles a day without sharp coaching is no longer tenable, still less is it possible to deny the merits of the sliding seat. Hanlan could never have

made the time he has without this Yankee notion. It is now frequently balanced on glass balls that permit it to move with the least possible friction as the oarsman stretches forward to grasp the water.

The sliding seat equalizes the men in the boat who differ one from the other in length of trunk and limbs, permitting a man with a short reach to slide a little further than another with long arms, so to catch the water at the same angle and pull through a stroke of the same length. Without the slide no amount of rowing together would equalize the stroke: the short man would have to catch later or finish later than the long man, the result of which is, of course, unsteadiness in the boat and diminution of speed; for racing craft are so narrow that the blow of the blade as it takes water and the jerk as it leaves the surface are enough to give a lurch which causes the oars on the other side to foul at some point on the recover.

The sliding seat is based on the common-sense reasoning that the legs are furnished with muscles far more powerful than any other portion of the body. Which would you prefer to be hit with — the fist of a pugilist, or the foot of a Frenchman skilled in the curious and extremely unfashionable science of the *savate*? The latter with his heels can kill a man with one blow far more certainly, far more easily, than the former with his knuckles. Those great thigh and calf muscles contain a power little suspected by the average man. Well, the sliding seat enables the sculler to apply a very large fraction of that immense power to the blades of his oars, and, using the nearly unyielding water as the points of resistance to the longer arms of his fulcrum, to shoot the narrow hull like a javelin propelled from a throwing stick. The gain in swiftness is not a gain in picturesqueness. Look at Hanlan "loafing doubled up" over his sculls, reaching far forward with his hands, and catching the water far back of his seat. Then the bow twangs. His knees were under his breastbone just now, and his thighs and calves (they are not particularly big) were almost touching each other. Down go these levers, and the boat jumps like a trout you have inadvertently jogged while trying to tickle him into your hand. Then Hanlan gathers together in the same lazy, unpicturesque way — what! he's done it again! You turn away and remark to yourself that if he can keep up that sort of thing for twenty minutes, nobody unprovided with these new-fangled rowing-tanks, slides, swivel oar-locks, and wind-boards can hope to stay near him in a race.

Henry Eckford.