

DURHAM, SATURDAY, MAY 7th, 1887.

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Jottings.

The *Church Quarterly Review*, in a notice of the *English Historical Review*, says "we would call special attention to a masterly article in No. 4 on the *Origines of the University of Paris*," by the v. H. Rashdall, which bears ample evidence of orious and well-directed research in the constitutional history of Universities." April, 1877, 252.

We understand that petitions have been addressed to several Scotch Universities, asking them to examine and give degrees in music. Aspendant to this:—at a meeting lately held in Birmingham, of the National Society of Professional Musicians, a motion was passed: "that it is advisable to establish independent colleges in various large centres throughout the country, for the cultivation of music in all, and particularly its instrumental branches; and that the General Council requested to forward the matter in every possible way."

Now is the time for taking action, and that for three reasons: first, we should then be well abreast of other Universities; second, from a psychological point of view it would be deeply interesting shewing that, notwithstanding the past, theivers that be are as yet not bereft of the ability to take a matter "at the flood."

Our correspondent "Ridens" calls attention to an offence against good taste, which doubtless has been committed through inadvertence, and will, we assume, be repaired in future.

Old Castle men, and all who take a pride in the beauty of the Castle, will be glad to hear that an iron screen has been put up in the Hall; and that the screen, designed by Mr. Hodgson Fowler, is a beauty worthy of the place it fills.

FIVES.

Very little about Fives seems to appear in print. *Land and Water* and the *Field* may sometimes condescend to give a line or two, but Fives literature is, without doubt, scanty and inaccessible. Lawn Tennis, Bicycling, &c., have their recognised place in the book of sports, the magazine and the newspaper, and in several cases single branches of athletics have one or more of these publications entirely devoted to them. But Fives, so far as we know, has not an established place of the humblest kind in any one of these organs. The advances, the back-slidings, the doughty deeds of its many votaries are all done in a corner. The laws and science of the game, its methods of attack and defence are, for the most part, "in the air," and exist in contemplation only. We have, therefore, an excuse for venturing on an unfrequented but difficult path. First as to the

HISTORY OF FIVES.

All undergrads., who have had the pleasure of reading the *Odyssey*, are aware that ball games were known in very early times. Nausicaa and her maidens begin their play immediately after lunch, which custom appears to have come down to our age. After the introduction of the ball itself, the idea of *hitting* must soon have arisen. Now the blow might be given in three ways: (1) by the hand, (2) by the foot, (3) by a stick held in the hand. From (2) football, of course, is descended. From (3) we get cricket, racquets, tennis, hockey, &c. The *hand*, however, is the most obvious striking instrument and consequently games founded on (1) have been popular in all ages. The Greek *ἀρόπησις*, the Roman *pila*, the mediæval palm play and *jeu de paume* had all this basis and were probably somewhat similar in detail. In the last-named period and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we first come across some particulars. Strutt tells us (*Book of Sports*, edit. 1801) "the exercise of palm play or hand tennis consisted in receiving the ball and driving it back again with the palm of the hand. They played at first with the naked hand, then with a glove which in some instances was lined, afterwards they bound cords and tendons round their hand." In early times, then, *gloves* were used. The ball, however, was not struck against a *wall*, but over a *line* or *net*, making a kind of mixture between our modern games of fives and lawn tennis. Thus, in one of Queen Elizabeth's progresses through the country, she was entertained at Elvetham, in Hampshire, by the Earl of Hertford, where, "after dinner, about three o'clock, ten of his lordship's servants, in a square *green court* before her majesty's window, did hang up lines squaring out the form of a tennis court and making a *croste line* in the middle; in this square they played five

o five with hand-ball to the great liking of her highness." We know too that before the "lined gloves" and the "cords and tendons" were introduced, the *ball* could not have been very hard. "A Parisian damsel, named Margot, played at sand tennis with the palm and also with the *back* of her hand better than any man of her time, and what is more remarkable, the game was then played with the naked hand." It would be difficult, indeed, to imagine a modern lady keeping a "Jefferies" going with the back of her hand. In the later times to which Strutt alludes, the ball was probably made of sterner stuff. Our Charles II. had *dresses* made specially for hand tennis, and his courtiers, doubtless, had the same, so that *changing* for fives is by no means of recent introduction. Lastly, in the fourteenth century, the French nobility, after gambling away all their cash on *jeu de paume*, would pledge a part of their wearing apparel rather than give up the pursuit. *Earnestness* in the cause seems not to have been lacking 500 years ago.

We see then that the *handball* of bygone centuries resembled our *fives* more or less in all respects but two. We have, therefore, to ask (1) when was the *wall* substituted for the *cross line* or *net*? and (2) when were the terms "hand ball," "hand tennis," &c., merged into the common name of "fives" and why? To (1) we are not able to give an answer. With regard to (2), the term *fives* was in use before 1800, but Strutt gives no exact date. There are three derivations of this word. In the *Book of Sports* we are told that the fact of *five* players opposing each other in the game (as in the case of the before-mentioned royal sports in Hampshire) brought about, in time, the modern title. But it is perhaps more probable that the name is derived from the essential feature of the pastime, consisting in striking a ball with the *five digits* of the hand. The third derivation, viz., from *fifteen* (3 times 5) being the usual number of points played up to, does not seem to be supported by authority.

Next as to

MODERN COURTS, RULES, &c.

The different kinds of courts are well known. The *open*, without roof, having one, three or four walls, of all sorts, sizes and conditions, from the side wall of a pitman's cottage to the new courts at Rugby School. The *close* courts which are covered in.

Those belonging to the Castle, Hatfield Hall, and the School, are all of this nature, but the first-named are more correctly described as "complete close courts," and the two latter, being half open at the back, as "incomplete close courts."

There is no recognized *size* for fives courts. The new Rugby courts are open and of larger dimensions than ours.

Here is a comparison in a tabular form with one of University College courts.

	Length. ft. in.	Breadth. ft. in.	Height of front wall. ft. in.	Height of side walls. ft. in.	Height of back wall. ft. in.	Height of line ft. in.
R.	34 2	19 6	20 0	20 0*	5 10	2
U. C.	27 2	19 6	14 0	13 0	7 6	2

There is also no fixed code of *rules*. The *Rugby* hold a predominant position and appear to be used pretty generally, but the minor rules vary at man schools and universities and are usually handed down by tradition.

The *balls* are either hard or soft. With regard to the former, everyone has his own opinion as to the merits of the various makers. The "inflated ball," called in old times "the balloon ball," still survives in many open courts, especially in those with a inferior floor. We believe that matches are played at Tudhoe Park, Spennymoor, for stakes as high as £50, with the soft ball.

We now pass on to a few

REMARKS ON PLAY.

We do not make any pretence of posing a "Mentor," but only submit a few individual opinions founded on personal observation and experience, which are as likely to be erroneous as not. We will consider them

I. The man himself, looked at as a five playing machine.

II. The different strokes.

III. Play looked at from the outside as a whole.

I. A good eye, quickness of motion, strength, suppleness, reach, &c., are natural advantages which are more or less helpful in fives as in other violent games. The qualities mentioned, however, to be really effective must be in proper combination. If a *strong* man is not *supple* as well, his strength will be wasted. *Quickness of motion* without a *good eye* is rather an evil than otherwise. A porous skin might be added to the list, but in this case, the provision of nature can be supplemented by the efforts of art. The five player who aspires to play hotly two or three times a week, must be in good health, and will find it both to his comfort and advantage to be in a state of *semi-training* likewise. If he can ascer at a continuous run to the top of the keep without feeling it, he may be fairly satisfied with his condition. Unless a man is *fit*, a series of fast games will invariably find out the weak points and he will have to abjure serious work in the courts till he himself again.

II. It is impossible to treat this part of the subject decently without diagrams. And even with the most approved figuring an hour's hand play is better teaching than a hundred folios.

* This is the height only at the junction of the front and side walls. The side walls vary from 20 feet half-way down the court to 12 feet for the remaining distance. In place of the gallery over our back wall there is in the Rugby court a wire netting on a brick wall, about 6 ft. high, on which if the ball strikes, it is probably out of play.

jaw. A few disjointed jottings only are given. STROKES may be divided into three classes.

- (1) The return stroke.
- (2) The rejoinder to the return.
- (3) The game stroke.

(1) These are *fast* and *slow*; the former by far the most effective, the latter are useful, for being hit underhand, the arm gets rest, and they sometimes puzzle an enemy on the look out for "smashers." It is well to hit near to, or right in the corner, as the ball gets thereby an ugly spin and its bounce is stunted and often deceptive, especially when the stroke is low down. The server then, who waits its coming off the left hand wall, usually waits in vain. According to the force with which it is impelled and according as it strikes high or low, in, near, or away from the corner, so the ball will either not hit the left hand wall at all, or come off first bounce or full pitch. In the last-named case it is almost sure to reach the back wall under more or less playable conditions. A strong player sometimes sends the ball completely round the court and it is taken off the right hand wall from whence it originated. *Hard smash strokes*, well out, are usually of effect; if not fatal, the rejoinder is weakened, but it is rather tiring to keep on giving them.

(2) A low quick *rejoinder* either to the right or left with impetus to reach the back wall *without coming off* it, is perhaps the most telling answer to a *smasher* (it is also not out of place in reply to any return), the returner not having time to recover himself, but it is not always easy to carry this idea out. A good *medium pace* stroke is a hit on the left hand side half-way up *grazing the wall from start to finish*. This is not so hard to accomplish as it would seem, and is soon learnt by practice even from a fast return. A *high slow*, crossing the court obliquely and on its descent colliding and cannoning in the *back right hand corner*, is not to be despised. To make the rejoinder almost a repetition of the return, *i.e.*, hitting first the right and then the front wall, is a pretty but somewhat risky stroke.

(3) The *game* stroke. This term includes the almost infinite variety of strokes which can be given when the game is fairly begun. All the *rejoinders* mentioned are practical *game strokes* as well. When the enemy is blown and at the back of the court, a *low slow* against the right or left wall coming *aslant* and *gently* off the front, is a good attention to shew him. "Outpost" play, close to the line, is very pretty and sometimes of much effect. Its exponents should be "light fingered." In fast game play, as a general rule, the ball should be hit *low*, so as to *make for the back wall* but *not quite reach it*, or higher *so as to come off full pitch near the bottom*, and this may be done either in open court or round a side wall. The *position* of the enemy will bring about most

exceptions to this rule. Another *general rule* may be put forth both for fast and slow play, *viz.*, give the enemy all the *finger end* work possible—send him scrapers of all sorts and speeds—soft-hit slimers, half-court pitchers, back-wall smiters. One more in conclusion. Never *volley* except your opponent, or opponents are up at the front wall and have returned back over their heads, or unless your own body is wedged in a corner, when *do*, but not blindly.

III. A skilful variation of these strokes of course adds much to the effect of each. Back and forward, quick and slow, one wall and two wall should succeed one another and be mixed up in endless permutation. The size of the court, the style of his opponent's play, his strong and weak points, and his own endurance, nerve and steadiness all influence the fives player and modify his play. He judges and varies according to expediency and to circumstances that arise at the time of action. Like a good general he is well acquainted with the theatre of war, knows the power and range of his weapons, and studies to learn his enemy's position and strength while concealing his own. He labours to out-manceuvre him, to gradually sap his strength, or to exhaust and disable him by a series of violent onslaughts. If a man is at all nervous or out of training, a fierce "bombardment" is often effective, particularly if the "besieger" selects well the time of commencing it. In addition to the actual points gained, the moral effects on the "besieged" are usually considerable. It is needless to say that in a *single*, if a player is driven *close to the line*, he should keep the ball *close* too, and never hit hard out over his head and give his opponent the whole court to "place" in. In *doubles* it is as often acknowledged in theory as forgotten in practice, that *partners* ought never to come into collision except under *most exceptional circumstances*. A very few articles of agreement, *if they are observed*, will make the partnership run quite smoothly. There should be the strictest discipline with a full *field* for individual effort and intelligence as in the *beau ideal* of modern military tactics.

The *duration* of a game of course varies greatly. A *double*, in which the sides are fairly equal and the play 1st or 2nd class, usually lasts from sixteen to twenty minutes. A *single* does not take quite so long. We have noted a few cases which may throw some light on the matter. A very fast game, in which the losers scored twelve and the rallies were long, occupied twenty-five minutes. An hour and twenty minutes sufficed for four games played between the same parties, ninety-five points being scored altogether. Three of the four players referred to, *with a weaker man in the place of the fourth*, got through *six games in almost exactly the same time*. We have seen three fast games, in which the winners obtained a total score

of forty-four, and the losers of twenty-five, played in fifty minutes. Lastly, as an illustration of the present question and also of the "glorious uncertainty" of fives, a couple of days after this last game, the *weaker man of the winning side was withdrawn and a much stronger one substituted*, the other side remaining as before, when, strange to say, the result was quite reversed, the previous losers obtaining forty-five points in three games, and the previous winners, with a great accession of strength, scoring only twenty-six. These games were also played in fifty minutes.

We appeal to the many lovers of fives for sympathy in this crude attempt to explain some of the traits of their favourite game. *They* will fully appreciate the difficulty of transferring its many glories to paper. The uninitiated will perhaps ask, how can four persons find room for so much pleasure and exercise on sixty square yards of cement—less than one-fifth of the area of a lawn tennis court? We answer, leave off pudding, don your flannels and try it. Each man of the crew of an eight-oared boat performs nearly eight times as much work during a boat-race than is done in the same time by a day labourer at his ordinary work. We should very much like to see a similar calculation in the case of a "hot single" at fives if it could be made. The mass of delight and exhilaration which can be compressed into half a minute during the "thick of the fight," is incomprehensible to any but the fives player. The speed and endless vagaries of the ball—its lively briskness—its dashing and slashing and clashing—receding and speeding—bounding and rounding—its sportful flashes—its troubling and doubling—thumping and plumping and bumping and jumping—its quick collapse—are so many drops in the cup of pleasure. The votary of the game finds exercise for all the energies of his nature: he must have a heart to resolve, a head to contrive and a hand to execute. The resolution too must be exceeding prompt: indecision is the cancer of fives and strangles the strokes at their birth. There is here the fullest scope for coolness, intelligence, constancy under misfortune, and power of deception. In fives, men *ought* to be deceivers ever. All tumultuous and "dusty" excitement must be banished the courts. But that extreme tension of feeling, that white glow of battle which develops the nervous strength to the utmost and makes the frame as iron and brass, is essential to success. Ball play is a veritable *corpus incorporationum*. As we have tried to shew, the *players* vary from age to age in dress and equipment, the rules and regulations pass away and are changed, but the only difference is one of form and garb. We players feel ourselves successors of the Phæacian damsels and would rather go *lusum pila* with Mæcenas than *dormitum* with Horace. We once met a quiet looking man in the train. He had

served in the Chilian army during the late war with Peru. He began very soberly to explain the position of the Peruvians on the heights near Lima, and to describe the first stages of the attack. But his eye soon kindled, he waved his arms and was almost overcome by the remembrance of his country's triumph. Very similar must be the feelings of the fives player, when calling to mind his conflicts and his victories *his* countenance too will brighten, *he* will hold up his hands, and, like our soldier friend, exclaim "Oh! it was glorious."

R. W.

Fourah Bay College.

SIERRA LEONE, 5th March, 1887.

The *Calendar* for 1887 has reached our hands.

We congratulate the compilers upon their task; but we at Fourah Bay cannot but observe the following *errata* as they concern us specially. In the first place, all the candidates who passed the First Year Examination in Arts and Theology in Michaelmas Term last, are recorded as members of Codrington College. And next, the names of two of our members who passed the Matriculation Examination in Epiphany Term last year, are omitted from the list of students of Fourah Bay College and of members of the University. Lastly, J. O. Coker, one of the said matriculated students who obtained a Certificate (with honours) of Proficiency in General Education in Michaelmas Term last, had his name totally left out from the list of successful candidates in the *Calendar*. Are we to understand that the University takes no notice of such members in connection with Fourah Bay?

According to the new and special arrangement for this College, the Terms for 1887 are as follows:—Epiphany Term, from January 17th to March 26th; Easter Term, from April 18th to June 25th; Long Vacation Term, from July 18th to September 24th; Michaelmas Term, from October 17th to December 24th. Each Term consists of ten working weeks and three weeks' vacation.

It is worthy of remark that in spite of this arrangement, to which "it will take a long time for Durham to be equal," as the editor says, the community in Sierra Leone feels that the college has too frequent and long vacations, though it is unnecessary to say that the students do not agree with the prevailing sentiment.

The following changes have been made in the Literary Association:—D. J. Coker, late Secretary has been made President in place of Allan Elba and S. A. Hughes succeeded to the secretaryship.

The state of health in the college has been most unfavourable this term, five students were prostrated by fever at the same time, and the Principal who is generally most attentive when any one is