

Pres Meiklejohn of Amherst Believes in Human Game of Life

The Athletic Equipment of His College is Complete, But Athletics Are Made Contributory in the Rational Development of the Student Mind—Real Education Begins and Ends in the Home

By A. J. PHILLPOT.

A STRONG expression of opinion on a subject which is prominent in the public mind will very often bring down on a man's head more of criticism of praise and blame than will the efforts and results of a lifetime along some useful line of human endeavor. For we are a "touch-and-go" people in many ways, and "Tap-You're It" is one of our favorite games. We love a personal target.

Pres Alexander Meiklejohn of Amherst College has found this out during the past few weeks. He is the youngest college president in New England, and with the fearlessness of youth he touched a sensitive nerve in the educational world with a few remarks he made at the recent Exeter Alumni dinner on the subject of athletics, or rather on the relation of athletics to education, and for these remarks he has been both praised and blamed.

But, curiously enough, the full significance of the idea in Pres Meiklejohn's brief address in the classroom has been generally quoted and criticized; in fact, taken separately and removed from the context, these sentences mean apparently something which he did not intend to say. He said:

"I believe very strongly in the play and outdoor joy of a boy, and I enjoy seeing him do something he loves to do and that carries him out of himself for the time being in what he calls play. If you want to see one of the most beautiful things in the world just look at those boys, half-naked, out on the track.

"But what of the studies in our schools and colleges? We see a boy on the track, perfect as a physical specimen—what of him in the classroom? I've had them in the classroom in logic before simple problems and it is sad to see them. They are not always quick I wish I could show some of them what they look like intellectually. You can take the simplest of problems and they become confused in their reasoning. Intellectually they are knowledgeless, unskilled, stumbling and stumbling over themselves."

Unfortunately it is the very last sentence in the above excerpt from his speech which has been picked up and lauded or mauled in every college club in the land, in the classrooms and by the friends of football heroes and track idols, and in the press of the country. It has been very much "the topic of the day" in educational circles, and it all proves, if proof were necessary, how vital a thing in our educational life athletics has become and how serious a matter of education it is to anything that is said or written on the subject.

Now, if you will read over again that excerpt from Pres Meiklejohn's speech you will notice that he has never once mentioned the college athlete as such. He has not specified the college athlete. He is talking of the college boys as a whole who look so well outdoors and on the track, but who do not measure up to these appearances in the classroom. His indictment is much broader, it is the college athlete as a whole, and not necessarily mean the boy who may excel in athletics, for he knows better than most people that the boy who excels in athletics is, as a rule, a boy who puts his mind on his work—a fundamental of education.

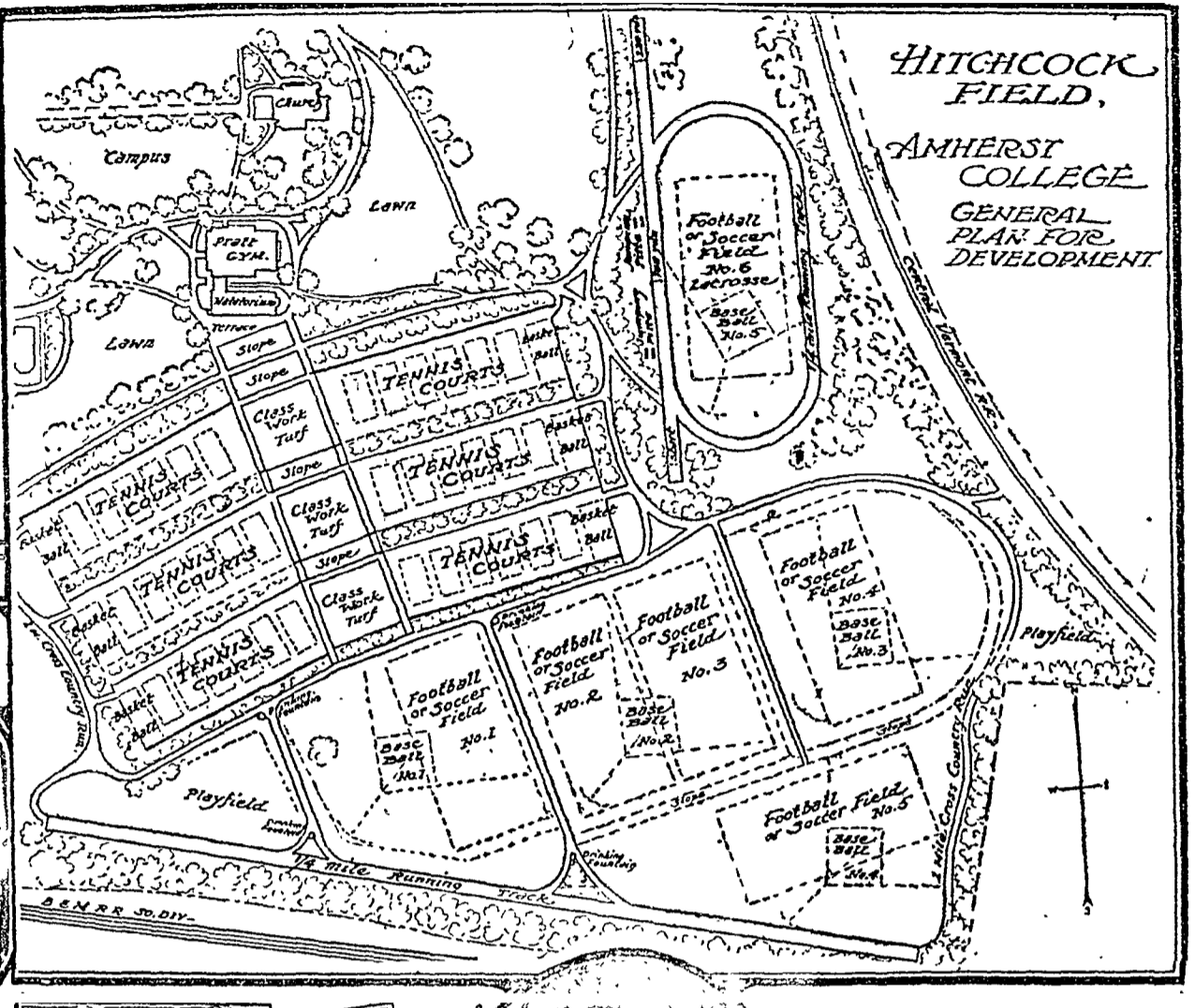
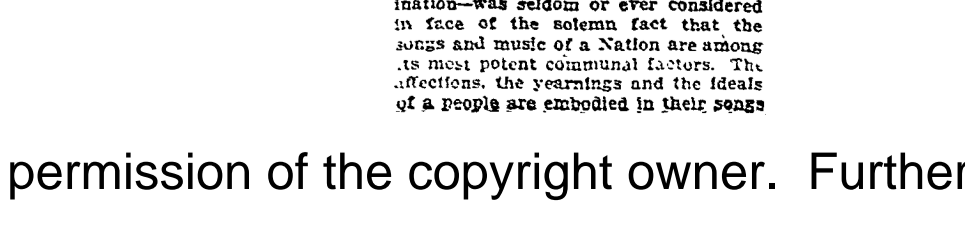
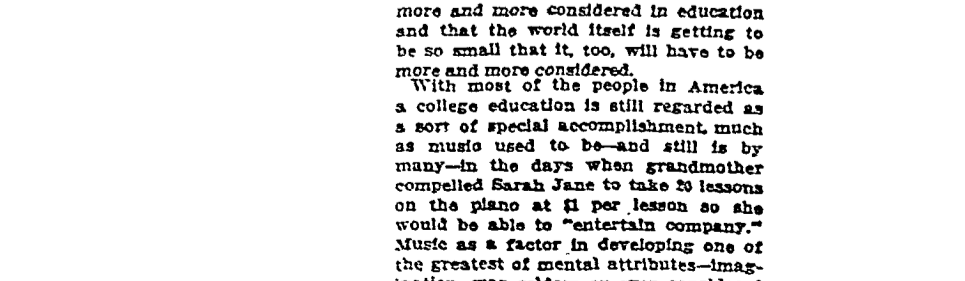
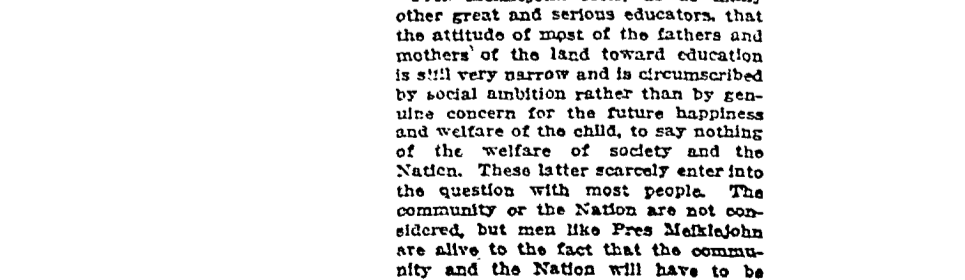
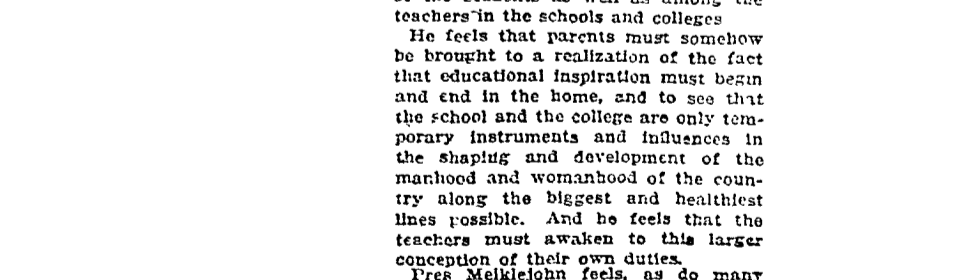
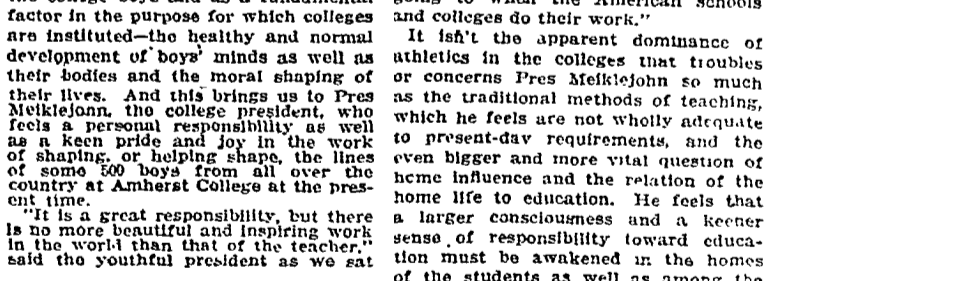
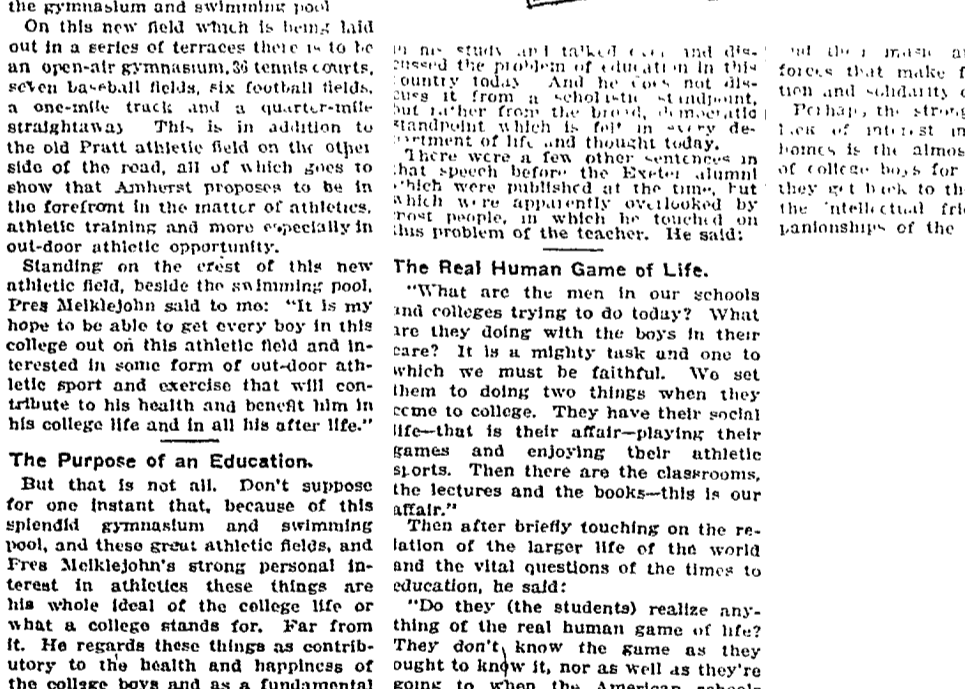
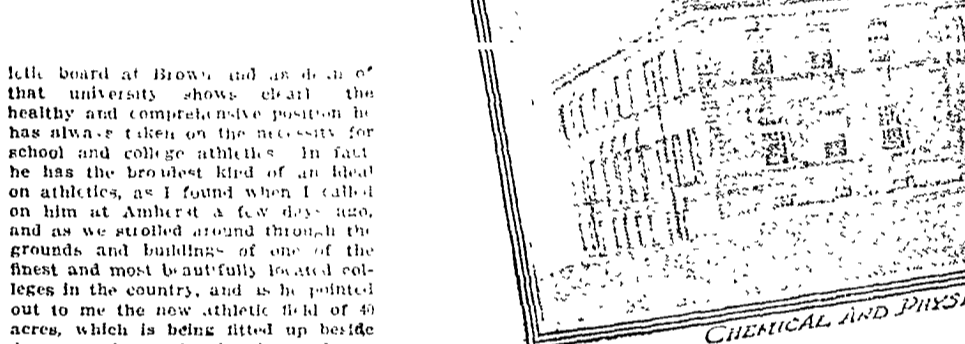
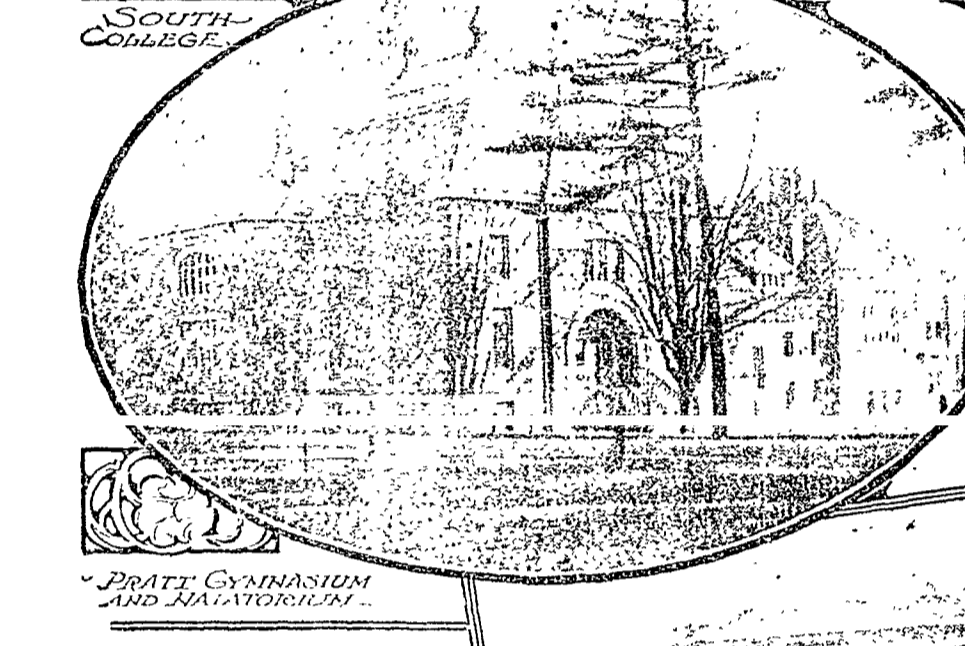
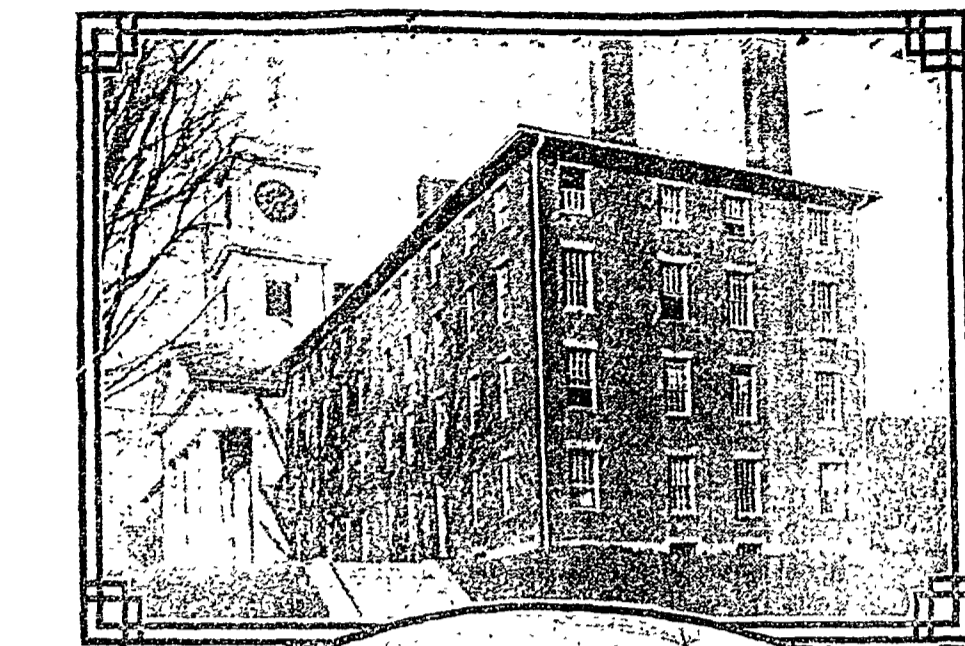
The writer was present at the alumni dinner when Pres Meiklejohn made those remarks, and I reported them at the time for the Globe as quoted, but I can frankly state that at the moment—his words flowed from his lips—I felt that he was speaking of college athletics as distinct from the student as a whole, and it only goes to show how easy it is to catch a suggestion by implication when the words do not really warrant the thought they seem to suggest. And I did not fully grasp the scope of his idea until I had talked with him personally about the matter.

However, no man can make clear his position on any such subject in a brief speech at an alumni dinner where he is one of many speakers and limited to a few minutes of time. And it would be particularly unfair to judge Pres Meiklejohn on the subject of college athletics from such a brief speech as he made that evening, even if the whole context rather than a sentence were selected for criticism. For, curiously enough, there are few college professors in the country so enthusiastic over athletics as Pres Meiklejohn, and probably not another one who practices athletics in a variety of ways with so much personal enthusiasm and delight.

Broad View of Athletics.

He is a wiry, vigorous, clean-cut young man—a champion cricketer and hockey player, a famous tennis and golf player, and one of the ablest teachers of logic in the country. He is the kind of man who generates enthusiasm in educational matters because he is, and always has been, deeply in love with his profession; and he is one who attracts to himself the generous support and respect of trustees, faculty, alumni and undergraduates.

His record as chairman of the ath-



Our creed, the creed that knowledge is its own reward, we should say to our people so plainly that they can not misunderstand. Give us your boys, give us the means we need, and we will so train and reform the minds of those boys that their own lives and the lives of the men about them shall be successful than they could be without our training. Give us our chance and we will show your boys what human living is, for we are convinced that they can live better in knowledge than they can in ignorance."

The Mission of a College Teacher.

And again, after criticizing the tendency toward over-specialization in colleges and making a plea for the demands of a liberal education, he says: "This is the mission of the college teacher as of no other member of our common life. Surely he should stand before his pupils and before all of us as a man who has achieved some understanding of this human situation of ours, but more than that, as one who is eager for the conflict with the powers of darkness and who can lead his pupils in enthusiastic devotion to the common cause of enlightenment."

He also said: "Our college curriculum should be so arranged and our instruction so devised that its vital connection with the living of men should be obvious even to an undergraduate." That is really what he stands for—the relation of education to life.

The "Seminar" idea is being more and more introduced at Amherst. Under this system classroom ethics are dropped and the teacher sits around the fire or under the trees with small groups of the boys and becomes one of them for the time being. He quizzes them and they quiz him. It is the aim of the college to reduce the classes to about 10 to a teacher, at a time, so the personal element and spirit will enter more largely into the college work.

You feel in this college those things which convey to the mind solidity and distinction. You feel that it has its roots in the past and that in the process of growth it has been well cared for and nourished so that the branches are healthy and radiate toward the light. There is the severe simplicity of the Puritan-Colonial era in the old buildings and dormitories, and you feel the influence of that "liberal education" to which the college is dedicated that time and more especially in the biological and geological laboratories, the chemical and physical laboratories, the observatory, the Pratt Gymnasium and swimming pool, the fraternity houses, the new Pratt Dormitory, the new athletic field and the health cottage. And above all you feel in the liberal curriculum.

The new Pratt Dormitory in this college is probably one of the best arranged and finest dormitories in any college in America, and some of the older dormitories are as simply quaint as some of those in the Harvard yard. In fact, it is a genuine surprise to find in such a remote hill town as Amherst such a splendidly equipped educational plant as is this Amherst College, which has become confused in the minds of many people with the Massachusetts

As I have said, the college teacher should stand aloof from his pupils has passed—especially the college teacher—and never ought to have been, and that the mere fact of knowing a little more about some particular thing than somebody else does not of itself entitle one to the position of teacher when the power of inspiring others is lacking. He sees the danger of over-specialization which is liable to produce mental strabismus that distorts the relation and importance of things in nature and in mental life.

Pres Meiklejohn made very clear his idea on the new responsibilities of the teacher and the measure of the teacher's efficiency in his remarkable inaugural address on the 10th of last October. This address will go down in education history with a few of the really great and important inaugural addresses that have given expression to the psychological moment to the pressure of the demands of civilization on institutions.

In this inaugural he points out the real meaning of a "liberal education" and the relation of the teacher to the unfolding mind of the pupil during the adolescent and growing years. He said: "We men of the college should declare in clear and unmistakable terms

Agricultural College in the same town, but the college president of the Amherst College was a graduate of the Amherst College and was originally from Williams College, which was then a remote town in the mountains. The town is a beautiful hill town and the college is a beautiful campus.

160 Acres in Campus Grounds.

The campus and grounds cover about 160 acres—about four times as large as Boston Common—and on this property there has grown about 100 buildings. The college has a fine collection of books and a fine collection of equipment as the growing needs of the years in education demand. And there are beautiful trees and groves in and around the campus, and on all sides of it and around the campus, that is a beautiful scene in its life.

Perhaps the best proof of its attraction as an educational institution to the generations of the same family that have been educated there—sometimes at the alumni gatherings it is not uncommon to see three generations of the same family represented by the oldest, the middle and the youngest. This is a true spiritual college, to have graduated.

Amherst has graduated some great men in the past years, men who have become a strong part of the traditions of the college. The late Clyde Fitch was a graduate, and in 1907 the beautiful study and library of the eminent dramatist will be moved from his New York home to Amherst to become the center of the literary and dramatic interests of the college. It is growing every day.

Under Pres Meiklejohn it is expected that the college will attract to itself an even larger attention in the educational world than it has in the past. And right here it should be said—at least this is the way it impressed me—Pres Meiklejohn is very fortunate as a teacher of such large responsibilities.

In an American college, in having been outside of the United States and having lived some of his young years in another country, and then in having been educated here, few people can give us a better insight into the American situation than he. He is a man who has achieved some understanding of this human situation of ours, but more than that, as one who is eager for the conflict with the powers of darkness and who can lead his pupils in enthusiastic devotion to the common cause of enlightenment."

Dr. Meiklejohn was born in England in 1872, of Scotch parents, and came to America in 1890. He went to Brown University and took the degree of Master of Arts in 1895. At Cornell he was elected to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1897. He then became an instructor in philosophy at Brown and an assistant professor of philosophy in 1899, professor of logic and metaphysics in 1900, and professor of philosophy in 1901. He was elected to the position of president of a college for a university that is Dr. Meiklejohn.

His reports while dean of Brown on college athletics show the full depth of his interest and knowledge of the subject and his sympathy with "clean sport." Those who have followed college athletics will recall some of the incidents that occurred at Brown a few years ago, when the university had a champion baseball.

The Association of Colleges had made a rule that students who played ball for money were to be expelled. It was a very strict rule. Brown had assented to this rule. They had a winning team, a member of which had played for money.

They wanted to break the rule, but when they did so, they were expelled. It was the rule and they had assented to it. And that may be the reason why that of all time—a time when they were victorious was not a time to break the rule.

Everybody came around to his way of thinking and it was admitted that his kind of sports were to be given up.

One of the things that bothered him while dean was the attitude of a great many students toward work of any kind—physical or mental. He found many who had neither pride nor ambition to study or do anything but "get by." On one occasion he said: "I found a man who knew how to get by, not the man who has interests which distract him from his studies, but the one who has no interests at all, who apparently can live in comfort and ease of spirit without doing anything that seems to him to be a howl of pain or a howl of work. I believe that lack of positive interest is a far greater hindrance to our work than any distractions which come from interests which interfere with proper attention to studies. If so, this is a condition far more serious and far more difficult to deal with than the ordinary interest from study. It is the fundamental question whether the conditions of life and of study in the American college do not tend toward transformation and amputation."

That type of boy is found in every school and college and the "rotting" system has largely broken up and destroyed the spirit of the highest intellectual life. At Amherst the fraternity houses are a large part of the life of the college and the fraternity houses are models of the kind.