

FRENCH SPORTS.

Pugilistic, Rowing, Running, or Walking Contests Unknown in France.

The Drafting of the Young Men Into Military Service the Chief Cause for This.

Fencing, Billiards, and Lacrosse—The Paper Chase—Pounding Bismarck's Head.

[NEW YORK CORRESPONDENCE.]

Not far from the Bleecker street station on the Sixth avenue road is a little court whose name, if it ever had any, has been blown away and forgotten. It is in the very heart of the so-called French quarter. When the infrequent snow-storm of a New York winter finds the ground cold enough to retain the flakes unmelted, the little court becomes the dumping place of the snow from the neighboring sidewalks and the overhanging roofs. And when the days and the thermometric mercury elongate simultaneously, and the snow becomes slush and disappears into the soil, the sewer, and the atmosphere, the French boys of the quarter bring out a big iron frog, and stand it up in the further end of the court, and pitch pennies into its mouth for hours at a time, for fun and profit. It is one of their most popular games, and, to a certain extent, is typical of French sport. For it seems that what Americans understand as sport is little known in France, and little admired by the French. Not all their recreations are colored with gambling, but very few are calculated to develop muscular prowess, or require it. Contests for a champion-belt in pugilism, or the badge of championship in rowing, or in walking, or in running, or in any of the scores of exercises so popular on this side of the water, are practically unknown in France. Nevertheless, the French residents of America have furnished some of the best-known contestants in several fields, and the undisputed champions in the one or two departments of sport that they pay considerable attention to at home. Monsieur Alphonse Dumont, a Parisian who is visiting this country, and spending a part of his time in this city, said on this subject:

"The Frenchman cares little to compete in anything where mere muscular

floors are absent altogether, except for a narrow platform running round the four walls on the inside. This is almost on a level with the water of the river into which the swimmers plunge. There are instructors in swimming in all these houses, and although there is naturally no opportunity for long distance exercise, or practice in making time, there is yet considerable opportunity for fun and unlimited means for cultivating diving to its best. Many good swimmers go to these places for practice; indeed, it would be practically impossible for those ignorant of swimming to go there at all unless they attached themselves to the end of the rope held by the instructor. Some of these bath-houses are free, and others are the result of private enterprise



THE PAPER CHASE.

and are open only on the payment of an admission fee. That there is actually an interest in swimming, apart from the limited opportunities of the Seine bath-houses, was evidenced just before I left France at Clichy. There is an island in the river there that is from a mile and a half to a mile and three-quarters in circumference. Two butchers, famous in their locality for their skill in the water, agreed for a wager to swim round the island in the night. Several gentlemen interested in sporting events were notified, and, in addition to the wager, a purse was offered; the wager, by the way, was that the circuit could be made in an hour. At 10 o'clock at night they dove into the river. The men who backed them followed in a boat, and I am told that upward of twenty thousand francs were put up on the question whether either of the contestants would finish on time. They came to the finish precisely at the same instant, having accomplished the circuit in fifty-seven minutes. The prize money was divided between them. When they were taken from the water the weather was so cold that ice formed on their trunks before they could be got under shelter. One of them became dangerously ill, but the other suffered nothing from his hardy adventure.

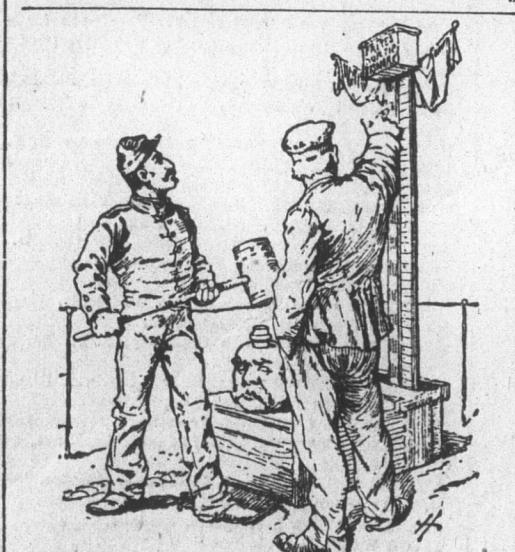
"Fencing I suppose everybody knows about. The French are the acknowledged masters in the art, and every educated man in the country knows how to handle the sword. The war department does everything possible to encourage the general cultivation of this exercise. General Boulanger is himself a famous swordsman, and frequently goes out of his way to act as judge in a public contest. These contests are numerous, much more numerous, I am inclined to think, than the sparring exhibitions that take place in New York. And this, it need not be said, is distinctly a sport wherein mere muscular power is at a discount; it is skill that counts.

"The French are also experts at billiards, and, in short, will be found the peers of any nation in games of skill. We have had some good wrestlers, also, notably Chrystol, Perrier and Regnier, but the wrestler with us is not lionized to the extent that a champion would be in America."

"Is there no general interest in aquatic sports?"

"Yes," responded M. Dumont laughing. "The wealthy have their yachts as you have here, and there is a form of canoeing that, though highly entertaining, would hardly pass for sport in the sense you mean. Canoeing is a popular recreation of a Sunday, and in fact those addicted to it like it so well that they often spend the entire day at it. That is more than your boat club men do on the Harlem, is it not? But the canoeist on the Seine is almost invariably accompanied by the lady whom you Americans would denominate as his best girl, and he is not infrequently taken along a cargo of lunch. Ah, yes, canoeing is good sport, but I do not remember that I have heard of a championship contest. And on our holidays it is not a game of base-ball that attracts the crowds; they go to the Tuilleries and listen to the music and roam about the gardens, and now and then an irregular kind of football is indulged in. It is not the Rugby game by any means, more a kind of indiscriminate kicking."

"In the northern part of France they



POUNDING BISMARCK'S HEAD.

play a variety of lacrosse, but it is considerably different from the game known to Americans. Lawn tennis is played by the same class of people who play it here, and in the winter, when the weather allows, there is some skating, but it is an intensely aristocratic sport, not at all the popular thing it is

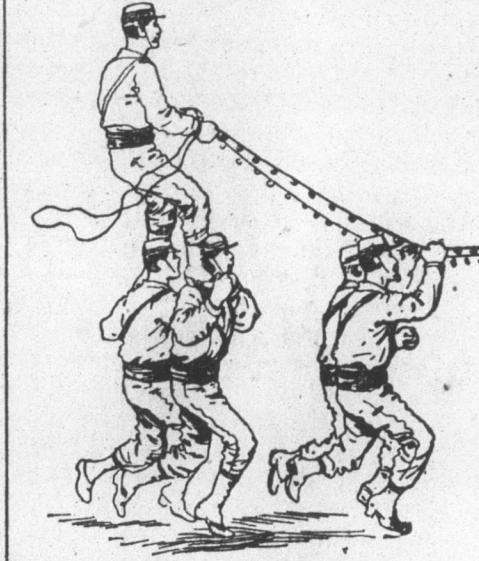
here. Our champion skater, by the way, so far as we have one, is an American, George Frost. More than that, I believe he is a journalist. Speaking of aristocratic sport reminds me to say that our sport is mostly of that character. Such great games as we have are played mainly by the titled persons and the military. The leading one I think of is a paper chase on horseback, conducted in very much the same way that the English and Americans play hare-and-hounds. With us, two of the most intrepid horsemen start from a given point at a set time, and mark their course by scattering bits of paper as they go. They stop not for barriers of any description and disdain roads. The pack, also on horseback, pursue them and catch them if they can. This game is always accompanied by a considerable concourse of spectators in carriages, who keep up with the pursuit as best they can by driving along the roads. It is a great game, and calls for the exercise of no little nerve and vigor. The courses are from fifteen to twenty miles in length."

A striking difference between the French and American ideas of sport may be seen in this, for in hare-and-hounds as played in this country on foot the course is rarely less than fifteen miles long. It is evidently not a sport for France. M. Dumont continued:

"At the country fairs, with which all Americans are familiar through the comic opera, for what opera ever was written that did not include as one of its scenes a country fair in France, there are various physical diversions that are more or less in vogue here in modified forms. Perhaps the most popular is pounding Bismarck's head. In this game the player strikes with a mallet on an image of Bismarck, and according to the force of the blow on the skull with which it is delivered, a bolt shoots up in a slot in an upright plank. The game is of course to see who can send the bolt up the highest. Then the chasing of a greased pig needs no explaining, I suppose. The best fun with a greased pig, however, is to be found in Paris itself. There they take a pig into one of the swimming houses in the Seine, such as I have spoken of, and having greased his tail throw him into the water. Then the swimmers who are contesting for the prize, which is the pig, follow and try to bring him to land. It is great sport, I assure you."

"You have spoken, monsieur, about the government providing exercise for the youth. In what way?"

"Hardly is a boy in school before he



IN THE GYMNASIUM.

is made to enter upon a series of gymnastics. It is a regular part of the curriculum, and increases in importance until the end of the course. Now, the peculiar feature of all this is, that although the general character of the exercise is calculated to develop bodily vigor, the main thing sought for is uniformity of action. The drilling is all in platoons. In the gymnasium the same feature obtains. You cannot imagine the curious evolutions that the future soldiers have to go through together. There is some individual work, but, as a rule, if you enter a gymnasium you will be met by a half dozen men hopping along on one foot, keeping their alignment as faithfully as if marching on dress parade, or striding in single file across the floor, their fists doubled and their arms swaying backward and forward synchronously, and you may be lucky enough to see a man standing on the shoulders of two comrades, driving with long reins several pairs of men who hold the reins lightly in their hands above their heads. This is a favorite accomplishment of the gymnasium, and is an interesting feature of the public exhibitions. The whole influence of even physical training, you see, is military, and the French, though by no means weak, do not tend to develop muscle at the expense of skill and the mental faculties, as it seems to me the Americans do."

The theory of M. Dumont, that the governmental compulsory training kills any desire for or possibility of general games, is corroborated by the fact that though the French in this city have their annual balls, their clubs and societies; though they observe the great fete days of France by picnics, parades, and public meetings, and in other ways keep alive the national spirit, they have no gymnasium even in which to cultivate or keep intact the physical training they have received across the water.

The Weak Feature in Labor Unions. What the working classes of the United States need and demand is the hire education. The laborer is worthy of his higher wages.—Burdette.

DURING the past season two naturalists, G. W. and E. G. Peckham, have found that wasps remember the locality of their nests for ninety-six hours.

ZEPHYR POINT CAMP-MEETING.

BY W. H. S. ATKINSON.

If I hev got ter oan up ter bein er cittersen uv putnime keowny I warnt it deestinkly undistood that ime no sukkir. Fak is, par sez az heow ime rite smart konsidring ime only 20 ate kum thanxgivin an wazent bornd with er krol, sides wich i kin bete the rekkud plowin klay sile.

Then he sez:

"Air u saved?"

"I neow bekum panefully awair that menny pares of ize ware restin on me, but i replide:

"Did u say saved or shaved? if the latter, i air; if the formir, i du not understand."

"Ar, pore sinner," sez he, "udu not compryend. Air u inlested undir the bannur uv the lord or air not? O, mi bruthir, woant u jine the arme ter-



day—woant u kum inter ower ranx ternerite?"

"Not ternite, Kornil," sez i, "eck-suse me; sum uthir nite."

But he warnt ter be skweltched ser sune.

"O, u pore lost sheep—u stray lam frum the flock—unhappy man, rushin like the swyne uv old ter distruxit!"

"Sir!" sez i, mi duck bein up an me getten riley, "deown in putnime keowny we raze sheep an lams wich air no deesgrase ter the stait fare, ownly wen yew kall me a sheep u tred on mi korns. But, yew ole skalliwag, i dror the line at swyne, an ef i air! hear alown alown ithout par ile lik yer ef i doant git!"

Mi eyer wuz rouz an I wood hev sooted mi axons ter mi wurdz but the ole flabbgasir axt me ter deezist, witch I did, mower espeshully az at thet mowmunt a vizun uv bewty waz makin her way threw the ordyngard thet the platform. Neow, the a batchilur an neown az a grainjur i am bi no menes impurvus tew feemall luvliness, an i wuz awl atenshun wen this zeffur pint farey begun ter sing. She sang sumer sweatly an with sew mutch ecks-preshun that wen she sed she hed a messij frum the lawd fer NEW," i koonted help but think she ment ME—an the way she glantz at me wood hev meltid a hart uv bereo stoan or eyetalyn marbil. Ar, i shell never forgit thet gyurl's singen! neow soft an low ez the peaninisser tetches uv ey mastir hand on a eholyun harp, rizin agen ter a shril dyerpasun, an anon swellin ter the ful granjur uv a organ peel. Frum thet mowmunt i wuz hoaplyis in luv, an i noot it.

Wen the kwint shaidz uv eave fel sortly car the weery urch, wile ovur the worters of ole lake ery the slarnen raze uv the setten sun karst a golding red shean (eckscuse mi feelens whi i kinnot kentroie at setch times) mi thorts uv hoam got the betur uv me an i wuz karrid in the sperrit ter the deerly lvd woulds an fealds uv putnime keowny. in Dede i becum sew loansum that I feerd ter stay with mi good relashins lest mi low sperrits shud pruve infexus. Sew wen darknis set-teld ovur everything i stroald up tords a groar noaz at the park, ware I found a bentsch an sot me down. Oarkum bi mi melonkilly hoamsknis an strainly effektid bi mi noo serowndens, espeshully the strong air frum orf ole ery whi actid az a tonnik an a kard monty an sew 4th part.

Wen the kwint shaidz uv eave fel sortly car the weery urch, wile ovur the worters of ole lake ery the slarnen raze uv the setten sun karst a golding red shean (eckscuse mi feelens whi i kinnot kentroie at setch times) mi thorts uv hoam got the betur uv me an i wuz karrid in the sperrit ter the deerly lvd woulds an fealds uv putnime keowny. in Dede i becum sew loansum that I feerd ter stay with mi good relashins lest mi low sperrits shud pruve infexus. Sew wen darknis set-teld ovur everything i stroald up tords a groar noaz at the park, ware I found a bentsch an sot me down. Oarkum bi mi melonkilly hoamsknis an strainly effektid bi mi noo serowndens, espeshully the strong air frum orf ole ery whi actid az a tonnik an a kard monty an sew 4th part.

Wen this pictur uv luvlinis got threw with lur singen wun uv the parsing fellers gev owt that thare wud neow be a meatin fer thozz az wist ter enkwire the way ter hevng—s'rt uv a side-sho in a ajacent tent. emajin mi serprize wen i wuz aprocht bi the eydentekel yung wummun hoo had sung sew intransently. i kud withstan a hull trespw uv these yere parsings an men ecksorters, but i kinfess i wuz not prufe agen the beewichin smilz an siring voyse uv this spesiment uv femmenine bewty, an wen she sed sew sweatley, "Deer frend, kin i not help yew inter the strate an narrer rode," i kud ownley reply ruther kinfusidly, "Mi deer, enny help u may kondisend ter giv me will be hyley valewd"—witch I thort a very nete speach fer me.

Wel, nuthin' ud dew but we must gof tew a kwiet part uv the kamp groundz, wear we kud be alown, an' the way that thare gyurl torked ter me wuz serprizen. the mannr in whi she shode me mi sinfel waze an pickherd hevng ter me awlmost muved me ter teers, an i never felt sew mutch like makin a ass uv myself an sniverlen az i did then, in awl mi life bef; an' wen she arst me tew begin a noo life "to pleeze hir," i sez, sez i, "mi deer, i wud go threw hell on hot brix ter pleeze yew!"

Wel, we torkt an' torkt til the small hours uv mawin, an the risult wuz that i felt miself kinverted. Then she sez, sez she, "deer bruther, this yere wark uv the lawd kinnot be karrid on ithout filthey lookur; won't u kintributew yewer might?"

"Wel," i sez, "ive onnly got the 10 dolar bil whi par gev me an thet's deoun in mi sok."

"No matter," sez she, "ile turn my hed enuther way wile you git i owt," an then she sez, wen i spoke uv given a dolor, "yew kum up ter the mawin prare-meatin, an i will giv u the change."

With that we partid very afeckshunly.

* * * * *

I dror a vale ovur subsikwint events at the zeffur pint kamp-meatin.

i travild bak ter putnime keowny a saddur an a wizer man, mynus mi wortberry an the 10 dolar bil.

But, az i staited at the kummince-mint uv this yere narrity, imo no sukkir of i wuz borned ithout er krol—an i kin beet the rikkud plowin klay sile!

To "Gentle Annie."

Yes, dear, we know the mills of the gods grind slowly, but they are trying to get a shave and the last car. You could comprehend this great and awful truth more easily, Annie, if you were that monster—Man.—Burdette.

THE running of this universe is such a big thing, that it is well, for all general purposes, that it is not managed by the numerous shortsighted wise-agers who have only individual benefits and present results in view.