

DENNIS BRAILSFORD. — *Sport and Society: Elizabeth to Anne*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969.

Social historians, and academics generally, have taken little interest in sports and games, a phenomenon M. I. Finley once called "perhaps the most remarkable of academic taboos." Thorstein Veblen, who did take some interest in the subject, thought there was a linguistic problem involved, since most scholars could scarcely speak of this form of physical activity "without implying deprecation or apology." The value of Mr. Brailsford's study is to show that the games people play, the way they play them, and their reasons for doing so can supplement, often significantly, our knowledge of the general workings of society. He is less interested in games themselves than in attitudes towards them, and is more preoccupied with the relationship between social and intellectual movements and changing patterns of sport and exercise than he is with the internal history of athletics. Although he has not always been successful in establishing convincingly such relationships, his book is nonetheless a most interesting and stimulating new approach.

Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Governour*, familiar through the work of Fritz Caspari as the most notable attempt before Ascham to apply the new humanism to the education of the English upper classes, is treated here as the first modern attempt to incorporate physical exercise in the training of gentlemen. Like other English humanists, Elyot accepted the interdependence of mind and body as natural. Although "the soul in pre-eminence excelleth the body as much as the master or owner excelleth the horse," yet the whole man would cultivate both, and so he, like Ascham later, advocated (in moderation) such pastimes as archery, hunting, hawking and tennis. Richard Mulcaster, contemporary with Ascham, devoted more than half of his treatise on education to a discussion of the role of physical activities, on the ground that whether exercise was intended for recreation, health or war, it would be foolish to train the mind to be strong, while leaving the body a prey to infirmity. His definition of exercise can scarcely be improved upon: "a vehement and voluntary stirring of one's body, which altereth the breathing, whose end is to maintain health, and to bring the body to a very good habit."

As Brailsford demonstrates, there was a close correlation between the ideas of the Tudor educational theorists and the recreational patterns of the upper classes. That young men, according to Roger Ascham, should "delight in all courtly exercises and gentlemanlike pastimes" was part of the ideal of the gentleman-courtier. Sports contributed to the elaborate showmanship of the Elizabethan court and of the great noble houses. The ideal was graceful accomplishment, not muscularity. As Erasmus had it, "we are not concerned with developing athletes, but scholars and men competent to affairs, for whom

we desire adequate constitution indeed, but not the physique of a Milo." Knotted muscles are plebeian, even villainous. Literary convention contrasts "sturdy beggars" and "tawny sun-burned rascals" with such heroes as Marlowe's Leander ("some swore he was a maid in man's attire"), who effortlessly swam the Hellespont propelled by zeal, not sinews.

Aristocratic Tudor attitudes towards folk games varied from amused indulgence to outright condemnation of the violence, drunkenness and licence often associated with them. The "beastly fury" of football was "utterly abjected of all noble men," wrote Elyot. It is much more difficult to grasp from Brailsford's account what the meaning of their sports was to the common folk themselves. Despite some excellent material on the ritual origins of football, the connection between Ascension Day, beating the bounds of the parish and distance running, and the great variety of popular recreation, he has not managed to set the sports of the people securely in the social and economic history of the period. His observation that by the end of the sixteenth century some popular games were breaking free of an exclusive connection with holy days and were beginning the transformation from local frolic to national sport is interesting, but requires more sociological explanation.

Just as the seventeenth century witnessed the breakdown of the Tudor harmony in church, state and society, so in the modest field of sports and games did established patterns come under attack. Among the literati, the Tudor synthesis of mind and body was replaced by melancholy contemplation of the transience of physical joys and by a pervasive sense of the facts of corruption. "What's this flesh?", asked Webster, "a little crudded milk, fantastical puff paste." Before such disillusionment, and the outright scepticism of Bacon, the confident assertions of Tudor humanists about the value of physical education receded.

Even more important in fixing English attitudes were the Puritans, whose well-known hostility to all manner of sports Brailsford documents fully. All such pastimes, as George Fox said, "trained up people to vanity and looseness, and led them from the fear of God." Both the conspicuous leisure of the upper orders and the more carnal entertainments of the folk had to yield to the Sunday observance laws of the Interregnum. The Puritan code probably hurried the death of such charming rustic entertainments as dog-tossing and bull-baiting. Brailsford suggests that agricultural transformation and other broad social developments were already sapping the old communal ways. This is plausible, but one would like to see such fundamental changes in behaviour worked out thoroughly in economic, social and social psychological terms.

Several other aspects of Brailsford's work merit attention but can only be mentioned here. Discoveries by Harvey and his followers in human physiology, leading to the conception of the body as "a Divine Piece of Mechanism" made

possible an escape from the Puritan injunction that "labour is fitter for you than sport." John Locke's prescription of uncomfortable and arduous forms of exercise, by taking the enjoyment out of sport, effected a neat reconciliation with Puritan views. And finally, in spite of the injunctions of the moralists and the doubts of philosophers, those classes of Englishmen least touched by Puritanism created, in the later years of the seventeenth century, the beginnings of that extraordinary structure of games England was later to export to the world, complete with rules, "professionals," gambling and clubs. The question is inescapable: what was it about English society that gave rise to such immoderate condemnation of games, and such immoderate inventiveness in their creation? In our own age, when hundreds of millions play or watch games which had their origin in the rude pastimes of Tudor peasants or the gambling tastes of Restoration nobles, the nature of sport has become of major sociological significance. As this fact sinks in, studies like Brailsford's will become more frequent; but he has already done much to demonstrate the absurdity of "the most remarkable of existing academic taboos."

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L. P. CURTIS, Jr. — *Anglo-Saxons and Celts; A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England.* New York: New York University Press for the University of Bridgeport, 1968. 162 pp. Studies in British History and Culture, II.

Macaulay, in one of his more exuberant essays once observed how in the course of seven centuries a wretched and degraded Anglo-Saxon race became "the greatest and most highly civilised people that ever the world saw". Most Victorians who warmed to such things as national pride and special destiny would have strongly assented to Macaulay's view. Did not the universally acknowledged pre-eminence that England had attained by the mid-nineteenth century clearly demonstrate the reasonableness of their most gifted historian's judgment? If there were doubts Victorians needed only to contemplate the low status of their Irish neighbours.

While privileged Englishmen dreamed of Empire and greater wealth, the thoughtful Celt reflected on the tragic history of a race whose most permanent characteristic was failure. Within a decade of the famine years one-fourth of the population of Ireland migrated from a country that had apparently lost hope. Anglo-Saxon Protestants, after three centuries of anxiety, might be relieved at the weakening of the Popish stronghold at the back door of England; still, a satisfactory resolution of the Irish Question continued to elude uncomprehending British politicians in the age of Victoria as it had