

THE SPORTING SPIRIT.

I am always amazed when I hear people saying that sport creates good will between the nations, and that if only the common peoples of the world could meet one another at football or cricket, they would have no inclination to meet on the battlefield. Even if one didn't know from concrete examples (the 1936 Olympic Games, for instance) that international sporting contests lead to orgies of hatred, one could deduce it from general principles.

Nearly all the sports practised nowadays are competitive. You play to win, and the game has little meaning unless you do your most to win. On the village green, where you pick up sides and no feeling and local patriotism is involved, it is possible to play simply for the fun and exercise: but as soon as the question of prestige arises, as soon as you feel that you and some larger unit will be disgraced if you lose, the most savage combative instincts are aroused.

At the international level sport is frankly mimic warfare. But the significant thing is not the behaviour of the players but the attitude of the spectators: and, behind the spectators, of the nations who work themselves into furies over these absurd contests, and seriously believe -at any rate for short periods- that running, jumping and kicking a ball are tests of national virtue.

Even a leisurely game like cricket, demanding grace rather than strength, can cause much ill-will. Football, a game in which everyone gets hurt, is far worse. Worst of all is boxing.

George Orwell.

QUESTIONS

1. What do people say about sport?
2. Does the writer agree with them?
3. What is the attitude of the spectators?
4. Do you agree with the author's opinions about sport?
5. Write a summary of the text in no more than 80 words.
6. Vocabulary.

Amazed:

Battlefield:

Behaviour:

Contest:

Leisurely: