

## William Hazlitt on fives

It may be said that there are things of more importance than striking a ball against a wall — there are things indeed which make more noise and do as little good, such as making war and peace, making speeches, and answering them, making verses, and blotting them; making money and throwing it away.

It may be said that there are things of more importance than striking a ball against a wall — there are things indeed which make more noise and do as little good, such as making war and peace, making speeches, and answering them, making verses, and blotting them; making money and throwing it away. But the game of fives is what no one despises who has ever played at it. It is the finest exercise for the body, and the best relaxation for the mind. The Roman poet said that ‘Care mounted behind the horseman and stuck to his skirts.’ But this remark would not have applied to the fives-player. He who takes to playing at fives is twice young. He feels neither the past nor future ‘in the instant’. Debts, taxes, ‘domestic treason, foreign levy, nothing can touch him further.’ He has no other wish, no other thought, from the moment the game begins, but that of striking the ball, of placing it, of making it!

*The Death of John Cavanagh, by William Hazlitt, published in the Examiner in 1817*