

## ATHLETIC

## Sports and Pastimes

The announcement of the very serious illness of George William Curtis, editor of the *Spirit of the Times*, and the father of sport in America, as he has been called, will be received with universal regret by athletes throughout the Dominion.

Mr. Curtis gained widespread renown in his younger days, as an athlete of no mean ability, and for years past has been accepted as an acknowledged authority on all matters of sport.

Mr. Curtis is only in the prime of life, 55 years of age, and if one can judge from the records of his work as an athlete, must be gifted with a constitution of iron, which ought to enable him to successfully withstand the attacks of any ordinary illness, and I sincerely trust that such may be the case in the present instance.

## ATHLETICS.

Anyone who has examined the results of the competitions at the meetings of the Canadian Amateur Athletic Association must have been struck by the fact that a large majority of the principal prizes are annually carried away by the members of one or two athletic organizations from the United States.

I would not have the slightest objection to urge against this, much as I might regret it, if I could think that the representatives of these associations were competing on an equal footing against the representatives from our own associations, but it is out of the question to attempt to maintain such a position for a moment, and I cannot see any reason whatever for allowing the practice to continue.

I know that many of our athletes will be averse to excluding from our meetings any amateur, no matter where from, and will scout, and possibly sneer at the idea of being afraid of outsiders. I am heartily with them in this view of the matter as a general principle, but circumstances alter cases, and I think this is a circumstance which fairly entitles them to alter their rules—nay, I will go further and say that it is their duty in the interests of local athletic interests that their rules in this respect should be changed.

The athletes who annually invade our Dominion are representatives of two or three large organizations in the United States, for whom they are to all intents and purposes professionals, and not in the slightest degree entitled to the claim of amateur. These men are literally kept by and for the various clubs whose colours they wear. Their expenses all over the country are borne by the club, their trainers are provided them by the club. They are under some form of agreement with the club, as has been almost con-

clusively demonstrated by the fracas that has occurred when a member has gone over from one club to another. It can hardly be imagined that they surrender themselves so completely to the club and trainer as they do for the greater part of the year unless they receive recompense for their time and labour, and it may not be unreasonable to assume, then, that there is some ground for the impression that expenses are figured on a sufficiently liberal basis to cover a remunerative honorarium.

These clubs find it to their advantage to keep these men, as the honours they secure will bring renown to the club they represent, and tend largely to increase the membership, as young men naturally like to be connected with a club that has a reputation for turning out good athletes, in preference to one whose members may be comparatively unknown.

Athletics have not reached this stage in Canada, and I hope it will be long before they do, for my belief is, that the effort to abnormally develop a few, and put them far and away ahead of the large body of competitors, has a tendency to discourage the majority, and induce them to become spectators rather than participants. As a consequence the number of good average all round men is reduced, in order to encourage a few flyers for each particular event.

Under these circumstances I claim it is a mistake to open our fields to men who have been trained as no amateur, if he is a *bonâ fide* amateur according to the spirit as well as the letter of the law, can train; and that it is putting our men, who train as amateurs using the word in its ordinary sense, are expected to train, in a false position to make them compete against men who devote their whole time to the rack track.

The annual general meeting of the Woolstock A. A. A. was held last week and if the number of names on the various committees struck for the ensuing year is a fair indication of the interest taken in the institution it ought to be one of the most prosperous clubs in the country.

## CRICKET.

The proposition to form a Dominion Cricket Association is one worthy of encouragement, and I hope it may be carried to a successful issue.

The scheme emanates from the brain of the Secretary of the Ontario Cricket Association, and reflects credit upon that gentleman. It will, however, require more than the suggestion from him if it is to be carried to a successful conclusion.

Of course, a sort of hypochondriacal, semi-existent sort of an association can be evoked with but little labour, but if any vitality is to be put in the organization it will call for energy, tact, and ability on the part of some one individual;

for after all, the failure or success of associations of this character, where the members are so widely scattered, and intercourse so infrequent, is largely dependent upon the one man upon whom the general management devolves.

If the secretary of such an association performs his duties in the perfunctory manner which alas! too often occurs, the association might as well not exist, but if he will go into it with a will and not depend upon his committee for ideas and suggestions, but formulate schemes for them, and be prepared to carry them through by his own unaided individuality when approved of, then he may put a new life into the game throughout the Dominion.

There are two very essential necessities for the game of cricket, with either of which the wielders of the willow in the Dominion are not overburdened—time and money. A match game of cricket calls for more time than probably any other game played, and the time required to witness a game deters many from attending as spectators. This interferes with the receipts at the gate and increases the expenses of the clubs. Men in business or offices can with difficulty spare the time necessary for practice, and when games are arranged with other clubs are deterred from taking part on account of the expense, which the gate ought to defray but does not.

At one time cricket flourished throughout Eastern Canada, and Montreal, Quebec, Sherbrooke and other towns could boast of elevens capable of making a good stand against anything on the continent.

Now the game appears almost dead between Halifax and Ottawa, and any vitality in it is in the West. The old Quebec and Montreal Clubs, whose strength was at one time formidable wherever they appeared, now seem only to exist in name. More is the pity. It is very easy to let a club run down, but a very difficult matter to bring it up again.

## CURLING.

Our unusually mild winter has thus far prevented votaries of the "roaring game" from participating in their favourite pastime.

Although it is not unusual for curlers in Ontario and the Maritime Provinces to be obliged to wait until after New Year's for Jack Frost to prepare their rinks for them, it is an occurrence which overtaxes the memory of the oldest inhabitant in Quebec for the wielders of the besom to be unable to use their "stones" on or about Christmas, and almost induces one to believe that there may be some ground for the oft repeated assertion that our seasons are changing.