

CORRESPONDENCE.

Letters should be brief, and written on one side of the paper only. Those intended for insertion should be addressed to the Editor, 162 St. James Street, Montreal; those on matters of business to the Manager, at the same address.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN SPECTATOR:

SIR,—In your number of the 2nd instant some paragraphs were pointed out to me, under the head of "Queer things in the newspapers," in reference to which I would request the courtesy of a few lines' space, to reply to the strictures of your friend. I am in no wise desirous of defending or excusing the exceedingly "queer" English contained in many of the extracts quoted, though some of the errors are quite excusable, as no one expects much from an evening paper in Montreal. But as regards the extracts from the *Gazette*,—the only morning paper quoted,—if the writer in the SPECTATOR had been at all conversant with the etiquette and internal economy of the newspaper offices in this city he would have known, firstly, as touching the matter of etiquette, that where reports are handed to a newspaper for publication *in extenso*, as Dr. Hingston's evidently appeared to have been, a night editor or proof reader might feel some delicacy in changing the wording of an official document; and secondly, as far as my experience on the press enables me to be a judge, I can assure your friend that the amount of work required to be done by a proof reader on a morning paper in this city utterly precludes the possibility of all the "copy" passing through his hands, and when the article is in type, it is often too late to make any but the barest corrections of typographical errors. I could not help remarking, too, that the *Herald* is lucky enough to escape your friend's strictures, which appears to me somewhat invidious, seeing that the *Herald* is a notoriously wicked murderer of the Queen's English.

Yours, &c.,

A Montreal Night Editor.

Montreal, August 6, 1879.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN SPECTATOR:

SIR,—The description of the exciting game of "Lacrosse," as played in the "North West," which appeared in your issue of the 2nd instant, over the *nom de plume* of "Wimbel," is both graphic and accurate. Upwards of sixty years ago I took part occasionally in the game with the Ojibbeways under the soubriquet of "Sag-a-nache-ance" (the little Englishman), although I stood six feet two in my moccasins, and I have no hesitation in saying, that in wonderful and graceful agility, precision and endurance, they could not be surpassed; and their play was always conducted with the utmost fairness and impartiality. The *crosse* in vogue there is much neater and more sightly than the clumsy one in use here, which looks like the half of a raquette (snow-shoe) with a long handle. It was a grand sight to see twenty or thirty Ojibbeway braves contesting in the game, the one having possession of the ball twirling his *crosse* and bounding through the air like an antelope to avoid its being rescued, and all the others equally eager and intensely active in their different parts.

Yours truly,

John Dyde.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN SPECTATOR:

SIR,—Your worthy correspondent "Wimbel" has added another chapter to Indian history in his letter on Lacrosse, which to many readers was no doubt very interesting. As one of the early pioneers of the modern game in the United States, allow me to correct the author of that letter where he says "Catlin in his valuable work on the American Indian does not mention the game." He distinctly does. Without referring to this author's larger works, I may say that in 1871 the writer personally met Mr. Catlin in New York, who was then exhibiting his Indian Cartoons, consisting of 600 paintings in oil, with 20,000 full length figures, illustrating their various games, religious ceremonies, and other customs. There were over 400 portraits. Among the portraits I saw were Tul-lock-chish-ko (he who drinks the juice of the stone), the most celebrated ball player of the Choctaws; Wee-chush-ta-doo-ta (the very red man), the most celebrated player of the Sioux; and Ah-no-je-nahge (he who stands on both sides), the most celebrated lacrosse player of the Ojibbeways. These three young men were each designated by the Chiefs to Mr. Catlin, in 1834-6, as the most celebrated players of their tribes. They were in their ball costumes, and with their *rackets* in hand, as Mr. C. called their lacrosse, which was formed as described by your correspondent.

Another cartoon was the Choctaw Ball-play Dance, which is performed at festivals during the night previous to the ball play by the players, who are in their ball-play dress. Each party dances around their respective byes, and the wives of the players who have their goods at stake dance between their ranks.

The painting of the Choctaw Ball-play, at which Mr. C. was present when 300 young men were engaged, was a very spirited work. For this play, which is the favourite play of most of the tribes, the feet are naked, and the figures also, with the exception of a cincture, to which is appended a tail of white horse hair with one party, and of quills and feathers with the other. This desperate game lasted from sunrise until near sundown, without halting for more than a minute or two at a time.

A very interesting cartoon was that of the Sioux women at this game. The painter witnessed this exciting strife at Prairie du Chien in 1834, where the Sioux had assembled to receive their annuity from the Government. The Chiefs, after receiving their annuities and presents, arranged a great quantity of calicoes, ribbons, and other presents on a frame erected for the purpose, and for which the women, divided into two parties, played, to the great amusement of the men, who were enjoying their *fire-water*.

Mr. Catlin in 1871 was 74 years of age, a tall, spare old gentleman, with whom I had a long and interesting chat about this game. I thought of purchasing these cartoons, but found Mr. Catlin's intention was to sell the whole together to the United States Government. He had been forty years roving among the Indians of North and South America. I believe he was a native of Pennsylvania, and died a few years ago.

During the last fifteen years no one has done more towards popularizing the game, in playing and with the pen, than Dr. W. Geo. Beers, who, in his very complete work on Lacrosse, published in 1869, gives us many other interesting facts on its early history. This work—his proclamation of 1867, suggesting that this sport should become our National Game when the various Provinces were united into one Dominion—as well as the very active part he has taken in the spread of the game in Europe—entitles this gentleman to a prominent place in the memory of all present players, and in the History of Lacrosse.

Yours, &c.,

J. H.

Montreal, August 5, 1879.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN SPECTATOR.

SIR,—I take the liberty of sending you the following remarks upon the history of lacrosse, at "Wimbel's" suggestion, to add to his gatherings. The description of the game, as given in "Travels in Canada," by Alexander Henry, is as follows:—

"The game of *baggiway* is played with a bat and ball, the bat being about four feet in length, curved, and terminated in a sort of racket. Two posts are placed in the ground at a considerable distance—a mile or more. Each party has its post, and the game consists in throwing the ball up to the post of the adversary. The ball, at the beginning, is placed in the middle of the course, and each party endeavours to throw the ball out of the direction of its own post as into that of their adversary."

This was written in 1763. In "Lahontan's Voyages," vol. iii. page 121, published in 1741, I find this description, and I give a translation:—

"The game of *Pelote* is a game of strength; the *pelote* is as large as your two hands, and the rackets which they use are the same as ours, except that the handle is three feet long. The savages usually play it in large numbers—three or four hundred at a time—and place two posts at a distance of four hundred steps, then form equal sides and throw the *pelote* in the air half-way from the pickets; then each side tries to get it to their own post. Some run with it, and others hold themselves in readiness to secure it when it falls. All their games are for pleasure and feasts; for, it is necessary to say, they hate money."

This is the first mention, I think, of the game of lacrosse. In "Charlevoix," vol. iii. p. 319, published in 1744, the following occurs:—

"The Miamis have two games. The first is called the *Jeu de la Crosse*. It is played with a ball and sticks curved, and having a sort of racket at the end. Two posts are placed for goals, and are at a distance suited to the number of players. For example, if there are eighty players, there is a mile and a half (?) between the posts. The players are divided in two sides, each of which have their goals, and try to take the ball to the opponent's goal without allowing it to touch the ground, and without touching it with the hands. Should either of these things occur, the game is lost, unless the player who has made the mistake repairs it by sending the ball at one trial to the end,—often an impossibility.

"The second game is much the same, but not so dangerous. The goals are marked as in the other, and the players occupy the intervening space. The game is begun by the ball being thrown as straight as possible in the air, in order to catch it again and throw it towards the goal. All the players have their arms raised, and the one who gets the ball throws it in the air again, or to one of his side who is agile; for, in order to win the game, it is necessary that the ball should reach the goal without falling into the opponent's hands.

"The squaws play also, but rarely. The sides are usually four or five, and the first to let the ball fall loses the game."

In "Carver's Travels," page 257, published in 1798, this description may be read:—

"The principal game is that of the ball, not unlike the European game of tennis. The balls they use are rather larger than those for tennis, and are formed of a piece of deer-skin, which, being moistened to render it supple, is stuffed hard with the hair of the same creature and sewed with its sinews. The ball-sticks are about three feet long, at the end of which there is fixed a kind of racket resembling the palm of the hand, and fashioned of thongs cut from a deerskin. The game is played by large companies that sometimes consist of more than three hundred. They begin by fixing two poles in the ground about six hundred yards apart, and one of these goals belongs to each side. The ball is thrown up high in the centre of the ground, and in a direct line between the goals, towards which each party endeavours to strike it, and whichever side first effects this wins the game."

I have searched through Ramusi's third volume, "Nova Francia," published in 1556, and can find no mention of the game, nor can I find any account in "Champlain's Voyages" of 1613 and 1632. It is probable, therefore, that none of the early explorers witnessed the game. Father Hennepin and Lescarbot do not seem to have seen the game, as they make no mention of it. Hennepin speaks of other games, but not of lacrosse.

As to "Wimbel's" statement, that "it was played by the Indians of the country lying between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers on the east, Lake Winnipeg on the north, and the line of Charleston on the south," it is probably true, as south of Charleston the climate is not favourable for lacrosse playing, and west of the Missouri the Rocky Mountains are hardly suitable except for dodging, and the Indians on the prairies are principally devoted to horse exercise.

Of course it cannot be stated "whether this game is of native origin or has been derived from the ancestors of the American Indian" until we possess further knowledge of the ancestors. It may be said that by establishing a resemblance between the games of "hockey" and "golf" and that of lacrosse, the ancestor of the Indian may be found in a Welshman or a Scotchman. It is *very probably* of native origin, and perhaps the historical Scotchman who sits on the North Pole may have seen the game played, and thus developed a national game for Scotland on his return there.

Marth.