

The War and Canadian Sport

Under this caption a writer in a leading Canadian weekly makes the following comments :—

"The steady march of athletes from the playing field to the training camp has more than justified the efforts of the mature men who considered it important in the past to encourage the national sports. They believed that the strenuous games, well played, would make good citizens, though they could not foresee that they were also manufacturing good soldiers. A man who will bore in on a determined defence in lacrosse to score a necessary goal ought to possess the nerve and strength of purpose to face most dangers; a man who takes a flying tackle at a charging half-back of the famous Shirlee Lawson type should have in him the proper stuff to make a good aviator; and the rushing forwards of a hockey team doubtless find that a charge is not altogether an unfamiliar experience. We have always prided ourselves that our three typical Canadian games bring out all that is best in the physical and mental make-up of the players. In playing lacrosse, hockey and rugby, the body is trained and the mind disciplined. To excel at any of them the players must be in good condition, daring and willing to take a chance, and they have also to use good judgment. What better material for making a soldier?"

The response of lacrosse, hockey and rugby players to the call of the Big Game certainly seems to justify these observations. During 1914 and even 1915 these amateur leagues carried on very much as usual, but 1916 has found teams deserted and schedules suspended everywhere.

"In Ontario alone, sixty per cent. of the men who wielded the gutted stick during the season of 1915 put on khaki in the following winter, and two of the four championship O.L.A. teams saw all but a couple of their players depart as soldiers." The M.A.A.A., one of the oldest and biggest athletic clubs in Canada, has withdrawn both from lacrosse and rugby competition during the war. The Inter-Collegiate Rugby games were suspended even last year. And this season there will be no Big Four rugby. Most of the championship Hamilton Club have joined the Tigers Battalion, while nearly all the Argos players have changed dark blue for khaki. The C. R. F. U. has declared there will be no Dominion Championships played off this year. In hockey, which calls for a smaller playing personnel, the prostration will be less pronounced. But when it is announced that Ottawa will not play in the N. H. A. this season, then it is apparent that the national winter game has indeed been affected by the war.