

Winnipeg's Winter Holiday

YOU must go to the Canadian West to find an annual holiday season that comes in the middle of winter. If you value personal popularity do not permit yourself to remark that the great curling bonspiel is possible because business moves slowly when the thermometer tells that the temperature is thirty below zero. The Westerner will at once enter an energetic denial if any such statement is hazarded. And he will assure you that in the winter of the West business nominally is as brisk as it is in the East in the softest days of summer. It is impossible, he further will say, for the Westerners to take a fortnight's vacation in the summer time when everybody, farmer and merchant, banker and hotel-keeper, has to work eighteen hours a day in order that he may keep pace with the rush of business which the striding Last West demands.

Thus you will understand that the slack time in February is slack only in a comparative sense. From the foothills of the Rockies to the ice-bound harbour of

half a dozen rinks from nine in the morning until half-past twelve, from two until six and from eight until pretty nearly any time the roar of the curling stone can be heard as it gyrates slowly down the ice. Men from St. Paul, Minnesota, who see Winnipeg only once a year, greet brothers from Calgary, and one or two Ontario rinks annually encounter a rink or two from faraway Edmonton. Winnipeg supplies perhaps half the total number of contestants and it is proof of the catholicity of the game and of French Canadian progress that one of the three champion curlers of the West is E. J. Rochon, a sportsman with not a drop of anything but French blood in his veins.

Those coon coats seem to be part of the dress uniform of the curlers. They certainly play no part in what may be called the service uniform. When the game is on, those warm-blooded slingers of fifty pound pebbles discard all their outer wraps and appear in a forty below atmosphere with a loose fitting jersey or Cardigan jacket. One of them grinned cheerfully when amazement was expressed. "Oh, that's all right," he



Photograph by A. J. Pittaway, Ottawa.

The Winnipeg Dramatic Club—Winners of the Governor General's Trophy for the best Amateur Dramatic Organisation in Canada.

Thunder Bay the curlers and their wives journey in hundreds to Winnipeg where annually takes place the greatest curling tourney in the world. Half a thousand and more of curlers play the game; four times half a thousand visitors are on hand to witness the contests and incidentally in many cases to do a considerable amount of business with wholesale houses or manufacturers in the Prairie Capital.

The city welcomes them with open arms. Gigantic, in coon coats; capped with the sportiest of peaked seal-skin caps, ruddy cheeked, stalwart, loud of voice and bright of eye, the curlers descend on the city by the Red. The city council has made a respectable vote of money to aid the Reception Committee and private citizens have "chipped in" liberally. Curling, of course, is an amateur sport—one could not imagine a professional curler outside of a hairdresser's shop—and the prizes are all in kind. Glorious carved silver candlesticks, gold watches, gigantic loving cups, weighty medals are all the prizes of the successful skips and their rinkmates. And here is a prize, it would almost seem, for everybody. In chuckled; "two suits of underclothing—one of them of

chamois—keep a fellow pretty warm." Certainly none of them complain of the cold.

The two weeks are not all curling. There is the great banquet; there are social engagements for the women, and there is always opportunity to get a drink that would horrify the W.C.T.U. How is this? Drinks after hours? There are no hours. Ordinarily the Winnipeg bars close and close up tight at eleven o'clock. The license law is administered rigorously. But be it known that in the Winnipeg civic year there were three great festivals of relaxation of the rules, and these are at Fair time in August; at Christmas time and in the days of the bonspiel. The Board of License Commissioners then grant what is known as "extensions."

Climatic conditions will always make Winnipeg the world's champion curling city. It will always be able to furnish ninety-in-the-shade in August, and equally certain it will never lack the bracing, searching February temperature that brings joy to the hearts of the curlers and a crowd of genial, honest sportsmen to the Gateway City of the West.

—R. K.