



GROUP OF CANADIAN BEAVER.

SPORTS AND PASTIMES

The present year promises to be one of the most successful in the annals of skating in Montreal, and although the accommodation for skaters will be much larger than in the past there seems every probability that all the rinks will receive their fair quota of patronage. The Victoria rink, which was formally opened on Saturday last, has thus early in the season a larger membership roll than ever before, and a glance round the spacious structure on Saturday was sufficient to prove that the efforts of the directors are fully appreciated. The attractions of the opening consisted of an exhibition of figure skating by Mr. Louis Rubenstein, and several more or less amusing races. From a racing point of view there was only one event likely to be of interest. I refer to the two-mile, in which C. Gordon won very easily from Fred. Scott. It had been expected that Irwin and Lavasseur would also start in this race, but they did not, perhaps because the season is too young yet for these flyers to get into trim for a hard trial at distance work. Gordon seemed to be in splendid condition, and this year it ought to take a remarkably fast man to beat him at any of the meetings. A five o'clock tea brought the formal part of the opening to an end, after which that magnificent sheet of ice was given over to the three hundred people who put on the steels for the first time this year.

The open air rink on the M.A.A.A. grounds is turning out a more marked success than even its most enthusiastic advocates anticipated. When on Thursday evening last it was thrown open to the public it was a matter for freely expressed surprise that such a sheet of ice could be kept in such excellent condition for skating, and all were loud in their praise. It may, of course, entail a vast amount of expense to keep this rink in order after heavy snowstorms, but with anything like good fortune and with the implements used on the grounds, it is likely that the rink will be a source of income to the M.A.A.A. rather than one of expense. There has been considerable discussion about the advisability of making a quarter mile track for the championship skating meeting. From a sporting point of view this idea is a good one, as it would do away with any excuse which the Yankee skaters might have about being handicapped by small rinks. There has always been a great deal of difficulty in bringing American and Canadian skaters together, and I can recollect no instance except in the figure skating competitions. It is true we have had no rich skating club to take enough interest in the matter to pay competitors' expenses, and this, no doubt, is to a large extent accountable for Canadians not going to New York.

But last year a good example was set, when Mr. Louis Rubenstein was sent to Russia to represent the Canadian Skating Association and came back with the world's championship. This was a much larger undertaking than anything that would be required this year. Of course the Skating Association is not burdened with a surplus of money, but if a subscription list were started the little money required would be soon raised. There are several fast men members of the association and a little money could be well spared in sending some of them to the American championships, and those who are not members and who have not offended against the amateur law, would only require to spend one dollar membership fee. There would be many advantages in this course, not the least of which would be the guarantee of amateurism, which always follows the members of any recognized club in racing contests. The suggestion is worth consideration anyhow.

Besides the rinks already spoken of there are three others, so well distributed over the city that there is but little danger of their interfering with each other. Both Mr. Moore and Mr. Robertson have had good sheets of ice for some time past, and Mr. Stenhouse is about ready to open on the Champ de Mars. Where last year three rinks seemed amply sufficient for all the requirements, this year there are five; but the increased interest taken in hockey will occupy a good deal of the spare space. The only difficulty to my mind is that there will be so much good hockey played this year that it will keep one busy trying to attend all the matches.

But if skating is going to boom what can be said of hockey? With two new clubs competing for premier honours, the old champions will have their work cut out for them. They will be the hardest played club this year, which means that, to my mind, they will win the majority of their matches. It was a good idea of the Shamrocks to organize a hockey club. An athletic club of the numbers of the Shamrocks should have had a seven on the ice long ago, but it is better late than never, and the effect will probably be noticeable next spring, when the crosse is taken up again, in the improved condition of the men. There is nothing that works to the disadvantage of any lacrosse club so much as a lack of means of keeping the men together during the long winter months. Then again, our lacrosse weather comes with such a rush, that for those who depend on outdoor work to get into training there is very little time left, and the result is seen in the quality of the play at the beginning and the end of the season. For winter practice there is no sport to compare with hockey in the way of keeping the lacrosse hand in. It has all the dash and brilliancy of the summer game and it calls for just as great powers of endurance. With the season ending at the beginning of March there are only two months left before the opening of the lacrosse season, and the men who have put in the winter with good solid hard work on the ice will have

very little work to do to fit themselves for lacrosse. The Shamrocks will see the wisdom of their present course when the great struggle of next year begins. So, too, with the Crescents, as I understand the personnel of the hockey club will be nearly identical with that of the provincial lacrosse champions. The latter clubs will use the Dominion rink, the Montrealers will play in the Crystal rink, and the Victorias will be at their old home on Drummond street.

The McGill men, too, are sanguine about their hockey prospects. They have not been blessed with any great amount of success in the past few years, and to a great extent were responsible for the change from the series to the challenge system. But it should be remembered that they were equally unfortunate in their football ventures, until a few weeks ago, and as no doubt many of the champion Rugby men will be on the ice it would not be a bit surprising to see success follow them in this sport too. What course Ottawa will pursue has apparently not been definitely settled yet, and although Ottawa is strongly represented in the new Ontario association it is altogether probable that the Quebec champions will hear from the Capital.

Speaking about hockey, I have been particularly struck during the last few years by the absolute lack of what might be called inter-provincial interest in the game. It has been practically confined to Montreal. It is true there have been some matches with Ottawa and Toronto clubs, but they bear no sort of comparison with the hard dashing game Montrealers are acquainted with. When Mr. Garvin was in Montreal last Monday, looking after the interests of the Toronto lacrosse club, I had a talk with him about the prospects of hockey up west. He is enthusiastic, and he says all the lacrosse men are in the same frame of mind. "We can hardly come to Montreal and get a victory, but one team will come up and make an effort for it anyway; but wait till we get a little experience and I think we will be able to hold our own." Mr. Clarence Martin, of Ottawa, also takes a good deal of interest in hockey, and I have his word for it that the Montreal champions will have at least one struggle with the men from the Capital to protect their laurels. The more the merrier. Competition is the life of trade, and the life of everything else for that matter. And just here, perhaps, a suggestion may not come amiss. There are now two well organized hockey associations in Canada, the one recently formed in Ontario and the old one, which, in the past, has been known as the Canadian Hockey Association. For purposes of convenience it might perhaps be as well to range them under the distinctive headings of Quebec and Ontario associations, although to my mind the Ontario association, in its organization, might have recognized the premier claims of the association under whose rules hockey has been kept alive. However, more of this some other time. There are two associations and they cover all the ground, for there is very little hockey played in the Maritime Provinces or the far West. Why not have