

THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY

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SCOTIA'S NATIONAL GAME

WRITTEN FOR THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY BY THOMAS A. TROY, B. A.

Curlin'

Bir-r-r! That's the sound that charms the ear
O' callants fond o' curlin'.
When o'er the ice in full career
The channel stanes are birlin'.
Cauld glowers the rosy southlin sun,
And gilds the frosted trees:
The rinks are drawn, the spiel's begin,
The skips roar frae the tees.

Bir-r-r! gae the stanes along the howes,
And, ranged on ika side,
The soople callants ply their coves,
And polish up the slide.
The hearty skips ayont the house,
Wi' flytin' and wi' jokin',
Gar a' the curlers rax their thews
Until their sarks are soakin'.

The forehans lay a canny stane
Atween the hog and tee,
The others strive a shot to gain,
Or gar the guards to flee.
It's "What d'ye see o' that, my man?"
"The ha'e o' 't—'Chap an' lie!"
"He's on him!"—"Gie him a' ye can!"
"He's aff him!"—"Let him die!"

It's "elbow out" or "elbow in,"
And "try a quiet draw."
"Hand up! Hand up! He's here ower gane!"
"Soop, soop! He's ta'en a straw."
It's "guard me that" or "raise me this,"
Or "crack an egg" on you:
Ye'd think their hopes o' future bliss
Were stakit on a stane.

And when the chiefs hae done the best
That eager curlers may,
Weel ken the skips that a' maun rest
Upon the himmost play.
Each scans the house wi' mickle care,
An' lays his secret plan,
An' to their stanes they baith repair
To fecht it man to man.

And oh! it is a bonny sport
The skip's braw stane to see
Come gliding through a narrow port,
And doze upon the tee.
And naught can gar the heart beat quick,
Or set ye roarin' snier,
Than see it take a bonny wick,
An' face the guarded winner.

The cheers arise and rend the skies,
On high the brooms are whirrin';
Now "Shake the hand!" each callant cries,
An' that's what I ca' curlin'.
So here's to a' our Scottish weans,
In ringin' frosty weather,
Who whirl their brooms an' hurl their stanes,
An' yell like deils thegither.

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The Gran' Auld Roarin' Game.

O' a' the wintry sports and plays,
That gar aye lo'e the holidays,
An' put aye in a merry frame,
Gie me the gran' auld roarin' game.

I mount the skates wi' ucco deed,
Lest I may fa' and split my head.
But Oh! I'm fearless and at hame
Playin' the gran' auld roarin' game.

Billiards an' skittles lead to vice,
But no saloons infest the ice;
We gang as sober as we came,
To play the gran' auld roarin' game.

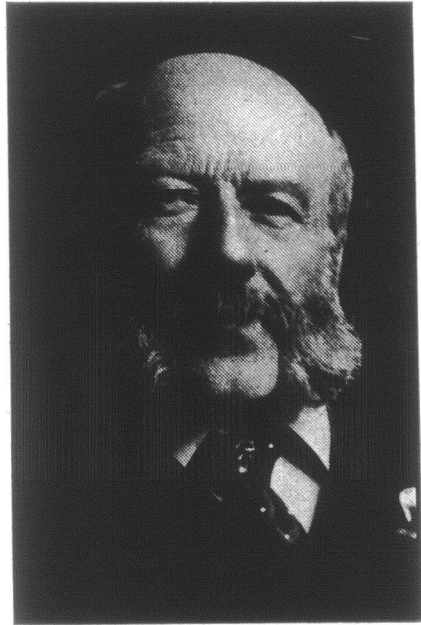
Lassies an' bairns may play in doors,
An' dimes feel fine on carpet floors,
A' tairlor joys are puir an' tame,
Beside the gran' auld roarin' game.

The parlor music sounds fu' sweet,
And gracefu' trips the merry feet;
Music an' dancin' baith are lame,
Beside the gran' auld roarin' game.

Sae game sae forces friend-shup's link,
"We're brithers a'" upon the rink;
Tory or Grit, it's a' the same
Playin' the gran' auld roarin' game.

Sae bad surroundings near it lurk,
The guid o' every creed and kirk;
An' clergy without thoct o' blame,
Join the gran' auld roarin' game.

Come ane an' a' wi' stane an' broom,
Awa' an' anxious care and gloom,
Forget ambition, wealth an' fame,
An' play the gran' auld roarin' game.



J. R. ROBERTSON,
Secretary R.C.C.C., Winnipeg.

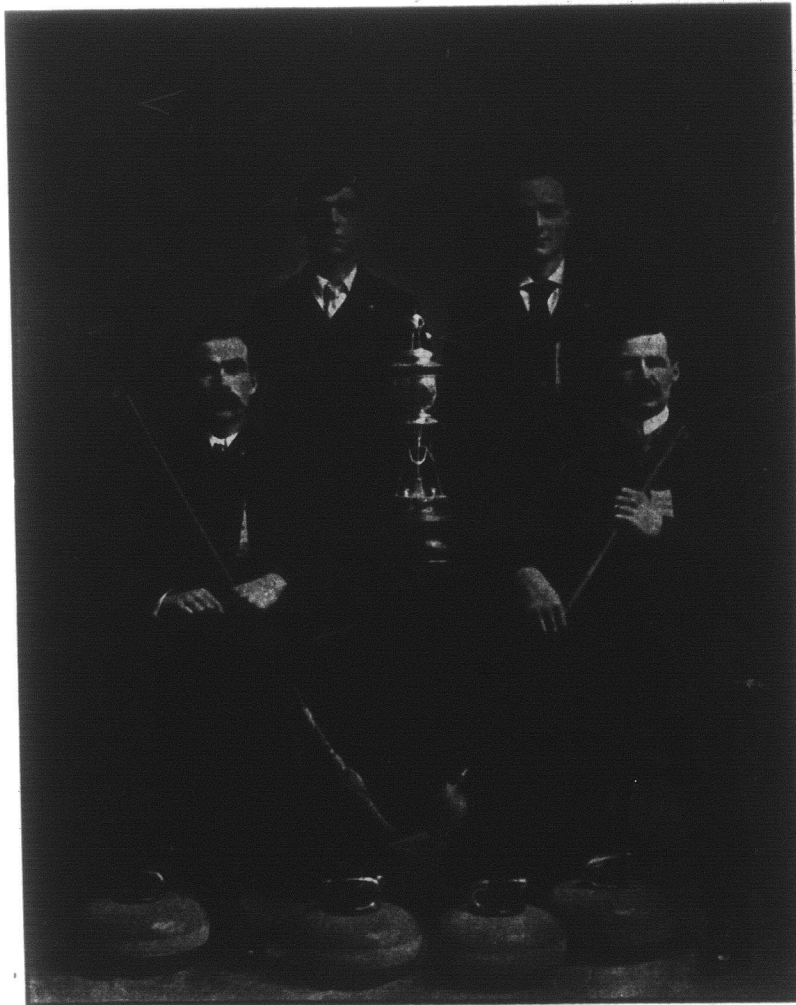
As the date for the seventeenth annual bonspiel of the Manitoba branch of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club approaches it is but right that we should cast a retrospective glance and mark the varied stages of progression through which Scotia's good old game has come down to us. Its distant origin carries us back to the fifteenth century where curling history loses itself in the mists of time and where further investigation is a matter of mere conjecture. Although no other nation has attempted to filch from the Scotch their reputation or lay claim to the origination of curling, still, in an endeavor to give credit to whom credit is due, no stone has been left unturned which might throw the least ray of light upon its prehistoric origin. The Rev. John Ramsay (1777-1871), who has given us the earliest account which we possess of the history of curling, states, as his opinion, that the game was of continental origin and as proof of his assertion he takes the etymology of the various terms used in playing the game. These, he contends, are all Dutch or German expressions and concludes from this alleged fact that the game must have been introduced from the Low Countries. Dr. Jamieson's great dictionary, published only a year or two prior to the Rev. Mr. Ramsay's deductions and on which the latter must have rested his case against the native origin of curling, is a perfect storehouse for the student of Scottish literature. Its references are very full and reliable, but his etymologies are, unfortunately, quite unreliable and in many cases misleading. Within the limits of this short article it is impossible to enter into details or to quote words or roots illustrative of this fact, but such is commonly acknowledged. Professors Mason, Mackinnon and Blackie, authorities on the language, give no credence to the theory that the terms are foreign

It is an admitted fact and one well worthy of note that no trace of the game of curling has ever been found on the continent. This, in itself, is ample proof that the game of curling, if not indigenous to "the land of brown heath and shaggy wood" at least dates back to a very early origin. No mention is made of the game of curling by any of the Scottish historians or poets previous to the year 1600, although Sir Richard Broun would have us believe that Ossian refers to its remote antiquity. True, indeed, that "the stone of might" is a common expression in Ossian's poems, but it seems impossible to torture it into a reference to curling.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, however, many references to curling have been made by poets and historians and the eighteenth century is pregnant with such allusions. It is to be regretted, however, that Robert Burns, Scotland's national bard, did not dedicate any national song of praise to the national game. That Burns knew the game may be inferred from his "Elegy on Tam Samson" (1786). Samson was one of the poet's Kilmarnock friends and his prowess as a curler are thus referred to:

When winter muffles up his cloak,
And binds the mire like a rock;
When to the loughs the curlers flock
Wi' glesome speed,
Wha will they station at the cock?
Tam Samson's deid!
He was the king o' a' the core,
To guard, or draw, or wick a bore,
Or up the rink like Jehu roar
In time o' need!
But now he lags on Death's "hog-score"
Tam Samson's deid!

Of the method of playing this grand game in its incipient stage very little is known. The rude unhewn stones which are still preserved afford ample proof that the rink was much shorter than at present. These stones, the earliest of which bears the date-mark 1511, and which is exhibited at Stirling, were of every conceivable shape. The primitive type was a natural rock picked out of the channel and was without a handle, holes being drilled in it to afford a thumb and finger hold and was intended to be thrown for at least part of the course. They were much smaller than stones of the handle type, running from five or six to twenty or twenty-five pounds in weight. This was the common type in use from 1500 to 1650. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, an improved model was introduced, which, to a great extent, changed the character of the game. A handle was attached to the stone which still, however, retained its rough uncouth appearance. In a very short space of time the primitive stone adorned the shores of the loughs while its giant successor usurped its place upon the ice. Some of these latter stones were monsters in size and it required no ordinary man to swing them. "The Jubilee Stone" (weight 117 lbs.), once the property and favorite of John Hood, of Chapelhill, Cockburnspath, is preserved in the archives of the Royal Club where future generations of curlers will, no doubt, look upon it with interest and astonishment, if not with dismay. When such stones were in common use it must have been a



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