

SCOTTISH GATHERINGS.

A Strong Plea to keep up the old Feature of Scottish Gatherings.

The interest aroused in Scottish gatherings and in the programmes arranged for them, as manifested in the recent discussions in some of our Societies is a good sign of the times, and it will no doubt interest Scotchmen in Canada to know how opinion stands in the United States as can be learned from the following letter addressed to our esteemed contemporary the Scottish American. It is written by Mr. James Grant, Cambridge, Mass.

The season for Caledonian games is on us, and committees are busy arranging details. They are filled with desire to make the games a success, which is indeed a laudable ambition, provided the success achieved is the success intended by those who laid the foundation on which has been erected the structure of Caledonianism in this country. That the forty years that have elapsed since the inauguration of our athletic gatherings should result in deviations from the rules of our fathers may be natural, and by some may be called progress. But as one who has to some extent studied our history, and has tried to imbibe the spirit, I am forced to call it prostitution, and in saying this I intend no reflection on any one in particular. Committees will act and determine according to their knowledge, experience, education and devotion to the story their work is intended to perpetuate. If they love their country and are patriots at heart the fact would find consistent expression in their acts, as it did with those noble Scotchmen who were the pioneers of Caledonian achievements in America; but if they are of an inexperienced and limited intellectual order they will lose sight of the real object the gatherings are intended to commemorate. Mammon will be their pet idol, the fads of the day will adorn their programme, and they will surrender the field which is theirs by right, and stultify the achievements of their predecessors, by putting it in possession of aliens.

What was the motive from which Caledonian clubs and games sprang in this country? and how is it adhered to? In reply to the first question I will quote from the preamble to the Constitution of the Boston Caledonian Club, which is a declaration to which every Scotchman should subscribe. After expressing belief in physical culture as an element in education it says:—"And believing that no physical exercise conduces more to a perfect physical development than the Scottish national games; and knowing, also, that the practice of those games fosters and keeps alive the associations, social customs and memory of the land of our, or our fathers', birth." &c. Now it cannot be argued that an organization that meets in the field but once a year has physical culture for its paramount object. Therefore the keystone in the Caledonian arch is the "fostering and keeping alive of the associations, social customs, and memory of the land of our, or our fathers', birth." This being the purpose for which the fathers made many sacrifices of their time and means, and the secret of our success, our duty is to keep these gatherings as purely Scotch as they were in the beginning, and have them conducted by ourselves and under our own rules from beginning to end. I would not admit a feature on the programme that would require a suspension of our rules, and force our judges, chief and chieftains to take a back seat, permitting young dudes to occupy before our festoons the positions to which we have chosen them. Such action emanates

from luke-warm patriotism and lack of confidence in ourselves, and is an admission that Caledonian games are no longer an attraction for Scotchmen. I believe the time has come to take a firm stand against any tendency to apply modern methods and systems to our games. A few weeks ago I was present where there were a half-a-dozen Scotchmen, two of them being the heads of the oldest Scotch societies in Boston, and they agreed that the next generation would see the end of our Scottish gatherings, unless something were done to restore their original character.

Some years ago a feeling began to grow in a few isolated places that a man who competed for money was not as desirable as one who competed for money's value. Organizations known as amateur athletic clubs were formed. They condemned professional athletes, but were willing to compete at the games of Caledonian clubs for medals. Caledonian clubs put in amateur events. This was the entering wedge. The Amateur Athletic Union was next formed, and it made a rule that none of their athletes should compete at any games that were not under the control of the union; that is to say, the judges should be members of the union, and their rules should govern the competition. They and they alone were to decide who should compete and who should not. Under these conditions they made overtures to some Caledonian clubs to offer medals at their games for members of the union, and not a few of the clubs yielded. In arranging these games the club had no voice or authority. When the day of the gathering arrived the curious spectacle was witnessed of the chief and officers walking off the field and giving up the conduct of affairs to youthful Irishmen, Germans or Americans, the Caledonian club which had to shoulder the responsibility having absolutely no voice in the matter. This is not overdrawn. I have seen it. Now mark the consistency of the amateur. A few years ago some Scotch amateurs—members of the New York Club—wanted to enter for some of the Amateur Athletic Club's games there, but were refused admission on the ground that any one competing at Caledonian games, whether for money or medals, was a professional. Now, amateur athletes are no more honourable than professional athletes, and they are not so good no attraction at games. Amateur athletes are as ready to compete for money as professionals when the opportunity to do so without detection occurs. Therefore, no Caledonian club should allow any other club to step in and dictate the conditions on which any event on the programme should take place.

In Boston we have in the past resisted the evil influence; but the veterans who fought our battles and made our name are dropping off one by one. Those who would not tolerate outside dictation, and who believed that Caledonian games, conducted by Scotchmen whose names shone bright in the history of their country, were attraction enough for Scotchmen, are not so prominent as they were once and there is danger that we too will kick our feet against the pricks.

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