

A NON-ENTHUSIAST'S VIEW OF ATHLETICS.

TO define the term Athletics, with its multiform comprehensions of the present day, would indeed be a difficult task, one which the writer frankly confesses himself unable to handle and equally unwilling to attempt before the reading public. The adjuncts of a single contest of any kind between closely-matched men are so numerous, varied, painstaking and involve so much of an expert talent, that to imagine one's self the possessor of a *comprehensive* knowledge of all such details suggests the wonderful fancy of an Altruistic dream. The purpose of this article is not to explain what athletics mean, nor is it the intention to paint an ideal athlete. The aim is rather to look upon athletics in their relation to the people, and to dwell for a moment upon a few thoughts concerning the forces which are at present at work in their development.

In every branch of athletics there are several factors which suggest themselves most prominently to the studious observer. Among these are,—first, the athlete himself; second, those who follow the sport as a business enterprise, intermingling a sense of pleasure which is regulated in a measurable degree by their success or failure in selecting winners; third, those who follow the sport for the sport's sake. The latter class are at the present time, in every country, wielding a great influence over athletics. It is, perhaps, an unconscious influence, because of the fact that the individuals composing the class spoken of do not take any part in the conduct

of sports, but simply attend the exhibitions. However it is an unquestionably effectual influence in regulating the method of carrying out competitive contests in skill, strength, agility and endurance, in requiring just and reasonable conditions to govern, in commending a fuller sense of responsibility on the part of the performer towards the public, and in shaping the relation of athletics in general to a higher civilization. The athlete was once the pride of the world; by this beneficial movement he shall become so again. And, fortunately, a higher perfection of heart and brain, which man is constantly developing, will forbid his becoming a god, thus preserving him on his natural level and making his stay amongst us perennial.

For the purpose of examining into the *characteristics* of this latter class it may be well to subdivide it into two parts—those who attend the exhibitions for the pleasure it affords them because of a particular liking for the game, and those who follow the game on account of a friendly interest in the participants, deriving only moderate entertainment from it, and having little or no preference for one game more than another. The latter class are more numerous than would appear on casual thought, while the former comprise the bulk of those who are seen on the reviewing stands of the amphitheatres throughout the country.

Great differences distinguish the two divisions. The first named are generally of a enthusiastic nature, impulsive and ardent. They will