

The Athletic Club

Many people, especially visitors from the East, wonder why amateur athletic sports, that is, running, walking, jumping, etc.—are not more largely patronized here.

Certainly the conditions, such as climate, grounds and general facilities for practice, could not be better, and, as a matter of course, the lack of public patronage at field-day meetings must be attributed to some cause.

It is a well-known fact that for many years the Olympic Club of this city has had scarcely any competition at its field-day meetings, and when the championship games were held it was always a foregone conclusion that the emblem of victory would be easily captured by the members of the living shoe.

A visit to the club's beautiful building on Post street will prove the correctness of this statement, as on the walls will be seen the championship colors of each year dating from 1886 up to 1891.

The athletes representing the University of California at Berkeley blurred the escutcheon of the club at the last championship meeting, by capturing the championship emblem.

It is hardly necessary to say that the defeat of the Olympic athletes by the athletic collegians was a surprise, since the representatives of the Olympic club who had participated in the games have not, as yet, overcome their great anxiety to again meet their successful competitors from the classic halls of Berkeley.

Prior to the great athletic earthquake of last year, which, by the way, has been the means of stirring up a healthy rivalry between the athletes of the Olympic Club and the collegians, there was very little interest attached to outdoor athletics, which goes to prove that the lack of public support at club meetings was entirely owing to the one-sided competitions between the clubs represented at the championship meetings of previous years or since the time the Merton Cricket Club disbanded.

Now that the Colleges—Stanford and Berkeley—have concluded to devote particular attention to athletics this year the future of the sport has a decidedly brighter appearance, and should the students continue to measure strides with the representatives of the Olympic Club on championship day it can be safely said that the gathering on the campus will prove, beyond a doubt, that the sport-loving people of this city will always turn out when spirited competitions between clubs is assured.

The Olympic Club has an advantage which neither of the colleges possess at the present time, and that is first-class athletic grounds, which are so conveniently situated that the athletes of the club can reach them in half an

hour's ride from their club room on Post street.

The athletes of the Stanford University will not envy the Olympic Club next year, as they have made all the necessary arrangements for the construction of an athletic grounds which, when completed, will be in point of detail the most perfect athletic park in America. They will see that the future of our outdoor athletic sport on this coast has a decidedly brilliant and healthy appearance.

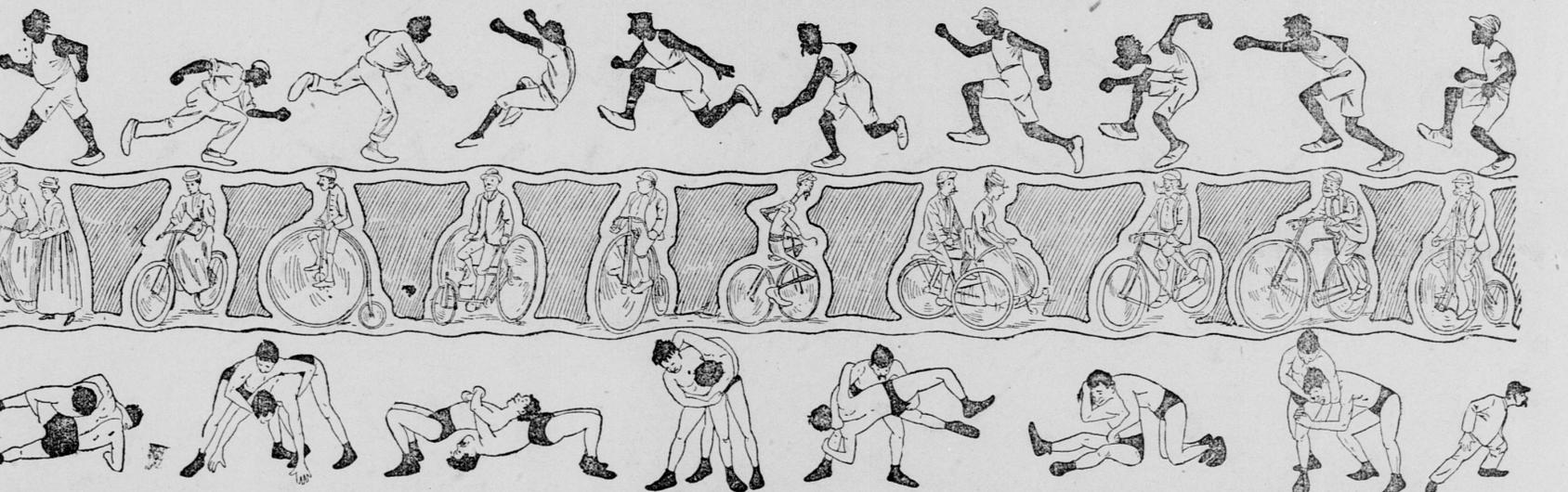
At the present time the young collegians are compelled to exercise on the Palo Alto race-track, which has been fitted up in the best manner possible for athletic practice.

The athletic representatives of the University of California have a fairly good track upon which to train at almost any time of the year, as its surface is composed of cinders. Records made upon it will not, however, be accepted by the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States, as the track in some respects does not conform with the rules as laid down by the union relative to the construction of cinder-tracks.

The Acme Athletic Club of Oakland is well awake to the occasion, and realizing that in the near future outdoor athletics will be a strong opponent of the national game for public patronage, it has now in the course of construction an athletic and bicycle ground in the suburbs of Oakland, which, according to the officers of the club, will, when completed, surpass in point of beauty and excellence any of the many famous athletic grounds of America.

With first-class exercising grounds in Oakland, Berkeley, Palo Alto and this city, there should certainly spring from the ranks of the various athletic clubs and associations an army of athletic athletes that can be depended upon in case of an athletic invasion from foreign parts, to uphold the honors of California in the various departments of outdoor athletics.

It has been remarked time and again by athletes who have become famous on the cinders and who have made athletics a study for years, that one of the great drawbacks noticeable in college athletics on this coast is the



poor condition which the athletes present on field days.

Lon Myers, the famous amateur sprinter and distance runner, stated when in this city on his way to Australia, during a conversation with some of the prominent athletes of the Olympic Club, that the great secret of athletic success was a knowledge of a proper system of training, and in this particular he knew of only two men in America whom he could recommend as being consistent instructors.

"The great trouble with most of the young men who are striving for fame on the cinder path today," said Myers, "is that after they have succeeded in winning a race they immediately assume a know-it-all knowledge of track athletics, which naturally disgusts the teachers who are engaged especially to perfect the athlete in whatever branch of athletics he has proven, in his trials, to be the better fitted for."

"The result of this assumed knowledge leaves the athlete in a position which he remains until, after repeated attempts, he finally grows disgusted and retires from active service without having attained the degree of prominence on the cinders which he so dearly longed for when a close observer of track athletics.

In reference to the athletes showing up in poor condition on field days, Myers explained in various ways how easy it was for a beginner to go wrong when to the latter's way of thinking, he was just going splendidly.

"I have frequently seen on the Manhattan Athletic Club grounds of New York," continued the runner, "numbers of youngsters training like beavers day in and day out for an athletic meeting, and when the time arrived for business they had either become stale from the effect of over-training or were badly drawn to make a successful finish when called upon for a final sprint."

Speaking on long and short distance running, the champion distance-runner said that from his long experience on the cinders he had discovered that the ways of training for a sprinting race, a middle-distance race and a long-distance race were vastly different.

"For short-distance racing," said Mr. Myers, "it is speed and strength that are the primary requisites.

"A runner must have the strength to finish strong and the speed to get away from the start like a flash, so as to be going under a full head of steam at the ten-yard mark. For the quarter and half mile distances a runner must train so as to develop good lung power, in the first place, and in the second place he must learn how to gauge his speed, so as to

have a good supply of dash left in case he is called upon in the final lap to extend himself.

The great mistake made by many young runners, and particularly those who train for half-mile races, is that they become rattled before they have covered one-third of the distance, and, as a matter of course, they are completely run down when nearing the finish. An athlete who is properly trained, and whose nerves will not become affected by the excitement attending a championship contest, can always be depended upon to finish strong.

"The system of training for a mile race is pretty much the same as required for the long-distance running, with the exception that during practice the athlete must always keep in mind the pace he is cutting out, otherwise he is very apt to break down when contesting for a trophy."

As there are many young athletes on this coast at present who would, no doubt, gladly profit by good advice from a competent instructor, an extract from an article on training, written by the once famous athlete, Harry M. Johnson, will be found interesting and instructive. He states:

"If you fancy foot-racing, first find the distance you are best apt to make your services of an athlete who has made a success on the cinder path. After a few trials at various distances he will soon discover your strong and weak points and will advise you accordingly."

"Before engaging in athletic practice of any kind the athlete should have the advice of a physician as to his physical condition. It sometimes happens that the training necessary to success on the cinder path is very injurious to young men whose lungs are not thoroughly sound, and, as previously stated, to avoid any bad results that may accrue from a hard course of athletic exercise the advice of a competent physician is decidedly necessary, in fact indispensable.

"After partaking of a purgative so as to prepare and condition the system for a course of training, the runner should remain quiet for three days and then commence practice by taking short and easy jogs over a moderately soft track, so as not to bring on a stiffness and heaviness of the limbs which is sure to follow the first few days."

as to run a strenuous fifty yards, I then put the youngster under another course of treatment, so to speak.

"If the distance he has entered to run should be 100 yards I mark off 125 yards, and at this latter distance I have always made it a point not to allow any of my pupils to run at their highest speed.

"My instructions to them have been to reserve their strength for the final sprint, and to attain this end they are trained to run 100 yards at a three-quarter gait, finishing the final twenty-five yards as strong as possible. By this system of training for sprint racing the young sprinter is sure to make a strong dash on the day he is called upon to defend his colors.

"There is one thing which the amateur athlete must be careful to guard against, and that is over-training. When he perceives that he is growing stale and feels as if athletic exercise had no charms for him then it is time that he should take a few days' rest.

"Practice should be taken three times daily, viz.: morning, afternoon and evening. Half an hour's exercise at each time is amply sufficient.

"Unless the climate is warm, athletes should always wear a covering over their body and limbs during practice, and by all means retire to their dressing-rooms just as soon as exercise is completed.

"Shower-baths following practice in the open air are not by any means advisable, as they chill the system and sometimes result in a severe cold which, in a damp climate, may lead to an attack of pneumonia.

"A sponge bath after exercise, followed by a good towel and hand rubbing, will assuredly give the better results.

"Before leaving the dressing compartment the athlete should be very careful that the excretion from his pores has ceased prior to exposing himself to the outside atmosphere."

On the cinders with spiked shoes gathered in such enormous numbers that people who cheer the club congratulated themselves upon having struck the nail on the head.

It seemed as if half of the members of the club had a fascination for outdoor pastime, so great was the interest manifested in athletics by the Native Sons who donned the spiked shoe.

The inaugural opening of the grounds was a grand success, and thousands of people who witnessed the thrilling predicted a glorious outdoor future for the Olympic Club. In fact, everything looked charming and the grass grew high.

For six months subsequent to the opening day the athletes of the club took advantage of the favorable opportunities that were offered for sprinting, jumping, handball and lawn-tennis exercises, and the result was that several new men shot to the front like mushrooms and developed into athletes of fame—that is, locally speaking.

It was about this time that the craze for boxing had begun to take a firm hold upon the members of the club, and, as a matter of course, outdoor athletics had to play second fiddle to the then more exciting sport of fist-fights, presumably because blood will tell.

Gradually interest in the contests held on cinders and turf fell away, until finally it reached almost a state of desuetude.

Athletes got disinterested and grew careless about the matter of training, and manifested in games which should have been witnessed by thousands of people.

The boxing boom, like all other booms, ran its race, and eventually became lost to view. The members grew tired of the knock-out scenes witnessed at tournaments and longed for some new attraction.

The stir created by the Universities last season opened the Olympic eyes to the fact that something must be done to drum up the outdoor athletes to action, otherwise the colors of the club which have been carried successfully through many years of athletic strife, were certain to meet with a deep stain of defeat in the very near future.

The Olympic Club can truly boast of one honor, and that is in having among its representatives men who have equalled the best performances in the world in the sag and jump. The following is a brief sketch of the good work achieved by the most prominent of the club's outdoor athletes, dating from the days of Jack Reicher and Robert S. Haley.

Haley was the first of the club's short-distance runners who had created a sensation in Eastern athletic circles by the announcement

of a performance he had done on the cinders. It was the thing of the world's amateur 100-yard record, which was then 10 seconds. Haley was a close student to track athletics, and there can be no gaining the fact that he was capable of running a great sprint race when fit for the task.

Joe Masterson was the next best man to Haley, and according to experienced judges there was a very small margin between the two sprinters at the finish of a hundred.

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