

KINGS OF THE PLAYING-FIELDS.



MONYPENNY'S RECORD RUN.

(From a photograph by Messrs. Stearn, Cambridge.)



“ATHLETICS,” in its modern sense of a muscular education, can hardly be said to have existed prior to the middle of this century. It is true that a love of healthy out-door exercises has always been a leading charac-

teristic of our race. Young men have run, and leapt, and thrown the bar, from the times of our Saxon forefathers. But from the pleasure a healthy mind finds in exercising a healthy body, to the self-satisfaction of a carefully-trained sprinter as he does his 100 yards in the “level time” of 10 seconds, there is a very wide step indeed. The difference is almost as great as that which exists between the terrier who runs yapping after an impossible rabbit and the same wiry little animal trained to turn back-somersaults on a music-hall stage.

Before 1850 amateur athletes were coached little and trained less. Bicycles were, of course, mere toys, and what running and walking races there existed were in the hands of professional “pedestrians,” as they were termed, who were by no means a respectable class. If gentlemen ran, it was to indulge an occasional freak, or to win a heavy wager. Indeed, a large section of the nation regarded such foot-races as reflecting little credit on

the amateurs concerned in them. Gradually, however, the love of athletics spread from school and university to all classes of people. Distances began to be measured with exactness, races to be “timed” with accuracy. Improvements suggested by experience enabled men to achieve feats undreamed of in former times. The course of training through which they passed, the shoes which they wore, the track on which they ran, and later, the bicycle on which they rode, steadily improved.

Athletes began to “specialise” in their sports. “All-round” men became few and far between. A man became a mile-runner, a high-jumper, a five-mile bicycle-racer, and did not attempt to combine the three. Increased competition and increased efficiency forbade it. Style was seen to increase speed, and style was cultivated. As speed became the main thought of the athlete, “record-worship,” as it has been fitly called, sprang into existence. To such an extent has it been carried that it has proved a curse, rather than a blessing, to athletics of all descriptions.

At the same time it must be admitted that although every sportsman should set his face against an undue reverence for records as a complete standard of athletic ability, these same records are exceedingly interesting. They furnish us with the only standard we can possibly obtain by which we can measure the real worth of famous feats of the past.

It is very difficult, however, to separate the grain from the chaff. For instance, when two running-footmen were matched against each other by their masters, in Woodstock Park, in 1720, Sir Erasmus Phillips, an Oxford undergraduate, calmly writes in his diary that the winner ran the four miles in 18 minutes. He probably did not wish to exaggerate, but he, in common with the other spectators, thought more of pocketing their bets than of measuring the ground or taking the time. It is interesting to notice that the present record for that distance, made by C. E. Willers in 1893, was 19 minutes 33½ seconds. Thus no reliance can be placed on these early records. Exaggeration was, perhaps, only natural in times when the modern system of record-keeping was unknown, and the desire of the narrator was to express his approval of a fine performance. In this respect poets, from Virgil to Sir

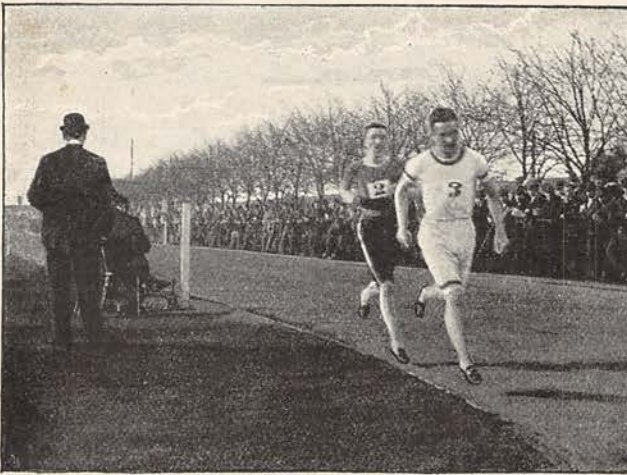
a minute; half, 2¼ minutes; mile, 4½ to 5 minutes."

From this date, however, the popularity of athletics spread with amazing rapidity, and, in 1868, J. Colbeck actually accomplished a quarter mile in 50¾ seconds, although he cannoned against a sheep as he was finishing the race and broke its leg. But it was an American, Myers, who was to teach Englishmen what could be done at this distance. Unlike most of his predecessors he started at his fullest speed and ran the race throughout as a "sprint," instead of reserving a vast effort for the last 100 yards. At Lillie Bridge he finished in 48¾ seconds—a time only broken by H. C. L. Tindall in 1889, and E. C. Bredin in 1895, who both accomplished that distance in 48½ seconds. Myers was a lean man of 5 feet 8 inches in height, and only just 8 stone in weight. His body was small and light, while his legs were extraordinarily long. As he tired, his stride lengthened instead of growing shorter. Indeed, he fully deserved the title since acquired by C. J. B. Monypenny, the Cambridge quarter-miler and record holder at 150 yards, of a "human greyhound."

The mile race is always an interesting feature of an athletic meeting. In 1865 we find R. E. Webster (afterward Sir Richard Webster and Attorney-General) winning in the Cambridge University Sports in 4 minutes 36½ seconds—a fine performance, and then equal to record. It is interesting to notice that, in the following University Sports, Webster met and defeated the Earl of Jersey after a great struggle. In 1884, W. G. George won the English Amateur Championship in the record-time of

4 minutes 18¾ seconds. George was then tall and thin, with a great easy stride from the hips. His staying powers were enormous. After 1884 he became a professional, and on August 23, 1886, beat the mile record in the time of 4 minutes 12¾ seconds. In 1895 F. E. Bacon wiped out George's amateur record. Bacon is perhaps the finest mile runner England ever produced. Of our present "milers" Bacon is the best, and has run George hard for the record at that distance.

The 100 yards' sprint has always presented considerable difficulty to the record compiler. The small space of one-fifth of a second is so important, and yet so hard to measure with any degree of accuracy. In the days when



BACON RUNNING.

(From a photograph by Symmons & Thiele, Chancery Lane, W.C.)

Walter Scott, are invariably sad offenders. Poetic licence may possibly be pleaded as an excuse, but it was quite unnecessary for Sir Walter to give a standing jump of 18 feet to a clansman when the record in any athletic meeting is 10 feet 9¾ inches.

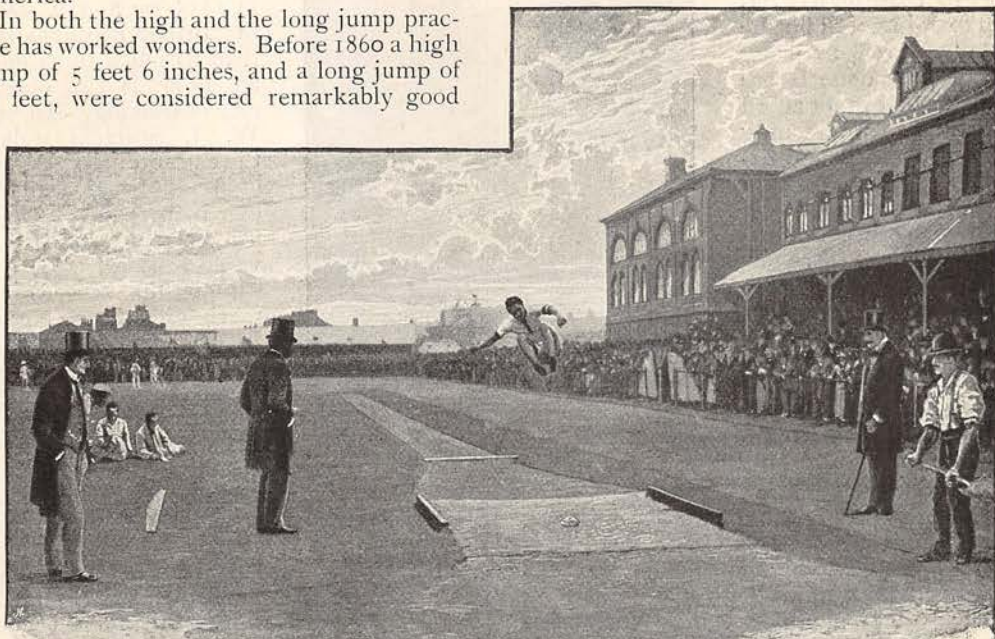
From the commencement of this century we find a greater accuracy in the descriptions of contests. In 1809, for instance, a mile match was run off, in the Bayswater fields, in 4 minutes 56 seconds. That was considered a good performance. Slight improvements on this time were subsequently made, but in "British Rural Sports," published in 1855, we find it stated that the best running speeds were a "quarter of a mile in

stop-watches, worsted, and pistols were non-existent it was, of course, impossible to time 100 yards at all. Yet, in 1808, Shewball, a Lancashire shepherd, was credited at Hackney with running 140 yards in 12 seconds, while Grinley, at Hampton Court, about the same date, was supposed to have run 120 yards in 10 seconds. This distance was very popular with amateurs, as they were then classed, who ran off many matches of 100 to 120 yards for wagers of varying amounts. About 1860 there were several men who approached the "level time" of 10 seconds. It was not till 1886, however, that A. Wharton was able to claim that time as indisputably his own. Wharton ran in a very peculiar style—his body bent forward, and his feet falling almost flat on the ground. His time of 10 seconds has been equalled, but never beaten, until last year, when L. E. Wefers beat our English champion, Bradley, at New York, in the time of $9\frac{1}{2}$ seconds, thereby establishing a fresh record. Few people realise that for this short distance a man can thus travel at the rate of over 20 miles an hour.

An ancient and popular event in athletic meetings is hammer throwing. Barry, the English champion, is a fine performer, although the record is held by Mitchell in America.

In both the high and the long jump practice has worked wonders. Before 1860 a high jump of 5 feet 6 inches, and a long jump of 18 feet, were considered remarkably good

performances. In 1871, however, R. Mitchell, a Manchester man, won the high jump with 5 feet $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the long jump with 20 feet 4 inches; both fine jumps, and then far above record. His prowess was, however, entirely eclipsed by M. J. Brooks, who first became famous in the Inter-University Sports. He trotted quite quietly up to his jumps and then sprang almost straight into the air, tucking his legs well beneath him. The result of this somewhat peculiar style was, that if he knocked down the bar it was generally with his body, his legs already being in safety the other side. In 1876, at Lillie Bridge, Brooks, jumping from grass, cleared the extraordinary height of 6 feet $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, a height which for eleven years remained a world's record; for, although T. Davin, at Carrick-on-Suir, was credited with a quarter of an inch more in 1880, there was some doubt thrown on the accuracy of the measurement. In 1887, however, W. B. Page, an American, cleared 6 feet $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches at Stourbridge. He was only 5 feet 6 inches in height himself, and the leap from that fact seemed all the more wonderful to the spectators. Last year M. F. Sweeney, amid a scene of immense enthusiasm, carried off the high jump from the London Athletic Club, in their contest with the New York



FRY'S RECORD JUMP.

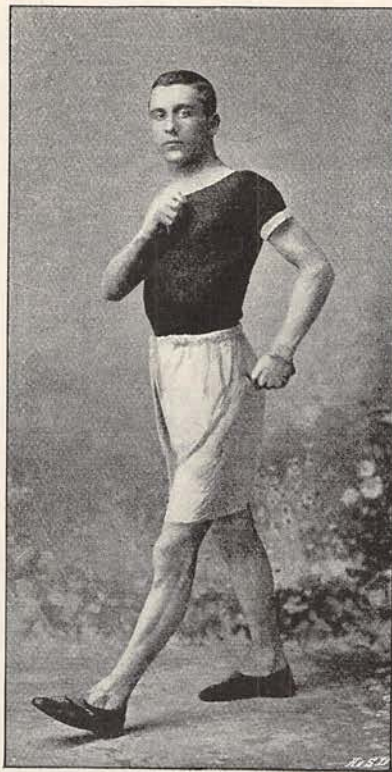
(From a photograph by Messrs. Stearn, Cambridge.)

Club by a leap of 6 feet $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches, beating his own record of 6 feet $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches made in 1892. The long jump has improved almost as rapidly as the high. In this event athletes discovered that the secret of success was the swiftness of the run in approaching the jump, rather than the spring itself. The size of the leap was also increased by a judicious swing forward of the legs while in the air. The result of increased skill was soon manifest. Jumps of over 23 feet were accredited to Lane in 1874 and Lockton in 1880. In 1891 C. S. Reber, in America, established a world's record of 23 feet $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches; a distance subsequently equalled by C. B. Fry, of Oxford University, in 1893. Fry is undoubtedly one of the finest all-round athletes of the century. He has represented his university in football, cricket, and athletics, and at the same time has proved himself to possess considerable intellectual ability. He is a fine sprinter, and his body is light and well-proportioned. He has, in fact, every requisite for a champion long jumper; but he has discovered, as many athletes have done before him, that he cannot afford to play such a stiffening game as football and expect to maintain his form on the cinder path.

On many other forms of sport want of space forbids a long dissertation. Hammer throwing with its great exponent Barry is always an interesting spectacle. Walking may, perhaps, be mentioned, as it was one of the most popular forms of athleticism in the beginning of this century. Mr. Foster Powell, in 1773, walked from London to York and back in five days and eighteen hours, the distance being 402 miles, thus maintaining an average of between sixty and seventy miles a day. Mr. Powell became so famous as a pedestrian that he was engaged at Astley's Amphitheatre to exhibit his powers in a small circle. This he did for twelve nights, and received a handsome remuneration. His reputation, however, paled before

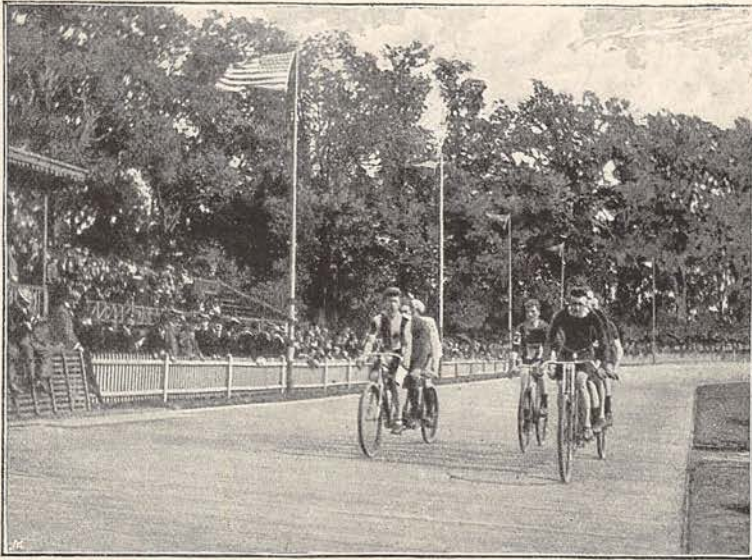
that of Captain Barclay Allardice, more commonly known as Captain Barclay. This famous amateur was of wonderful physique, and rejoiced in all forms of athletics for the sake of the exercise rather than the wager. At Newmarket he walked 1,000 miles in 1,000 hours, travelling over the distance of a mile during every hour, and reducing his weight some two stone and a half during the performance. On rough roads he walked on another occasion the distance of 90 miles in about nineteen hours, a feat which compares fairly with the English amateur record of 100 miles in 19 hours 41 minutes, made under the most favourable conditions on a track. During our own times walking has fallen rather into disfavour. Amateurs have not adopted it as a form of athletics with any keenness. Worse still, the desire for great pace has made many a record very doubtful, the change from a very fast walk to a slow run being difficult to notice. Considerable improvement there has undoubtedly been; for, while in 1855 we find it stated in "British Rural Sports" that "from 6 to $6\frac{1}{4}$ miles an hour is the outside rate of walking," last year W. J. Sturgess walked the extraordinary distance of 8 miles 340 yards in one hour, 'hereby establishing for himself a world's record.

Of cycling records it is more difficult to speak. In the first place, the great increase of pace which every year demonstrates is due rather to the continued improvements in tracks and machines than to the increased pluck and endurance of the cyclists themselves. What a fine cyclist could not accomplish in 1880 is comparatively easy for a second-rate performer in 1895. As soon as a record is set up a dozen competitors are in training to knock it down again by perhaps some fifth of a second. The distances for which records are held seem innumerable, while, besides the safety, there are ordinary, tandem, and tricycle records to be considered as well. For



STURGESS WALKING.

(From a photograph by Symmons & Thiele, Chancery Lane, W.C.)



HUNT IN THE CUCA CUP RACE AFTER THE TWENTY-FIRST HOUR.
 (From a photograph by Symmons & Thiele, Chancery Lane, W.C.)

every road in the kingdom records exist, so that one man can hold a record from Woking to Surbiton, and another from Surbiton to Woking. A cyclist is even said to have claimed a record when his machine ran away with him down a hill. All this is very absurd. A "champion" at, say 648 yards, is in a scarcely superior position to the cricketer who described himself as the "best cover-point in Europe—south of the Pyrenees." At the same time some of the old records are of interest. In 1877 W. Tomes, of the Portsmouth Club, cycled the mile in 3 minutes 5 seconds, beating previous records. This was a fine performance if the time be correct. In 1879 we find a competitor in the Cyclist Union championships winning the mile in 2 minutes $59\frac{1}{2}$ seconds. In 1894 Carl Zeigler, with a flying start, cycled the same distance in 1 minute 50 seconds, or at the rate of over 32 miles an hour. This remarkable feat was performed at Waltham in the United States, and is undoubtedly authentic:

In long distance races the improvement is equally marvellous. In 1882, the Hon. Ion Keith Falconer, a well-known Cambridge cyclist, travelled from Land's End to John o' Groats in the time of 12 days 23 hours 15 seconds, thus averaging about 75 miles a day. Later, G. P. Mills cut this record down to 5 days $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours, and by a slightly shorter route, in 1894, he accomplished the distance in 3 days 5 minutes 49 seconds, averaging about

287 miles a day. This is an excellent example of the rapid improvement of the modern bicycle, for, in establishing his first record, Mills only allowed himself 6 hours of sleep *en route*.

In 1884, R. H. English, before a large crowd at the Crystal Palace, managed to place 20 miles 560 yards to his credit in one hour. This feat caused a great sensation in the cycling world, and yet, in 1894, Martin rode 26 miles 1103 yards, in England, and A. T. Linton 28 miles 419 yards, at Bordeaux, in precisely the same time. It is scarcely satisfactory for an Englishman to notice that the Safety world's path records are almost entirely in the hands of French and Americans. Our best-known champions are F. W. Shorland, who, at Herne Hill, in 1894, rode in 24 hours the wonderful distance of 460 miles 1,296 yards, and G. Hunt, who last year travelled over 260 miles in twelve hours.

The early records of skating are, unfortunately, obviously inaccurate. Marvellous were the stories circulated of the performances of the old fen-champions. They could travel 30 miles in an hour, they could skate a mile in a minute and a half. These are mere complimentary legends. At the same time the improvement in skating is probably not so marked as in the other branches of athletics. For instance, in 1821, a Mr. Woodward bet a Mr. Bland 100 guineas that he would nominate a man who would skate a mile in less than three minutes. With such a wager

it is more than probable that Mr. Bland measured the distance pretty accurately, and yet Mr. Woodward won, his champion, John Gittam accomplishing the distance with a flying start in 2 minutes 53 seconds. This is equal to the authentic record-mile of George See, in 1886, although See did not have the benefit of a flying start. The histories of the families of See and Smart may be said to be the history of modern English skating. Old "Turkey" Smart was known as "the father of fen championship skating." He was also literally the uncle of the fen champions, for his nephews, "Fish" and James, long shared that honour. Of these two, "Fish" was the older man. In 1879 he won 27, and in the following year 28, races without once suffering defeat. It was not till 1889 that his younger brother lowered his colours. In 1881 he skated 2 miles in 5 minutes 43 $\frac{1}{2}$ seconds; and in the same year he accomplished a mile with a flying start in 3 minutes dead. The performance was, however, eclipsed by George See in 1886, and by T. Donoghue in 1887, who, with a strong wind behind him, is supposed to have skated a straight mile on the Hudson River in 2 minutes 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ seconds. Great doubt exists as to the authenticity of this record. James Smart, who is perhaps the best known of the two brothers, is a lithe and active man, unlike the typical broad-shouldered fen-man. He skates with a shorter stroke than either his uncle or brother, but has a beautiful style and wonderful spurting powers. Perhaps his best

performance was the mile in 2 minutes 53 $\frac{1}{2}$ seconds, in 1886, when he was just beaten by George See. He has won many races in England and Holland. Harald Hagen, a Norwegian, has accomplished several remarkable performances. In 1891 he skated 5 miles in 15 minutes 11 seconds, and, in 1892, 1 mile in 2 minutes 49 seconds. In 1894, at Zwolle, in Holland, he established two world's records—namely, 5,000 metres in 8 minutes 33 $\frac{3}{4}$ seconds, and 10,000 metres in 18 minutes 52 $\frac{1}{2}$ seconds, thus becoming champion skater of the world.

In speaking thus shortly of records and record-makers, it is only possible to touch the fringe of so wide a subject. Many wonderful performances might be mentioned unconnected with any definite sport, such as Captain Webb's celebrated Channel swim in 1875, or J. Finney's plunge under water lasting 4 minutes 29 $\frac{1}{4}$ seconds, in 1886. We have, however, confined our attention to the most popular races of the most popular sports. In every case a steady improvement in records has shown what training, skill, and experience can perform. How far this improvement will be maintained as the competition increases, it is impossible to say. There must be a limit, even to records, for time is one of the few things that America cannot "improve off the face of the earth." In conclusion it must be remembered that on such a subject it is impossible to be quite up to date, since records, like good intentions, are only made to be broken in a day or two.

B. FLETCHER ROBINSON.



BARRY THROWING THE HAMMER.

(From a photograph by Symmons & Thiele, Chancery Lane, W.C.)