

THE CROWN OF WILD OLIVE.

A CLERGYMAN of Springfield, Massachusetts, in commenting on the tournament recently held in that city, remarked that he knew of nothing so nearly resembling the old Olympic games as a modern bicycling tournament. In view of this resemblance, which certainly exists, it may be pleasant to inquire into the origin of these games, their character and mode of conduction, the kind of persons who contended in them, the honors they strove to win, and the charms of poetry and art that invested their strife. We will learn something of the tendencies of the games and of the advantages they brought to the people. Perhaps there may be some lessons for us in our modern tournaments. We may, perhaps, gain some hints of high and beautiful motives with which to invest our innocent and healthful recreations.

If we inquire into the beginning of the Olympic games we shall find them adorned with many a tradition of god-given origin and miraculous sanction from heaven. The Eleans claimed that they were founded by the Idæan Hercules, who also brought to Olympia and planted there the wild olive-tree, from the foliage of which were woven the crowns of the victors.

Not content with a heroic origin, the Eleans have named, as authors of their games, the gods. Jupiter and Saturn, who wrestled with each other for supremacy over the world on the very spot where the festival was afterward celebrated. Others affirm that it was instituted by Jupiter, in honor of his victory over the Titans.

These games were originally celebrated irregularly, and for the honor of some a special occasion. They were often made the ornament of a triumph over an enemy. Hercules is said to have instituted this festival to Jupiter on occasion of completing one of the most difficult of his labors. Games usually made up the larger part of the ceremonies at the funeral of every person of importance. Homer, in the twenty-third book of the *Iliad*, describes the games at the funeral of Patroclus, presided over by his friend Achilles. Virgil also describes games celebrated in honor of the deceased father of Æneas.

To the one or the other of these customs is properly due the origin of the games at

Olympia, as well as of those celebrated at the Isthmus of Corinth, at Nemea, Delphi, and, indeed, in all the important towns of Greece. They were all of venerable and ancient foundation; several of them dedicated to the Olympian Jupiter, and one was in the beginning probably not more esteemed than another. The Olympic games, like the others, were at first celebrated at unequal intervals of time, on private and special occasions, and rather in compliance with custom than in obedience to any divine ordinance.

The occasion of the establishment of the Olympic games as a religious festival, to be observed at stated intervals, and taking precedence of all others in glory and honor, is as follows:—

Iphitus, King of Elis, and a descendant of Hercules, seeing with sorrow the calamities of his country, then torn in pieces by war and wasted by pestilence, consulted the oracle at Delphi for a remedy. The Pythoness told him that the indignation of Jupiter, to whom the Olympian games were dedicated, and of Hercules, the hero who had instituted them, was drawn down on the people by their non-observance of the festival. The safety of Greece depended on the immediate reestablishment of the games. She ordered the king, in union with the Eleans, his subjects, to restore the celebration of the festival, and to proclaim a truce to all cities desirous of taking part in it. She also commanded the other tribes of Greece to submit thenceforth to the directions and authority of the Eleans in establishing and ordering the games. All this took place seven hundred and seventy-six years before the birth of Christ. They were bidden to perform the games "in accordance with three things," which they interpreted to mean, in accordance with days, months, and years. They at once set about dividing time into years and months, and arranged the interval of celebration, called the Olympiad, as once in five years.

Pausanias, in his travels through Greece, describes the temples, statues, groves, etc., consecrated to Jupiter at Olympia. The temple of the god was of the Doric order, built of beautiful marble, on a consecrated area, set apart and dedicated to Jupiter by Hercules himself. The roof, pediments,

and cornice were richly adorned with all manner of gilded vases, golden shields, complicated pieces of sculpture, representing chariot-races, battles between Centaurs and Lapithæ, the labors of Hercules, besides single figures of Victory, Hercules, and Jupiter. Within the brazen gates of the temple stand statues of King Iphitus and his wife. But the most magnificent feature of the temple was the famous statue of the Olympian Jove himself, composed of gold and ivory,—the matchless work of Phidias. The god is seated on a throne, with a crown of wild olive on his head. In his right hand he bears a crowned statue of Victory, and in his left a sceptre of exquisite workmanship, bearing an eagle perched on it. The sandals and robe of the god are of gold, and the robe is wrought with all sorts of animals and flowers, especially lilies. The throne is beautified with gold and precious stones, ivory and ebony, paintings of animals, and many sculptured figures, dancing Victories, and other appropriate subjects. The walls enclosing the throne are in part stained sky-blue, and in part painted with heroic and mythological scenes. There is lack of space for describing the wonderful beauty of the surroundings of this statue. Quintilian said that the artist seemed to have added reverence to religion itself, so nearly did the majesty of his work approach to that of the Divinity. The Eleans tell us that, when Phidias had completed his work, he begged of Jupiter himself to give some token of his approbation, if he was pleased with the statue, and that immediately the pavement was struck with a thunderbolt from the god. A brazen urn, set on that spot of the pavement as a memorial, was still there at the time of the visit of Pausanias.

Before this temple is the grove of wild olives which encloses the Olympic Stadium,—the scene of the sacred games. By the temple flows the river Alpheus. An oracle of Olympian Jupiter once spoke from this temple. It owed much of its wealth and magnificence to the celebration of the games, and, consequently, to the offerings and donations brought thither from all parts of Greece. There were at Olympia many temples of other deities, also, and buildings called Treasuries, erected by the various States, for the reception of presents they had vowed to Jupiter, as well as for the storing of the money which was to defray the expense of the solemn sacrificer paid at the time of

the games. Pausanias gives a very long list of statues of gods and heroes, of Olympic conquerors, emperors, and kings, even of horses and chariots that had won in the race, that were standing at the time of his visit in the sacred enclosure about the temple, and in the grove of wild olives. Their number was countless, and their value inestimable. They were made of the richest materials, and by artists that have never since been equalled. It is very difficult, at the present day, to form any just idea of the magnificence of Olympia, of the pomp and splendor of the sacred games, which reflected their august and revered character upon those who won the crowns at the festival, and of the liberality and devotion of the Greeks in what related to their national glory and the worship of their gods.

The candidates for admission to these games were obliged to undergo a long and severe training in their gymnasiums at home, and afterward at Elis. The judges at home addressed an exhortation to those who were departing for Elis. The bade the candidates, if they had exercised themselves in a manner suitable to the dignity of the contest toward which they were looking, and were conscious of no action that could betray a slothful, cowardly, and ungenerous disposition, to proceed boldly; but, if not, to depart.

After their arrival in Olympia, at the opening of the games, a herald publicly proclaimed the names of all the candidates, with the exact number of competitors in each exercise. For a candidate to decline the combat after having declared himself a competitor, and having in that public manner defied his antagonists, was considered a kind of desertion worthy of disgrace and punishment.

Immediately after the herald had thus named over the candidates, who appeared and answered to their names, they were obliged to undergo an examination, consisting of the following questions: Were they freemen? Were they Grecians? Were their characters free from all infamous and immoral stains?

They judged that the fact of being a freeman ought to preserve those who valued such an estate from incurring, by any unworthy action, the punishment due to slaves. All irregular, corrupt, or fraudulent practices were deemed the fruit of servile minds.

On the point of nationality the Eleans were very scrupulous. Alexander the

Great entered himself as a candidate for the Olympian crown, but was objected to as being a Macedonian. No one was admitted who could not declare his father and mother, or on whose lineage rested the suspicion of a taint. Hence was derived the law requiring the candidates to enter, together with their own names, those of their fathers and their countries.

The last of the three questions we have mentioned was asked in the following manner: A herald, having proclaimed silence, laid his hand on the head of the candidate, and, leading him in that manner into the Stadium, demanded, in a loud voice, of the whole assembly, "Is there any one who can accuse this man of any crime? Is he a robber or a slave? Is he wicked or depraved in his life or morals?"

The candidate, having passed with honor this public inquiry into his life and character, was led to the altar of Jupiter, to swear that he would not be guilty of any fraud or indirect action, or any breach of the laws of the games. He swore, also, that during the past ten months he had performed all that was required to prepare himself to contend for the Olympic crown.

The candidate was led from the altar of his oath to the Stadium by his parents, countrymen, and masters of the gymnasium at home. His friends would not fail to encourage him to the combat by an earnest exhortation.

In the Stadium he was left entirely to himself, to stand or fall by his own merit. The hopes, fears, and excitement, however, of his relatives and friends, who sympathized eagerly with him in every turn and change of the combat, were allowed to break out into exhortations or applause. Whoever lost the crown had the consolation of having been judged worthy to contend for it. The honor of having striven for the victory abundantly outweighed the disgrace of losing it.

The conqueror's first reward, which was also the pledge of many following honors and privileges, was the crown of branches of wild olive.

To enhance the value of these chaplets, and render them worthy of these holy games, the Eleans claimed that the tree from which they were always taken had been brought to Olympia by Hercules, from the country of the Hyperboreans,—a people unknown to geographers, ancient or modern. As there were many plants of the same kind growing within the area

sacred to Jupiter at Olympia, any one of which might lay claim to being the one brought thither by Hercules, all doubts had been obviated by the oracle, which had indicated to King Iphitus the veritable tree of Hercules. This tree was immediately enclosed by a wall, and was henceforth distinguished by the name of Calli-Stephanos, the Tree of the Crowns of Glory. It was put under the protection of certain nymphs, and an altar was erected to them, near the consecrated plant.

The crowns and branches of palm which the conquerors received with the crowns, and carried as emblems of the unconquerable vigor of their minds and bodies, were exposed to view upon a tripod, and were set before the contestants to excite their emulation.

Many pleasing testimonials from friends and spectators attended the victories, and were received before the award of the crown. Such were the acclamations and applause of the vast assembly, the warm congratulations of friends, and even the extorted salutations of the opponents and conquered. These broke out immediately upon the victory, and were as balm to their wounds and cordial to their toils, and enabled them to wait with patience,—perhaps many an hour,—after a hardly won battle, standing in the Stadium naked and exposed to the rays of the sun, before receiving the crown.

For, although they were entitled to receive the crown and palm at once, they were supposed to have waited till noon for the award, or, if they had won after the rest and refreshment taken at noon, their crowns were not received till evening.

The giving of the crown was attended with a great deal of solemn ceremony. The conquerors marched in order to the Tribunal of Judges, where a herald, taking the crowns of olive from the tripod, placed one on the head of each of the conquerors, and, giving into their hands branches of palm, led them, thus adorned, along the Stadium, preceded by trumpets, proclaiming also, with a loud voice, their names, the names of their fathers and their countries, and the exercise in which each had gained the victory. As they passed along the Stadium they were again saluted with acclamations, and with a shower of herbs and flowers poured on them from every side.

The last duty performed by the conqueror at Olympia was the payment of sacrifice to the twelve gods, and especially

to Olympian Jupiter. The sacrifices were performed with so much magnificence as frequently to feast the whole assembled multitude. The conquerors were also sometimes feasted by their friends, or by the Eleans themselves, who had a banqueting hall for that purpose in Olympia. At these entertainments were sung by a chorus, accompanied with musical instruments and alternate dancing, odes composed for the occasion in honor of the hero. Every conqueror, however, was not so fortunate as to count a poet among his friends; nor had every one the means of buying an ode, upon which the poets set a very high price. There is a story that the friends of Pytheas, a conqueror, came to Pindar, desiring him to compose an ode upon the occasion. But the poet demanded so large a sum of money that they told him they preferred for that sum to erect a statue of brass to their friend, rather than to purchase a copy of verses; and they left the poet. But they soon changed their opinion, and, returning to Pindar, paid him his price. Pindar began his ode by setting forth that he was no sculptor, no maker of images which could not stir from their pedestals, and which were to be seen only by those who took pains to go to the place where they were erected; but that he could make a poem which should fly over the whole earth, and publish in every place that Pytheas had won the crown. Pindar thus expressed for poetry the same preference given by the friends of Pytheas, and the ode still sings the hero's praises.

To perpetuate the glory of the victory the name of the conqueror was entered on a register, which was never to be destroyed. The name of an especially distinguished conqueror was often used to designate the Olympiad from the day of his victory.

The last honor granted to the conqueror at Olympia was the erection of his statue in the sacred grove of Jupiter. They were restrained from indulging their vanity by any misrepresentation of the size, shape, or comeliness of their bodies. The examination of the statues was as exact as that of the candidates themselves, and if they were found offending against the truth, in any particular, they were thrown down. A was customary with the conquerors to represent in their statues the attitudes, costumes, or implements with which they had gained the crown. Thus, the statue of Sadas, a racer, made by Myron, was formed in the very action of running, and

not only expressed the attitude of the body, but of the mind also, with its hope, expectation, and joy, in so lively a manner, that a Greek poet, in a beautiful epigram descriptive of it, declared that it was already leaping from the pedestal to seize the crown.

But the conquerors were not always content to consecrate themselves only in this manner to Fame and Jupiter; they sometimes set up statues of their charioteers, and even of their horses; and sometimes they dedicated and left in the sacred grove the very gilded chariots in which they had won the race.

Having left Olympia, and entered his own country, the conqueror found still more honors, privileges, and rewards awaiting him. The public honors paid him on his entrance to his own city were very great, equalling in glory and in pomp the ceremonies of a Roman Triumph, which, doubtless, was derived in its origin from the splendid entries of these victors into their cities. It was customary that a part of the city wall should be thrown down, and that the victor should enter through the breach. By this ceremony it was signified that a city inhabited by men who could thus go forth and overcome, had little need of walls. The hero entered in a splendid chariot, drawn by four horses, attended by a great multitude of his fellow-citizens, as many of whom as possible rode also in chariots, drawn each by two white horses. The conqueror wore purple or scarlet garments, richly embroidered with gold. Before him marched heralds, bearing the crowns he had won, and proclaiming the nature of his victories. Lighted lamps were borne, before him; the whole city wore crowns and ribbons; and, as the hero passed through the streets, herbs, leaves, flowers, garlands, and ribbons were cast to the ground before him, while the multitude hailed him with shouts.

The whole triumphal cavalcade formed a religious procession, leading to the temple, and ending in sacrifices of thanksgiving.

All these honors and privileges serve to show the high opinion entertained by the Greeks of the utility of gymnastic exercises. They believed such exercises to be highly useful to war, as tending to increase the strength and agility of the body. The principal object of each of the petty States into which Greece was divided was to make as large as possible the number of men able to be brought into the field in

case of need. No one was exempted from serving his country in war, and every man of free condition was trained from his youth in such a manner as to best fit him for such service; that is, in learning and practising gymnastic exercises. This care to render their bodies healthy and robust was even carried to an evil excess. They came at length, in some instances, to mistake the means for the end. By overrating the victories won at the public games, and rewarding the conquerors with greater honors than were reasonably due, they at length caused the victories to appear to many as the true objects of their ambition. Instead of becoming good soldiers, many were only eminent athletes. The crowns, at first intended to be won only by qualities that should be, at the same time, of the greatest value to the country, at length fell most frequently into the hands of men unfit for military duty, and devoted to athletics alone as a profession. Any man of noble spirit disdained to enter the lists with a professed prize-fighter. Thus, to quote from Pindar, the Greeks, neglecting the mark, and aiming to cast their arrow too far, overstrained and broke the bow.

The term *athletic* was applied by the Greeks to that exaggeration of their beloved gymnastics into a profession, which they regarded with strong, high-bred contempt. The Greeks were ordinarily fond enough of lucre; but to their credit be it said, that money prizes were far beneath the dignity of their national games. These were all crown contests. At the Isthmian games the crowns were of pine leaves, the Nemean crown was of parsley, and the Pythian crown of bay. When the Sybarites tried to establish games in opposition to these, offering golden crowns as prizes, they failed miserably, and brought on themselves the scorn of the nation. By the meanness of their prizes the Greeks were given to understand that praise and glory were the proper rewards of worthy actions. That a service to the State should be repaid by what has no intrinsic value, but is merely an emblem and evidence of the good deed, and thus entitles one to the esteem and applause of his fellow-citizens, is a most efficient means of influence to any State. How powerful an incentive the love of glory is must be seen by every noble mind, by the inward light of its own native virtue; but it must be constantly enforced by education and example upon narrow and low minds.

The close alliance of the arts of poetry

and sculpture with the national games secured an æsthetic education of the highest kind to the whole people. We cannot avoid a deep regret that our physical exercises are so comparatively separated from the higher influences. A purse, or a medal, or badge of great value, is far more vaunted and valued than some prize of modest expense, but of great honor, and either embodying or bringing with it great artistic value. Any one who throws influence in the opposite scale, and endeavors to make mercenary and vulgar motives give place to a genuine love of honor and of the beautiful in art, is doing a much-needed service to the public mind. We are too mercenary and devoid of ideality. In some few instances, however, we have had prizes offered that, for taste, emblematic significance, and appropriateness, we may feel proud of. We might mention yachting, canoeing, and gunning prizes which are unique, and have true artistic expression. Mr. L. S. Ipsen is one of our most successful artists in seizing that subtle essence which makes a prize special and artistic. He succeeds in infusing the masculine elements of the old Norse and Celtic trophies into the more softened and graceful products of Greek art.

We commonly neglect another means of influence of which the Greeks made full use. For success in gymnastic or athletic pursuits of any kind we are, in the nature of the case, as much obliged as they were to observe sobriety and temperance in every respect in order to secure success. These must, of course, contribute greatly to our health and vigor of body and mind. But, further than these necessary virtues are concerned, athletic exercises have nothing to do with our moral characters. But we must remember that the Greeks admitted no one to contend for the crown, however otherwise well, qualified to win it, who was guilty of any crime, or depraved in morals. And it was not sufficient for the candidate himself to have a character free from any scandalous imputation, unless he could also clear those of his parents and ancestors. Thus, a spot on the reputation was not a thing that would fade out or be overlooked in a few years, but became a family disgrace and sorrow.

This influence in favor of strict morality was very wide. There were in Greece four sacred games, and innumerable others, of the same nature, in every town and city, whose prizes were all honorable. Consequently many families in every

Grecian State were for ages kept sober, temperate, and chaste, by an ambition which must have been almost universal.

Pindar expressed the desire of many in the following lines:—

“Some pray for gold, others for land

without limit. Never, O Zeus, be such a disposition mine! but may I adhere to guileless ways of life, that when I am dead I may attach to my children a name that is not of evil report.”

H. H. M.

A SALT BREEZE.

WHEN one first catches the smell of the sea, his lungs seem involuntarily to expand the same as they do when he steps into the open air after long confinement in-doors. On the beach he is simply emerging into a larger and more primitive out-of-doors. The walls of his earthly house are taken down, and there before him is aboriginal space, and the breath of it thrills and dilates his body. He stands at the open door of the continent and eagerly drinks the large air. This breeze savors of the original element; it is a breath out of the morning of the world, bitter, but so fresh and tonic! He has taken salt grossly and at second-hand all his days; now let him inhale it at the fountain-head, and let its impalpable crystals penetrate his spirit and prick and chafe him into new activity.

We Americans are great eaters of salt, probably the largest eaters of salt and drinkers of water of any of the civilized peoples; the amount of the former consumed annually *per capita* being more than double the amount consumed in England and on the Continent; and the quantity of water (with ice in it) we drink is in still greater proportions. Our dry climate calls for the water, and probably our nervous, dyspeptic tendencies for the salt. Hence our need, as a people, of that great tonic and sedative, the sea-shore. In Biblical times, new-born babies were rubbed with salt. I suppose it stimulated them and quickened their circulation. American babes are not thus rubbed, and there comes a time with most of us when we feel that the operation cannot be put off any longer, and we rush down to the sea to have the service performed by the old nurse herself, and the pores of both mind and body well cleansed and opened.

Nothing about the sea is more impressive than its ceaseless rocking. Without either wind or tide, it would probably be restless and oscillating, because it registers

and passes along the fluctuations of the earthy crust. The solid ground is only relatively solid. The scientists, under the direction of the British Association, who sought to determine the influence of the moon upon the earth's crust, found, as soon as their instruments were delicate enough to register the influence of that body, many other agencies at work. They could find no really solid spot to plant their instruments upon. Thus, over the area of a high barometer, the earth's crust bent beneath the weight of the column of air. At sea the waters are pressed down. The waves of the atmospheric ocean, as they sweep around the earth in vast alternations, cause both land and water to rise and fall as beneath the tread of some striding Colossus. This unequal barometric pressure over the Atlantic area would, doubtless, of itself keep its equilibrium perpetually disturbed. Thus, “the cradle endlessly rocking” of which our poet sings, is not only bestrode by the winds and swung by the punctual hand of the tides, but the fairest summer weather gives it a nudge, and the bending floor beneath it contributes an impulse. Its rocking is secured beyond peradventure. Darwin seems to think it is the cradle where the primordial life of the globe had its infancy. Whether or not it rocked man, or the germ of man, into being, there can be little doubt that it will continue to rock after he and all things else are wrapped in the final sleep.

Its grandest swing, I found during a couple of weeks' sojourn upon the coast, is often upon a fair day. Local winds and storms make it spiteful and angry. They break up and scatter the waves; but some quiet morning you saunter down to the beach and find the sea beating its long roll. The waves run parallel to the shore and come in with great regularity and deliberation, falling upon it in a succession of