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EMINENT ATHLETES.

No. XXXVI.—DONALD DINNIE, OF STONEHAVEN.

THIS week we have great pleasure in laying before our readers a brief outline of the athletic career of one of the most successful and distinguished all-round athletes that ever lived. When it is stated that during the last twenty years he has defeated all comers at running, jumping, wrestling, weight lifting, tossing the caber, putting the shot, throwing the hammer, and other manly outdoor sports calling forth strength and agility, both in this country and in America, some idea of his great prowess may be imagined. In fact, wherever the English tongue is spoken, the name of this Scotch champion of champions is as well known and familiar to the ear as "household words." His athletic performances and victories, however, are so numerous, being over 3,000 in number, that any attempt to give them in detail and do them justice in the small space at our command is simply impossible, and will therefore confine ourselves to those which we think will be of interest to the athletic readers of this journal.

Donald Dinnie was born at Aboyne, a pretty little town in the county of Aberdeen, Scotland, on the 10th day of June, 1837. In height he stands fully 6ft. in his socks, and, being exceedingly well developed, when in good athletic trim he generally scales 15½st. in his ordinary walking costume. To most readers this weight may appear too excessive for any person having pretensions to be considered a champion athlete, but to give some idea of Dinnie's Herculean yet graceful figure, it may not be out of place to state that round the chest he measures 46½in., round the upper arm, or biceps, 16in., round the thigh 26in., and round the calf 17in. In fact, he is so symmetrically and proportionately built, both above and below, that any painter or sculptor might be proud of him as a model for a Hercules. Whilst yet a youth, he was noted for many miles round his native place for his skill and strength in all manner of athletic games. At sixteen years of age he left school to be bound apprentice to a stone mason, to which trade he served four years, and whilst learning his business he employed his spare time in practising those manly sports and pastimes of his native country which have since made his name so famous. At this early stage of his athletic career he soon learned to put the 16lb. shot a distance of 37ft., and to throw the 16lb. hammer over 80ft.; and when he was twenty years of age he was able to hold his own against the best men of the district in which he lived. In 1857 he made a clean sweep of all the first prizes at the Banchory games, putting the 16lb. shot 42½ft., and the 16lb. hammer, at a stand throw, over 100ft, and beating all the most noted athletes in the north of Scotland. In 1861 we find him competing at the Montrose athletic sports, held on the 8th of August, where he won the first prize for putting the shot, throwing the hammer, tossing the caber, and tied with the celebrated jumper, A. Milne, of Forfar, in the high jump, both men clearing 5ft. 11in. on turf, which, we may remark *en passant*, is the best performance on record in Scotland, and also ties with the best amateur performance yet accomplished in the kingdom.

During the next ten years, from 1861 to 1871, he visited all the principal athletic gatherings throughout the kingdom, winning prizes for all manner of games, and at the Turriff and Forfar sports he again succeeded in clearing 5ft. 11in. at the run high leap. In 1868, at the Braemar athletic games, he won the all-comers' prize for putting the 28lb. shot, accomplishing the best performance on record with a put of 31ft. 7in., at a fair stand and on level ground. Two years after, in March, 1870, he was matched against M'Fee, of Birmingham, for 100l. and the championship of the world at putting the 36lb. shot in the Olympian style—that is, using both right and left hands, and the best aggregate dis-

ance to win). Dinnie won at 48ft. 6in., his opponent's totals only making 41ft. 4in. A short time after this match, having been repeatedly invited, he sailed for America, and visiting all the chief towns in the States, he gave the Yankees a touch of his prowess by beating all comers at putting the shot, throwing the hammer, tossing the caber, leaping, &c., and wound up a most successful journey by winning the champion gold medals offered at New York, Boston, and Montreal, the acquisition of which trophies gained him the championship of America. Returning home again, we next find him on March 11, 1871, at Dundee, competing in a match against J. Fleming, of Blair Athole, to whom he conceded 7ft. in throwing the 16lb. hammer, for stakes amounting to 90l. Dinnie came off victorious with a throw of 123ft. 11in., which up to that time was the best ever accomplished, Fleming's only measuring 116ft. 3in. On March 18th, or a few days afterwards, they again met to try conclusions at Aberdeen, on which occasion Fleming was allowed 13ft., and the stakes were increased to 100l. This concession, however, proved too great for the champion, as he lost by 1ft. 4in., Fleming's best throw measuring 115ft. 11in., and that of Dinnie's 127ft. 7in. This victory so pleased Fleming and his friends, that later on in the same year he was again matched against Dinnie for 100l. on the following conditions:—Fleming to receive 13ft. at throwing the 16lb. hammer, and 20in. at putting the 16lb. shot, and to wrestle three out of five falls in the Scotch style. Bearing in mind, no doubt, the result of his last match with the Blair Athole crack, Dinnie took every precaution to get himself properly fit, and the consequence was that when the day arrived he was in splendid form. Under such favourable circumstances, although a grand and exciting struggle was anticipated, Dinnie won the three events with consummate ease, Fleming not having the slightest chance in either. Dinnie threw the 16lb. hammer 134ft. 2in., and Fleming 111ft. 7in.; and in putting the 16lb. Dinnie covered 48ft., and Fleming 46ft. 6in. In the wrestling contests Dinnie threw Fleming three times in succession, thus winning the match easily, and accomplishing the most remarkable and meritorious performances upon record up to that date. About this time he could beat any man in the north of Scotland at sprint running from 100 to 300 yards, but his *forte* was undoubtedly hurdle racing. As a timber jumper he had no equal for many years, and by his achievements was universally admitted to be the best man at that line of business in the country. It is not often we find such a giant as Dinnie A 1 at both running and jumping, but he is certainly an exception, as he has been known to clear easily over 20ft. However, he at length received a check in his successful career. At the Levan games, in Fifeshire, in 1871, he had to play second fiddle in the running long jump to Tom Carruthers, of Yetholme, the celebrated professional sprint and quarter-mile runner, who, without any artificial aid whatever, cleared 23ft. 4in. on level turf, which was a grand performance, and the best, we believe, ever accomplished. On the same day Dinnie won the first prize for the hop, step, and jump contest, covering 43½ft., which is also a first-class performance. Some few months after this, whilst competing in the running long jump at the Rothsay games, he slipped and fell heavily, breaking his left leg just above the ankle joint. This unfortunate accident laid him up for some time, but his naturally robust health soon brought him round again. Ever since, however, there has been a weakness in the limb, which has interfered many a time with his success in both leaping and running.

After his recovery, finding no one worthy of his steel in his native land, he paid a second visit to America, this time in company with his quondam opponent, J. Fleming, of Blair Athole, and between them they managed to clear out all comers at most towns throughout the United States. Dinnie won over sixty first

prizes for running and leaping, and over one hundred for feats of strength and skill, such as tossing, putting, throwing, wrestling, &c. At Ottawa, Canada, he was presented with three handsome gold medals, and once more earned the proud title of champion of America at putting the shot, throwing the hammer, and tossing the caber. After a most successful tour, they both returned home, and were soon afterwards matched again, Dinnie allowing Fleming 13ft. at throwing the 16lb. hammer, and 18in. at putting the 16lb. shot. The match came off at Couper Angus on the 1st of August, 1874, when Dinnie once more defeated Fleming easily, and, as if to prove that he had no rival in such feats of strength, he on this occasion excelled all his previous efforts. The result of the contest was as follows:—Dinnie threw the hammer a distance of 138ft., Fleming's throw measuring 121ft. 1in.; and at putting the shot. Dinnie covered 49ft. 4in., and Fleming exactly 48ft. Considering this feat was accomplished on perfectly level turf, standing at a mark, it is without doubt the best performance on record, either professional or amateur; and it must be understood that all the distances which have been mentioned were cleared by the now universal style adopted in Scotland, namely, from a fair stand at a mark, no run being allowed. By this mode 100ft. must certainly be called a first-class throw, and makes Dinnie's extraordinary performance appear impossible. By the turning round method, the run not being limited, as in vogue at the champion and University meetings, he has often thrown the 16lb. hammer over 160ft., and no doubt with practice could have beaten even that great distance, but as the run was not allowed in Scotland he very seldom practised it. At the Crieff Highland games last year he appeared in great form, and did another wonderful performance. Entering the hammer-throwing handicap he was of course placed at scratch, and had to concede liberal starts to all his opponents, but he proved quite equal to the occasion and won easily. He threw a 20lb. hammer 104ft. at a fair stand on level ground, and beat his nearest antagonist by fully 10ft. His Manchester friends had the opportunity of witnessing several of his feats of strength at the first Highland Festival held at Pomona last year, when he again distinguished himself, beating all easily who competed against him at putting the shot, throwing the hammer, tossing the caber, and wrestling.

It may be stated that on several occasions at athletic meetings he has put the 16lb. shot from 50ft. to 55ft. on turf, but of course much down hill; and in a similar manner he has put the 22lb. stone over 40ft. and 42ft. At throwing the weight he has always vanquished his opponents; and he has accomplished the best performance on record at throwing a 56lb. weight by the ring, the weight not exceeding 9in. long and the ring 4in., in all 13in. With such a weight, standing still at the mark, he has been known to send it 28ft. 4in., and a 28lb. weight, also by the ring, a distance of 48ft. 2in., which performances have never been excelled. In all, during his athletic career, which now extends over twenty-one years, he has won fully three thousand first prizes for athletic feats, and also a fair number for rifle shooting, as he adds to his other qualifications that of being an excellent marksman. In his collection of prizes he can proudly point to over one hundred champion cups and medals, which we believe no other living athlete can do. This stalwart son of "Auld Scotland," who is very unassuming in his manners, is in the prime of manhood, full of robust health and strength; and although 39 years of age he is still open to put the shot, throw the hammer, use the heaviest dumbbells, toss the caber, or throw weights of any size, against all who may be willing to oppose him. He is now landlord of the Royal Ury Hotel at Stonehaven, the county town of Kincardine, which is noted for its sea-bathing properties, and where can be seen the ancient and dilapidated Castle of Dunnottar. We will conclude this necessarily brief sketch by assuring our English athletes that should any of them take a trip to the Highlands during the summer months, they will find a hearty welcome and every comfort at the establishment over which Donald Dinnie presides, and also find in him a kind and genial host.