

ARTISTIC SKATING IN THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE

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THE return from a sojourn of a year and a half with foreign skaters of the only American champion who has ever qualified in the international style, calls attention to the increasing interest here in this most healthful and invigorating winter sport. American figure skaters are at last waking up to a realization of the anomalous position in which the developments of the last few years have put them. The skating country most favored by nature, and full of the best artistic skating material in the world, is given over to hockey and speed skating. The country that led the world thirty to forty years ago in artistic skating is today the only skating country in the world without any international standing. The story of just how this situation has come about has never been told, but there never was a better time nor the same now.

The figure skating arose almost simultaneously in this country—at Philadelphia, on the Schuylkill, and at Boston, on the Back Bay—it received its great impetus in New York at the time of the invention of the strapless club skate and the formation of the New York Skating Club, in 1863. The skating surfaces then were small, the rock of the skate was small, (that is, ground to a radius of a very small circle), and the enthusiasm of the early skaters was expended on the invention of acrobatic one-foot figures in small, kicked circles.

The style of skating that then prevailed is still characteristic of American figure skating. But Jackson Haines, a New York dancing master, and the most original skater that ever lived, liked neither the style nor the skates. Unlike most of his contemporaries and successors, he did not object to a separate pair of skating boots on which his skates were securely screwed. The popular heel-button clamp skate of to-day, of course, has obvious conveniences. The toe-clamp is perfectly strong; but the narrow heel fastening does not always keep the skate perpendicular, and the front stanchion often transmits to the ice a disturbing thrust from the toe of the boot.

A skater's efficient power is transmitted to the ice by a thrust from the ball of the foot. There's where the skate blade should be supported. Now, when the skate is screwed on, two stanchions are sufficient to support the blade; and a lighter, easier-running, neater skate is possible than with the three stanchions. This kind of skate is ground flat in the middle for big curves, and sharper at the ends for quick turns, with a round, free toe for pirouettes that will not bore into the ice. Jackson Haines took to Europe in the winter of 1864-5; and with it, a captivating personal style, characterized by long graceful curves, quick turns, and fascinating, rhythmical movements harmoniously timed to music. This style rapidly spread all over Europe; and, enriched by contributions from trained experimenters and skillful performers of various nationalities, has been officially adopted by every great skating country except the United States, where it originated.

Now note what follows: In 1869 E. T. Goodrich and Alfred Moe of Chicago took over to Europe the three-stanchion, sharp-pointed club skate, (so that Europeans now have both kinds,) but their triumphant season was cut short by the Franco-Prussian war; for, of course, they were expert on Plimpton rollers, too. In 1874 Goodrich went over again with Callie Curtis, who had won the great diamond championship medal. While they were giving an exhibition at Helsingfors, Finland, (where the world's speed championship of 1910 is to be decided,) in company with Jackson Haines, Haines caught cold and died of pneumonia in a little town near by, and was buried there in the winter of 1875. Callie Curtis is still in Germany. (The Jackson Haines waltz and the Curtis-Goodrich waltz are still fundamental figures in European free skating.) Goodrich is the only one of the three who ever came home, but when he came back in 1885, he retired from skating. Now, if Jackson Haines had ever brought back his big curved rhythmic style, and his easy running, round-toed, two-stanchion skate, America might still be leading the skating world. But, unluckily, American skating fell under less auspicious influences.

In 1886, the year after Goodrich got back, the so-called National Amateur Skating Association of the United States was formed, and for twenty years, organized skating in this country was in the hands of a small group of New York Athletic Club men, who interpreted and revised the schedule, and managed competitions in such a truly National spirit (?) that only once in that time did a competitor from the States not in the "ring" succeed in winning the championship. This unhappy fate of outsiders was not encouraging to the sport; but that might have done little harm, for the great majority of our skaters are and ought to be more interested in the graceful art as a recreation and an accomplishment than as a competitive sport.

Irving Brokaw, Former American Champion, Describes What Is True and "Fake" in This Art of Winter.

The worst effect of this skating policy was that the vast unorganized skaters talent of this country looked in vain all that while for the official formulation of some standard of form and execution. Meanwhile, artistic skating abroad not only grew more popular with all classes of society, but attracted to the study of its limitations and possibilities keen critics and clear expositors, who reduced the art to a practical working system. While, in this country, the pursuit of medals in preference to the development of the art has finally put the N. A. S. A. out of existence, and put American skating, with all its virtues, into a class by itself, the European development of the American style banished in the 60's has become the standard of the world; and the international style is now "new" to most Americans, only because they have not "kept up with the procession."

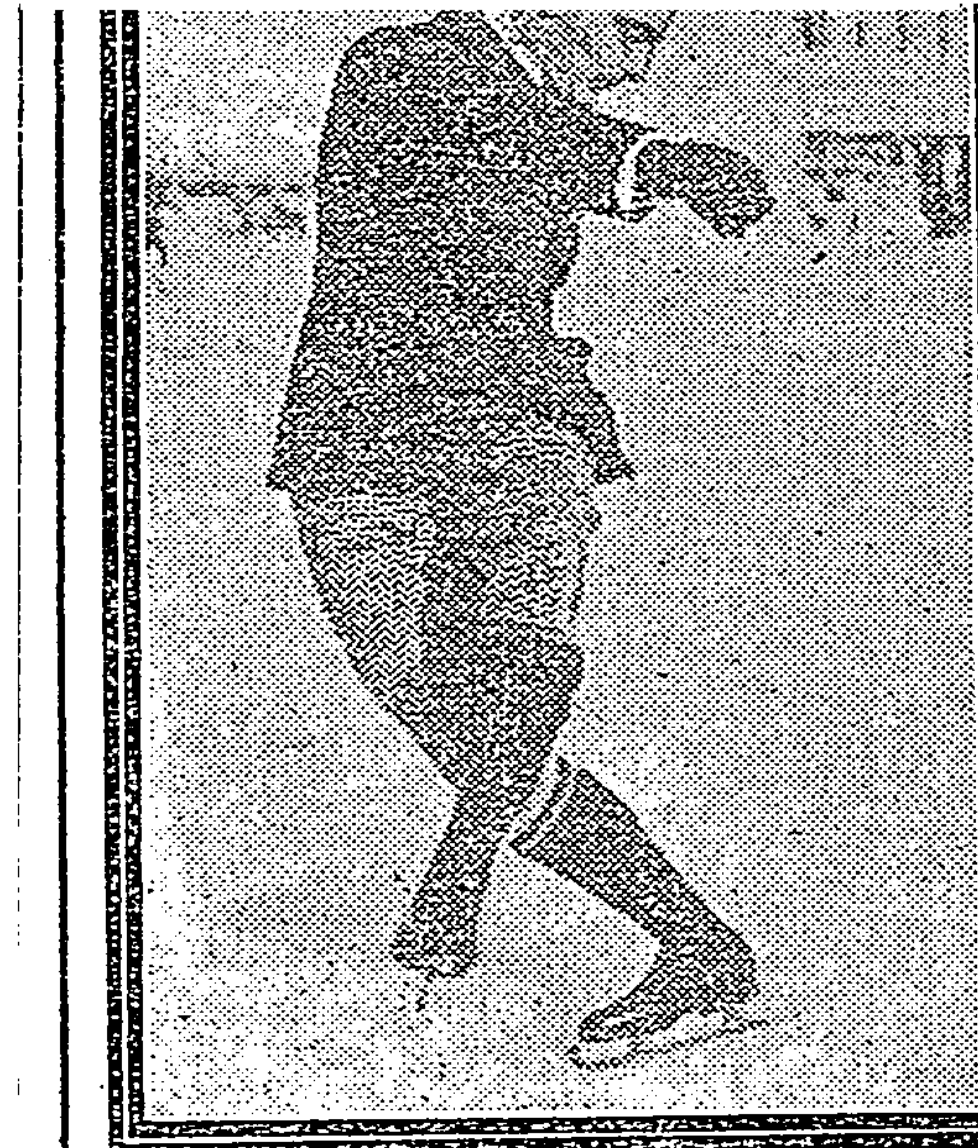
Never came information more timely than that which this book will bring on its arrival this month. What with the opening of new artificial ice rinks in Boston, Chicago, and other cities; with the establishment of tests in the international style at the Cambridge Skating Club, St. Nicholas, Country Club, Brookline, Brae-Burn, and other clubs; and with the prob-



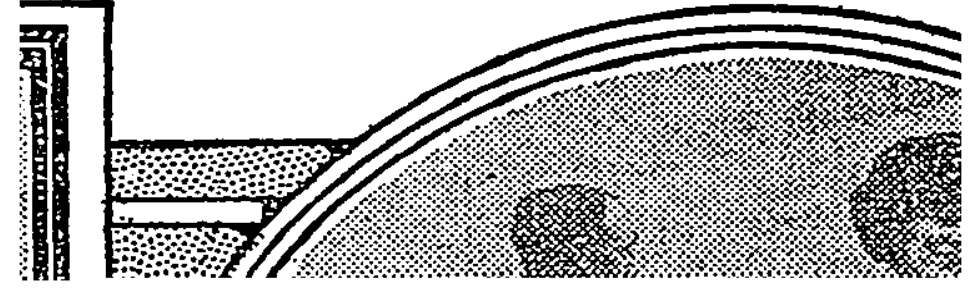
able adoption of the International programme by the International Skating Union of the United States, and a general awakening of interest throughout the country—this book comes in good time to supply the desired technical information. Mr. Brokaw has not only perfected himself in the art both of execution and exposition, but has made the acquaintance of the best experts and expositors on the other side, whose co-operation he has enlisted in producing the most sumptuous and comprehensive book on the international style ever issued. Since the chief cause of the failure of America to hold her own in the skating world has been, not lack of ability, but lack of information as to what has been doing, this authoritative compendium will be particularly useful. It is no longer a question of which style is better—both, of course, have their advantages; but, while our authorities have slept, Europe has obtained, and will maintain, a majority of 12 to 2 (United States and Canada) against any

International compromise. For the benefit of the next generation, therefore, there is nothing to do but to adopt the international system, join the union, hold a world's championship competition over here, train up some young skaters in the skating of the future, and beat the Europeans at their own game. There is a wealth of talent in this country to do it with. This illuminated quarto of Brokaw's will tell the talent clearly how to do it.

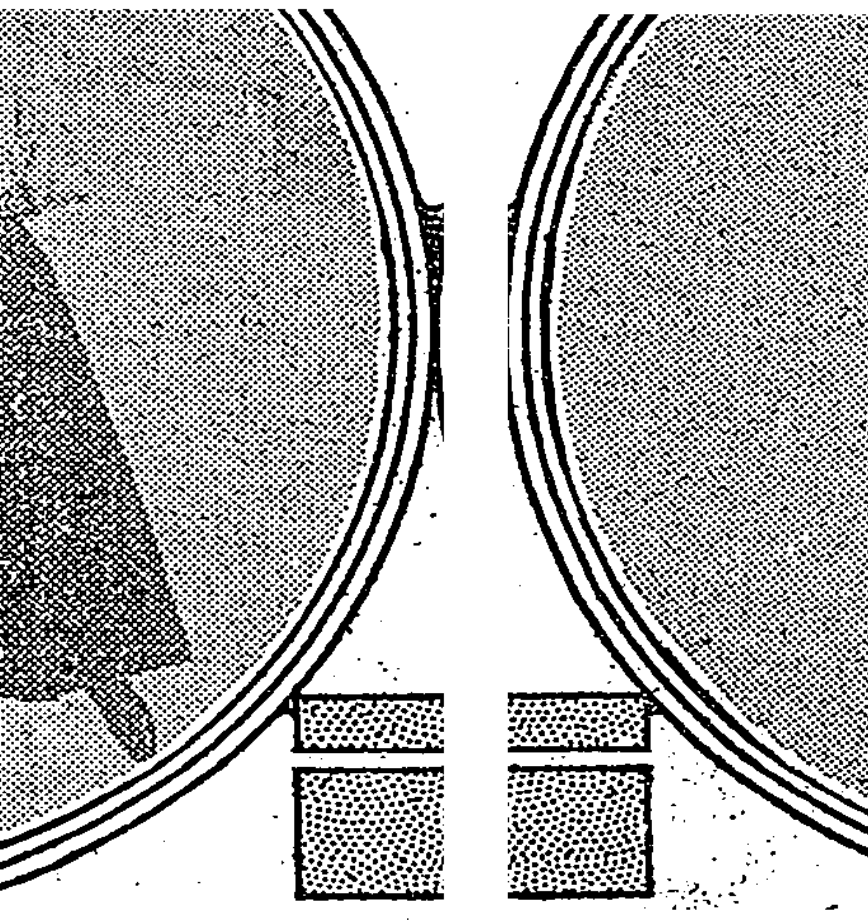
After interesting and edifying chapters on the history of skating, the development of the skate, and the life of Jackson Haines, the author gives the fruits of long, indefatigable study and accurate observation, in clear expositions, such as only one who has been "through the mill" can give, and he makes his verbal expositions of still greater practical value by instantaneous photographs, which his technical experience has taught him to snap at just precisely the critical moment. Every one of the prescribed figures of



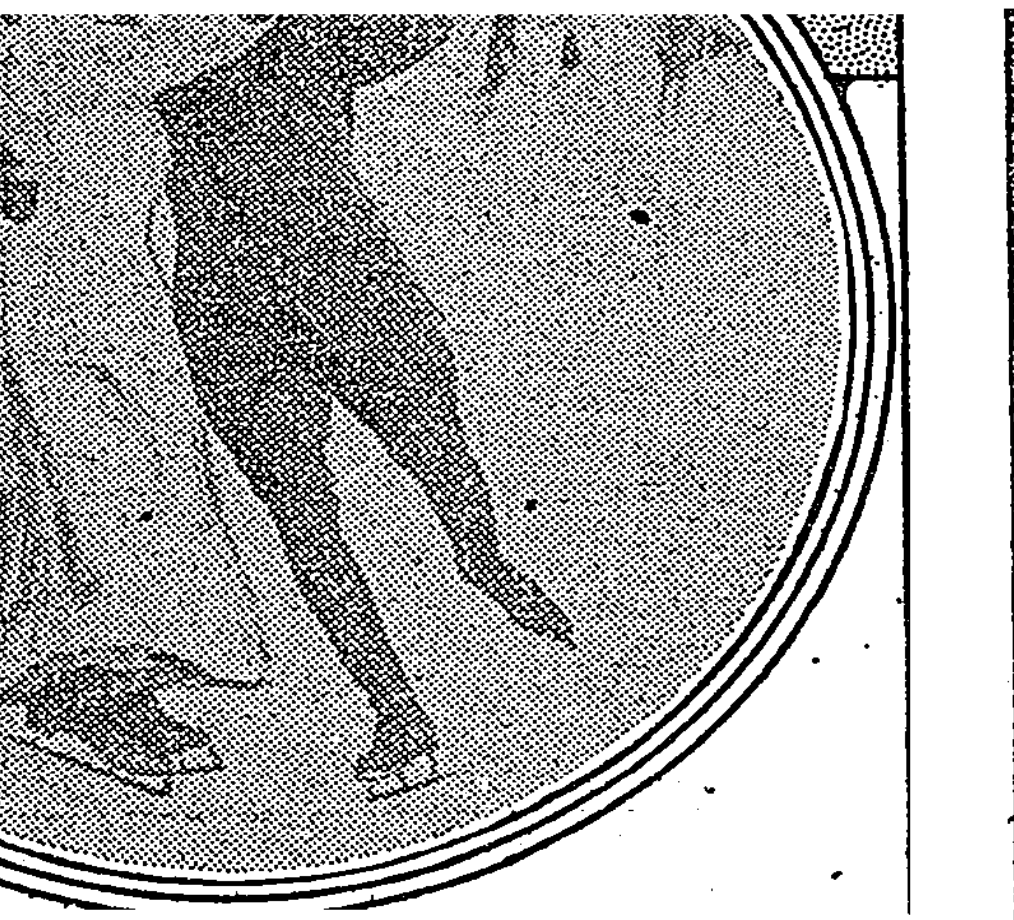
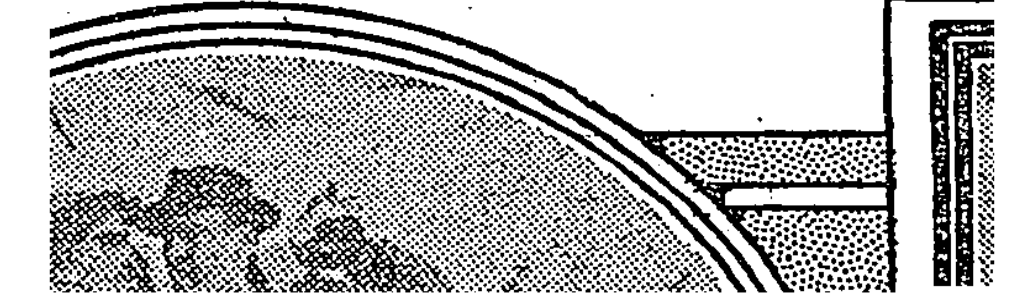
Ulfick Valckow, Sweden, World Champion for Light Time.



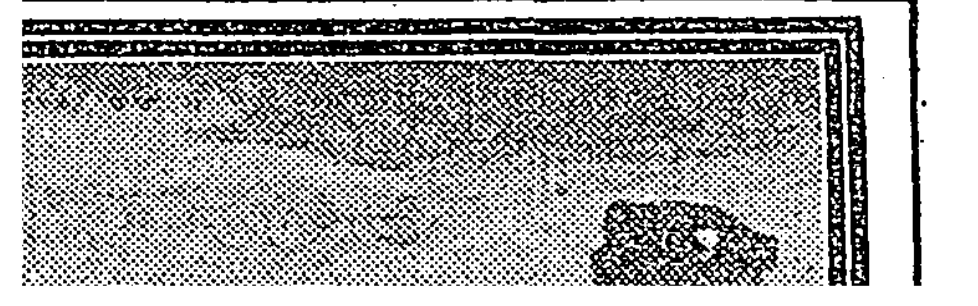
Mr. and Mrs. Tokusora, United Kingdom.



Henning Grotzkow, London with partner in the waltz.



Gustave Hugel, Former World Champion.



Ella Renard-Schmidt, Berlin, World Champion 1909.

In 1899; to-day the champions of the world in pairs are an English pair, Mrs. Johnson was winner of the special figure competition in 1907; and the winner of the woman's championship, the first two years after it was founded in 1905, was Mrs. Edgar Syres of London, the best woman skater in Europe to-day. The popularity of free skating, pair skating, and valseing on the ice is increasing every year; and the organization of Winter sports in Europe would be a sham to Americans, if they knew more about it.

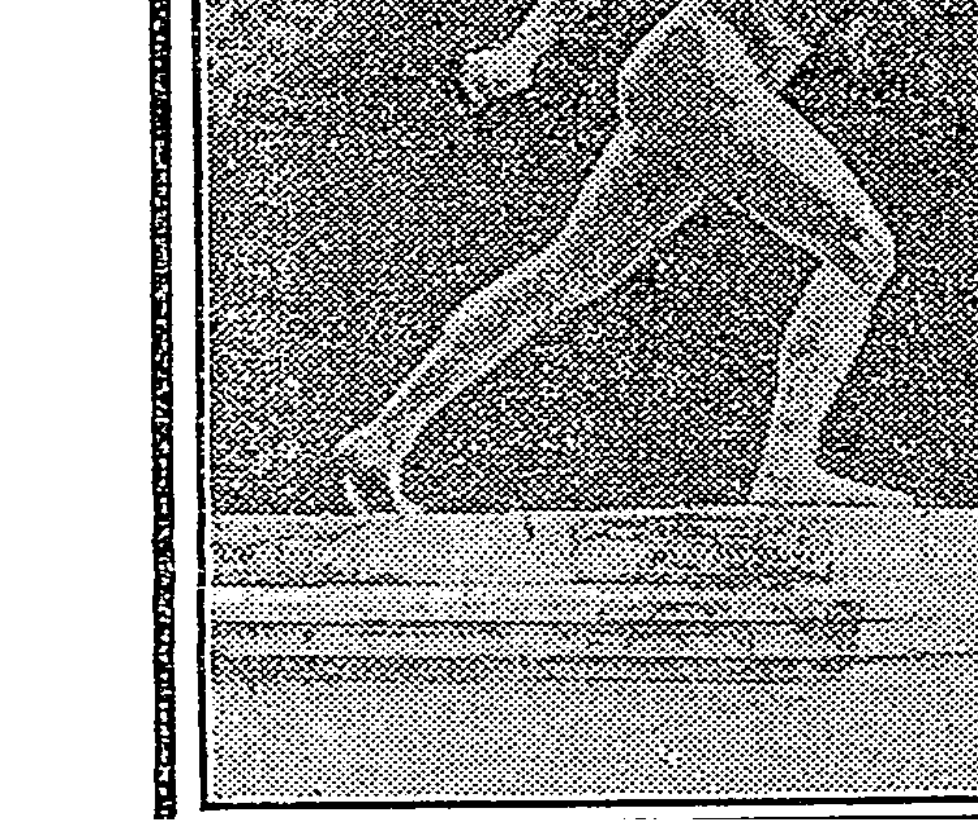


Illustration of the body of International Skating from The Bonquet Book.

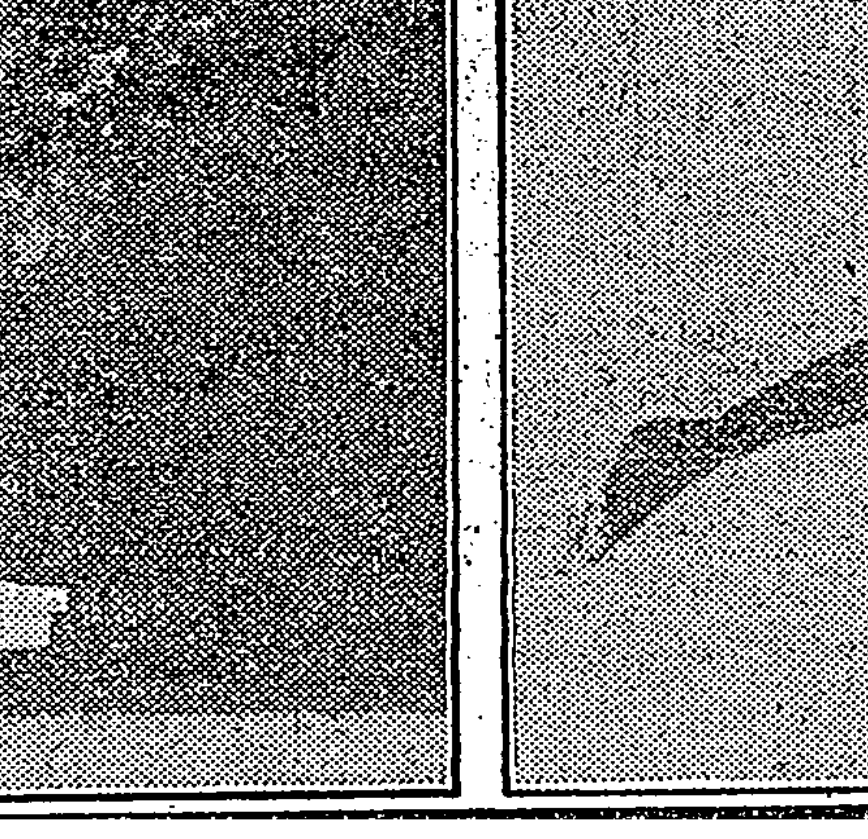


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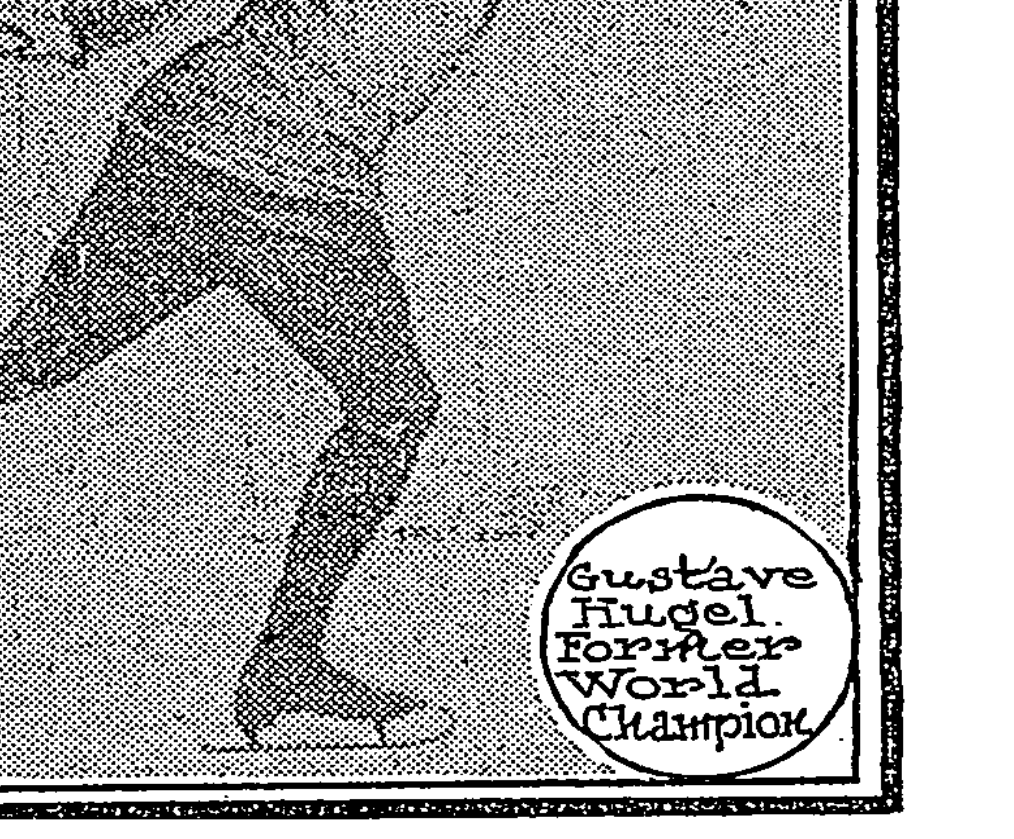
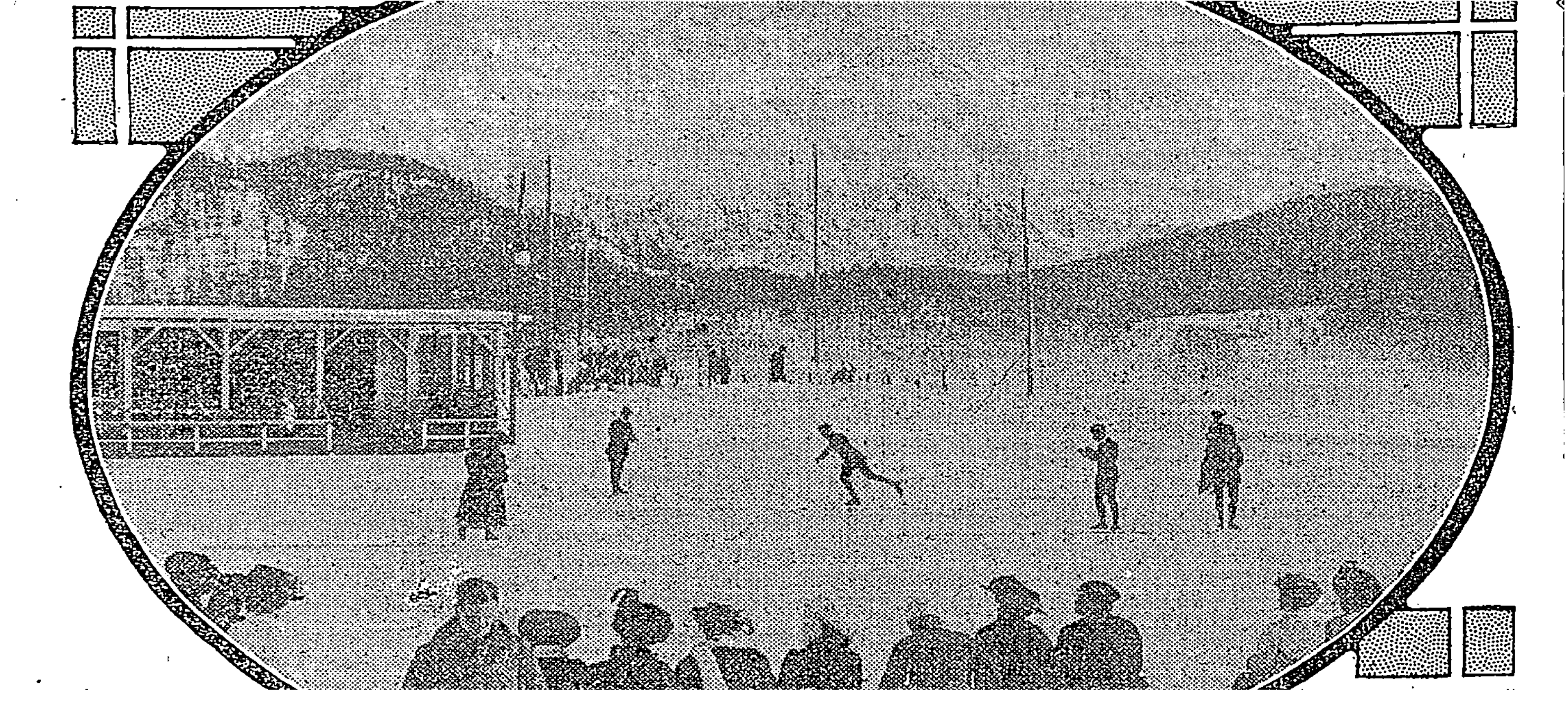


Illustration of the body of International Skating from The Bonquet Book.

The I. S. U. programme is thus elucidated, with a wealth of verbal and graphic material presented with the most artistic resources of the printer's and illustrator's art. The print is large, the margins wide, and the illustrations as beautiful as they are truthful.



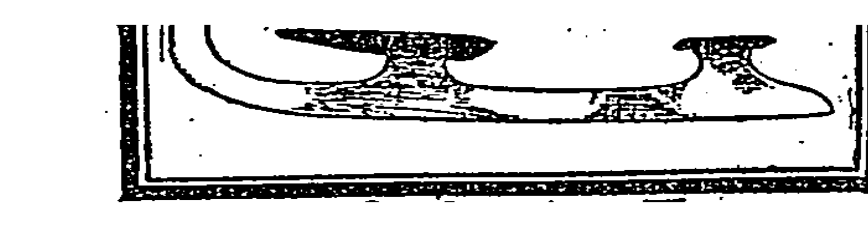
to the international style for pleasure and for further development in the art. Not since the International Skating Union was founded in 1891 (the year after Louis Rubenstein of Montreal competed at St. Petersburg) until last year has an American skater qualified in the international style. Everywhere Irving Brokaw's appearance was watched with interest, and he was received with great cordiality. The skating clubs of various countries extended to him their hospitality, and he was made a member of the exclusive Eisclub of Berlin, the Figure Skating Club of London, and the Friday Morning Club, and the Club des Patineurs of Paris. He gave successful exhibitions in Berlin, London, and the Friday Morning Club at the Palais de Glace, Paris, and skated for charity at the Berlin Eispalast and at the Palace and Celerina Rinks in the Engadine, Switzerland.



A Skating Competition at St. Moritz, Switzerland. Brokaw, Central Figure.

execution of new figures, a silver challenge shield was offered early this year for competitions, from which the compulsory skating of school figures is entirely absent. This competition is in two parts—figure combinations (designs) and free skating. The first winner was K. Ollow of St. Petersburg, at Wlbourg.

This latest development is in sharp contrast with the development of skating in this country. Twice the American schedule, which used to include "everything appertaining to the art," has been revised, to relieve the tediousness of competitions, but instead of keeping the programme all-inclusive, as before, and shortening it for competition purposes by providing for a selection, the revisers reduced it both in quantity and in quality, and robbed it of cutting out the free skating and special figures altogether.



Type of Skate for International Skating.

International method of selecting the prescribed figures beforehand. "It might be wise to enact," writes Mr. G. Sanders of the St. Petersburg Club, in the art of skating, "that the competitors shall have no knowledge beforehand as to which figures will be required for the competition in compulsory skating, and that the matter shall be settled by drawing lots just before the contest. In such contest only those skaters could take part who are thoroughly conversant with the school figures."

Since free-skating, pair-skating, and waltzing on the ice are so much more popular than the school-skating, the author of the later book on the subject very properly devotes much space to these subjects. Nowhere else in skating literature can such clear, specific, and authoritative information be found. Explicit directions are given for the correct execution of the running start, the spirals, jumps, spins, and pirouettes, suggestions for form, many diagrams, several programmes, and rules for tests and competitions.

When I was preparing my "Handbook of Figure-Skating" I sent several pages proofs of special figures to the American champion of that year, requesting a contribution from him. He not only had no contribution to make, but he plainly intimated to me that I had been taken in; that most of those figures were "fakes" and impossible of execution. Mr. George Sanders, an American living abroad, the inventor of most of them, contributes one of the best chapters to "The Art of Skating." He gives, in addition to a list of supplementary elements and lucid directions how to combine them with the school elements into varieties of original designs, a complete list of special figures with dates of first performance, from the first competition of which they formed a part (1870) up to the present year. It is needless to say that my five pages of special figures form only a small part of them.

Miss Harrison of London, one of the most graceful waltzers on the ice, has assisted in giving most timely directions, in text, illustration, and diagrams, for the proper execution of this deservedly popular branch of modern skating, but most shockingly abused by the many attempting it, who haven't learned the rudiments of artistic skating. The most approved rules for holding tests and competitions are given.

The champions of the world in pair-skating, Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Johnson of London, give would-be pair-skaters sound advice in another chapter. Here are a few of their "dictums": "Master the easier school figures until the pair can almost do them 'blindfold'; then practice the same figures hand-in-hand; be not in too much haste to practice free-skating; avoid any movement that does not give the impression of ease and grace; the running start should be studied and practiced with great care; jumps, and pirouettes should be introduced only when the pair are proficient in the easier figures and dance steps; every turn and movement of body, feet and hands should be timed as if actuated by some unerring mechanical device; aim at variety, harmonious combination, continuity, and symmetrical placing and covering the skating surface."

Mr. Brokaw does well to avoid all controversy about the different ways of skating figures; but he gives Dr. Fuchs ample space to explain his theories of skating. Mr. James C. Parrish of Philadelphia Skating Club gives an entertaining chapter on the skating in the sixties; and the book closes with official information about tests, competitions, and judging, skating literature, and the International Skating Union.

A series of illustrated articles, however, now appearing in a Boston weekly, to be reprinted in a pocket-booklet for use on the ice, will give in handy, cheap form timely information to the younger skaters, from whom the experts of the future will be recruited. Already bronze, silver, and gold medals are offered to winners of three tests in the prescribed figures of the International Skating Union by several skating clubs and associations. The programme of tests with diagrams, may be obtained of the Secretaries of the St. Nicholas Skating Club, New York; the Cambridge Skating Club, Mass.; the Country Club, Brookline, Mass.; and the Brae Burn Club, West Newton, Mass. Only those who pass these three tests are eligible for international competitions.

In order to assist in popularizing the "new" skating among the younger generation of skaters, Mr. Irving Brokaw has kindly consented to offer handsome prizes to be skated for this winter—by the boys of the public schools of Greater New York—the contest to take place according to the rules of international form. A copy of the list of figures will be sent to each school. The contest will take place at the St. Nicholas Rink, the exact date to be decided later.

THE ART OF SKATING: Its History and Development, with Practical Directions. By Irving Brokaw, former champion of America, and contributions by eminent skaters in the press. 4to. With over 300 illustrations. Letchworth at the Arden Press and Pettier Lane, London, 1909.