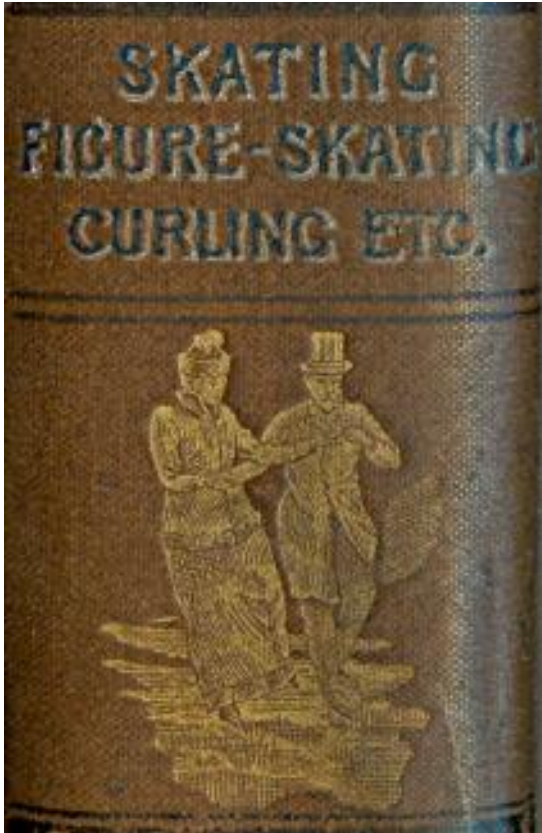


University Library, Special Collections & Archives
Highlight for January 2010



Skating & Figure-Skating. London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1892. Classmark: Children's book collection SPEC Children EVIII.11

Skating was volume 18 of the Badminton Library of Sports and Pastimes, an encyclopaedia edited by Henry Somerset, 8th Duke of Beaufort (1824–1899) and named for his main country residence, Badminton House. It was published initially in 28 volumes 1885–1896, concluding with *The Poetry of Sport*. Three revised volumes followed (1898–99), and two after Beaufort's death, 1902 and 1920.

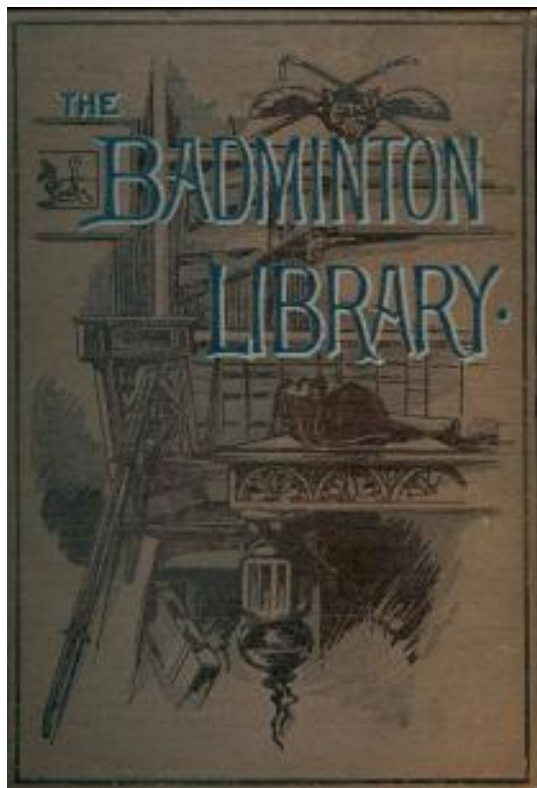
The 'huntin', shootin', fishin'' nature of aristocratic sports is evident in the order of publication: the 1885–86 volumes were: 1: *Hunting* 2: *Fishing: salmon & trout* 3: *Fishing: pike & coarse fish* 4: *Racing & Steeple-chasing* 5: *Shooting: field & covert* 6: *Shooting: moor & marsh*. Football (both the 'Rugby Union game' and the 'Association game') did not have a separate volume until 1899, having originally been covered in the same volume as Athletics (vol. 8, 1887). The 1898 volume *Rowing & Punting* updated *Boating* (vol. 9, 1888), and the 1902 *Motors & Motor-driving* introduced an entirely new sport: *Driving* (vol. 11, 1889), written by Beaufort himself, deals with 'coachmanship'. The final volume in 1920, a revision of several earlier editions, was devoted to cricket, 'the national pastime for a century'.

The full coverage of winter sports in the *Skating* volume is indicated on the title-page: *Skating... Figure-skating... with contributions on Curling... Tobogganing... Ice-sailing..., Bandy* (ice-hockey). There is no mention of skiing. The *Mountaineering* volume (vol.16, 1892) covers 'Snowcraft', 'Rock climbing' 'Hill climbing in the British Isles', 'Sketching for Climbers', 'Camping' and 'Photography' but has only one a brief reference to skiing in the section on 'Equipment and outfit': 'Dr Nansen found that the 'skí' used by the Norwegians were of great service to him in his journey across Greenland; but they would be of no use in the mountains.'

The changing nature of late Victorian sports, evident in the Library's coverage, is made explicit in the introductory chapter to the last volume of the series, *The Poetry of Sport* (vol.28, 1896). The writer, Alfred E. T. Watson, explains that the project arose from a suggestion in 1882 of updating 'Blaine's Encyclopaedia of Sports' in a series of separate volumes, recognising the 'curious rise and fall of favourite sports and pastimes'. The choices subsequently made reflect then current trends: 'Twenty years ago England in general went rinking.... Enthusiasts wondered why so simple a contrivance as the roller skate had not been invented long since, and regretted the time they had wasted on so foolish a business as croquet.... Lawn tennis ... looked as if it had 'come to stay'.



The single volume on Athletics and Football was bulked out with a final chapter on paper-chasing and cross-country running as ‘football ... appeals almost exclusively to its own public.... That football has the steady vitality of cricket may well be doubted, and it certainly has not [its] well nigh universality.’ Rejected volumes included ‘Baseball, Lacrosse, Hockey, and Other Ball Games’ as ‘not appealing to a sufficiently large class’; ‘Physical Recreation’ ‘because we did not see how five hundred pages of readable matter could be filled’ and ‘Chess’. Badminton, named after the house, is dismissed under Lawn Tennis, itself dated back only to 1874 and ‘still in its infancy. This infancy, however, was like that of Hercules, one of extraordinary vigour. While still in the cradle it strangled the rival games of Sphairistike and Badminton, and afterwards extinguished croquet.’ Like croquet, badminton was associated particularly with women: it was claimed in 1911 that ‘in no game is the standard of ladies’ play so near to that of men’.



The preface to the 1902 volume on *Motoring*, written by the ‘pioneer of automobilism’, Alfred Harmsworth, revisits and confirms the ‘extraordinary prominence and popularity of golf and cycling’, although the *Golf* volume partly explains this by the inclusion of a chapter of ‘Hints to cricketers who are taking up Golf’.

The images shown are taken from the standard trade edition of the Badminton Library in the Children’s book collection, which was published in octavo format with brown cloth pictorial binding. The 12 volumes held form part of the former School of Education’s collections on physical education: *Archery; Athletics & Football; Boating; Dancing; Fencing, Boxing & Wrestling; Golf; Mountaineering; Riding; Skating; Swimming and Tennis, Lawn Tennis, Rackets & Fives*.

There were also grander editions of the Badminton Library, as befitted the work’s aristocratic origins: the deluxe edition (also octavo format) and the large paper deluxe edition, both half-bound in dark blue morocco, bright orange boards with the Beaufort coat of arms in gilt on the upper board, gilt-tooled spines, gilt top page-edges and a matching dark blue silk ribbon page-marker.

The large paper edition was a limited edition of two hundred and fifty copies of each volume and the University owns a complete set of these, bequeathed to the University Library by the collector William Noble (1838-1912):

Archery, Athletics & Football, Big Game Shooting (2 vols), Billiards, Boating, Coursing & Falconry, Cricket (1888), Cycling, Dancing, Driving, Fencing, Fishing: pike & other coarse fish, Fishing: salmon & trout, Golf, Hunting, Motors & Motor-driving (1902), Mountaineering, Racing & Steeple-chasing, Riding & Polo, Sea-fishing, Shooting: field and covert, Shooting: moor and marsh, Skating, Swimming, Tennis, Yachting (2 vols) and The Poetry of Sport.

References:

Fridtjof Nansen *The First Crossing of Greenland* (1890)

Delabere Pritchett Blaine *An encyclopaedia of rural sports* (1840)

S.M. Massey *Badminton* (1911)

Copies of all the titles mentioned in the highlight are available for reading in Special Collections & Archives.