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CLASS B.

British Games are Played in most parts of the Commonwealth.

The last remaining imperial power today is Great Britain, yet there are those who doubt the endurance of the links which bind together this the greatest empire which the world has ever known. Perhaps the solder which forges these links so strongly, is the spirit conceived on the playing fields of England, and handed down through the centuries, not only from sportsman to sportsman, but in the works of the great poets and writers of England. And so the traditional games of Britain are fostered throughout the Commonwealth, and their popularity has without doubt been a means of keeping together this miscellany of colours, creeds, and kinds, which we call our British Commonwealth.

The title of this essay, "British Games are played in most parts of the Commonwealth," is an ambiguous one. It might refer to games which had their origin in the British Isles, or on the other hand, it may also include games which have been brought to Britain from other countries, but which have been so adopted by the British, as to have become part of the national way of life. Taking it in its broadest sense, I shall now endeavour to show that most games played in Britain today are also played in the Commonwealth.

In 1832, during a game of association football or Rugby School in England, an unprecedented occurrence took place. William Webb Ellis took the ball in his hands, and to the astonishment of the spectators, ran with it down the field. Little did he know that by doing so, he was laying the foundation of one of the most popular sports played in Great Britain. Today this game of rugby has become virtually the national sport of South Africa, a member of the Commonwealth.

Rugby is played not only in the great cities of South Africa, but also in the vast interior where a rugby field may be one of the few signs of civilization. One of the most memorable events in South African sporting history, was the 1956 tour of the "Lions", which team comprised the leading players of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Rugby is also the most popular sport in New

Zealand, Australia, and the Fiji Islands. For the past sixty years, the rugby crown has been disputed within the Commonwealth.

That which is now one of the traditional games of the Commonwealth can thus be traced back to that great English public school - Rugby.

From the dewy sward of England to the sun-drenched plains of Australia, one hears the familiar sound of leather striking willow - cricket is being played! That wonderful sport which instills its enthusiasts with character, fighting spirit and sportsmanship.

The most famous Test matches played between these two countries are those in which "the Ashes" are at stake. These "Ashes" originate from a ~~term~~ term applied by the Sporting Times in a mock "In Memoriam" notice referring to the loss of prestige in English cricket during the Australian's successful visit in 1882. Ever since, ^{which} English teams have striven to bring back the ashes or mortal remains.

In the West Indies too - only two centuries ago a land of slavery - cricket is played with such skill and enthusiasm, that England, who herself introduced the game to them, often finds her great teams hard pressed to retain supremacy.

Any student of history is familiar with the story of Sir Francis Drake, who doggedly finished his rubber of bows while the Spanish Armada was already in sight, before he would attempt to engage in battle. In spite of, or maybe because of, his phlegmatic attitude, Drake won a brilliant victory and brought glory to his country.

To this day the fascination of Bowls has not waned, and a familiar Sunday scene depicted in most parts of the Empire, is that of white-clad figures leisurely but accurately placing their gleaming woods, and it would take much to prise a true bowler from his game. Little do these eager participants realise, that the game in which they are so interested has come down to them through the centuries from the court of Henry VIII of England who

was himself a skilled enthusiast.

Wimbledon, the Mecca to which all devotees of tennis pay their yearly pilgrimage, has probably inspired thousands of young tennis players throughout the Commonwealth. This is a game which was introduced into England from France and so popularized by her kings hundreds of years ago, that today one hardly finds an English-speaking person who has not played tennis at some time of his life. The name "tennis" is thought to have originated from the French "tenir."

Racing, strictly speaking, is not a game, but it would be almost impossible to omit the sport of kings from any essay dealing with British pastimes. Throughout the Commonwealth in the larger centres, and indeed even in a few of the lesser-known towns, the race-course is often the centre of attraction. For the ladies it is an occasion of social glamour, and for the men, the thrill of fine competitive horse-racing as well as the lure of a gamble.

A game that is truly British is that of golf. It originated in the highlands of Scotland and was popularized in England by James I. The most celebrated golf club in the world is the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, founded in 1754, and is the governing body of the game. Golf has spread where ever a Scotsman or Englishman has travelled and made his home. Therefore it is not surprising that within the British Commonwealth there are so many eager followers of the little white ball.

To the majority of us, the game "polo" immediately conjures up visions of England's Duke of Edinburgh playing his favorite game. This sport which originated in Persia and was played later in India, China and Japan, was introduced into England in 1869. Taking South Africa as a section of the Commonwealth, it may be said with assurance, that polo has become one of the foremost sports enjoyed by men throughout the country. As most men have a love of horses and of exercising their skill, and as no game combines those more brilliantly than polo, there is small doubt that all over the Commonwealth this game is enjoyed to the full.

Perhaps it is only natural that the games most popular in Great Britain should be played in the Commonwealth for this offspring of the mother country is peopled by the sons and daughters of those who established Britain's reputation for sportsmanship, and just as Britain has handed her games to her Commonwealth, so she has handed them her great tradition — "Play up, play up and play the game."

Books Consulted For this Essay.

- The Encyclopaedia Britannica
- The Children's Illustrated Encyclopaedia of General Knowledge
- The Pictorial Encyclopaedia.