

coat and refused to finish the game, and after some delay, and amid great confusion, the referee properly decided that "the sixteenth game of billiards for the championship of America is won by John McDevitt."

After this Goldthwait attempted to win the championship and failed. Joseph Dion also made two journeys to Chicago for the same purpose. The last attempt on the part of Dion resulted in the most remarkable game ever played. The game was the usual one of 1,500 points up, push shot allowed, but jaw barred, on a four-pocket table, of which was known then as the second size, (5½ by 11 feet.) Dion took the lead from the start, and had nearly one-third (449) of his game finished while McDevitt stood at but 42. Then the latter managed to get the balls in his celebrated triangular position. In this position the two balls forming the base of the triangle were not close together but were not far enough apart to permit of the ball forming the apex to pass between them. In this position he could play his cue-ball up and down either side of the triangle and count, as was shown in this contest, indefinitely. With 1,458 points to go McDevitt rolled up a run of 1,460 caroms, thus closing the game. This was the last of what was known as the push. The billiard professionals all acknowledged McDevitt's superiority at this game, whereupon that player returned the cue to the original donor, (Phelan,) with the stipulation that never afterward must the push shot be allowed in a public or money match. The tragic fate of this young and greatest of American billiardists is not yet forgotten. He was hurried to death in the great fire which, in 1870, destroyed so much of the fair city of Chicago.

The history of billiards since that time is more familiar to our readers. It will be remembered how the four-ball push-barred game became so easy that it was soon ignored, and the three-ball or French game adopted. The appearance in this country of Carne and Rudolphe and Garnier and Urbassy and Vignaux, in the order mentioned, will be remembered. Of these five Frenchmen Carne was undoubtedly possessed of the most skill; but he was without nerve, and was easily beaten in all public contests. The others are well known. Contemporaneous with four of these foreigners were Maurice Daly, Joseph and Cyrille Dion, and George Slosson of the first class, and innumerable other players of less skill, great pretensions, and no classing particular. For a while the Frenchmen, the two Canadians, and the two Americans had things their own way. Several tournaments were held. Garnier became champion at Chicago; Vignaux gained like honors in this City, and carried them back with him to France. Another tournament was gotten up, and after much tribulation it was agreed that William Sexton, a youth known to but few at that time, might take part in the games. The contestants were the two Dions, Garnier, Daly, Slosson, Sexton, and Rudolphe. The first prize was won by Joseph Dion. The youngest player, the new-comer, made an excellent impression, won some games in fine style, and proved his right to be ranked among the stars. He at once established himself as a player of great skill, splendid nerve, and excellent demeanor. His visit to France will be remembered. He was unsuccessful in his effort to bring back the cue which Vignaux had rightfully carried away, but the attempt was a brave one. Since then he has tried repeatedly to make another game with Vignaux, but the latter is afraid to play the young American.

The latest tournament was the one of 18 months ago, when Sexton, the debutant of the year before, won the championship. In this tournament another young player appeared for the first time in first class company. It was in this meeting that Jacob Schaefer, of Chicago or elsewhere in the West, entered the lists and scored two creditable victories over veteran players. Before this he had but little reputation as a billiard player, none whatever as a first class man. In the West and in some of the minor eastern cities he had played in several matches with men of no great consequence, but while the experience may have been beneficial to him, they did not seem to bring him before the public as a star. After the tournament he practiced for a while in one of the leading downtown billiard-rooms of this City, and then went to St. Louis. In that city he played well, and in a public game in a tournament in which Gallagher, Slosson, and Cyrille Dion took part, he made a run of 429, the largest on record. He was then matched to play Sexton. Since his arrival from Chicago, where he was in the employ of a firm of billiard-table manufacturers, he has been in pretty constant practice at Albert Garnier's billiard parlor in upper Broadway. In some of these games he has played quite poorly; in others he has astonished everybody. For instance, last Wednesday night, in a game of 1,000 points with Slosson, he closed the game in eight innings. The runs were as follows: 223, 110, 1, 284, 184, 151, 39, 8. In another game not long since he made one run of 573. In the meantime Sexton has also been busy practicing, having for his opponents Joseph and Cyrille Dion. On one evening, in practice with Cyrille Dion, he ran 573 points; at another time he made 450. With his past record the public are, no doubt, familiar. Since he won the first prize in the tournament of December, 1876, he has, if we mistake not, been beaten but twice—by Vignaux, in France, and by Slosson, in Texas. He has traveled everywhere and played everybody. In style of playing the two men are as opposite as can be imagined. While Schaefer cannot be called an awkward player, still some of his strokes are delivered in a manner anything but agreeable to the intelligent and critical spectator. His great strengths in his massés and in his delicacy of touch, both of which enable him to pile up large runs along the rail. In the real science of billiards—that is to say, long follows, long draws, spreads, three and four cushion shots, and other strokes which are best made when made away from the cushions—he is not so skillful as he might be. But, with the balls along the rail, at foot, head, or side, he is as apt to make a large run as not. His strokes for position are made with accuracy, his massé strokes are remarkable, and his "nursing" powers are unquestioned; and yet he does not satisfy the billiard student. From Sexton quite the reverse is experienced. No skilled billiard player or student of the game can see the champion playing at practice or in public without arriving at the conclusion that he is superior to all other living billiardists. Personal feeling may not permit some few gentlemen to admit as much, but we are confident that we only express the sober, unprejudiced opinion of gentlemen perfectly competent to judge when we say that Sexton has no equal. It is true the result of the game may not be in his favor; that Mr. Schaefer may beat him badly; but that will not necessarily make false prophets of these judges, those experts to whom we have referred. They are giving their opinions now, on what they have seen and are daily seeing of the two men. Our own wish is that the best man may win. The height to which both these men mounted in the billiard profession has not been one of easy ascent to either, sudden though it may seem to many. Both have experienced defeats, but with rare perseverance and untiring patience they have studied all the intricacies of the game until now they are supposed to be without superiors. It is the coming match that alone will determine which of the two is the better player, at the easy game now in vogue.

For French billiards is to half a dozen or so of the professionals an easy game, much easier to them than was the old four-ball push game to McDevitt, Goldthwait, Kavanagh, and others of that ilk. Runs of small degree have crept up into high proportions until now everybody is looking for triple figures in every inning. Now, as billiards becomes more cultivated these runs will, no doubt, increase in length. The game has in it a certain progressive element, say like rifle shooting, in the degrees of dexterity, which it develops. During the last half dozen years billiards has gone on steadily rising in excellence, and the more it is played the greater will be this increase. It is not too much to say that aside from the numerous professionals there are many amateurs who, with all respect for the dead, would be able to give the great Michael Phelan himself a very sound beating. The day, however, is not far distant when the three-ball game, as played at present, will be done away with, or so greatly changed as to be practically a new game. Now, as McDevitt did in 1870, so can the winner in the coming match do hereafter. His right to declare that "rail billiards" must be abolished will not be questioned. It will then be for the professionals and a few students of the game, including Mr. Garnier, to determine upon a game to take its place.

SOME NOTABLE TOURNAMENTS.

ANTIQUITY OF BILLIARDS—McDEVITT AND HIS UNHAPPY FATE—THE FIRST TOURNAMENT.

Billiards in its present shape is essentially a game of modern invention. That Shakespeare, Spenser, and Ben Jonson knew it well, their works abundantly show; but the sport of their day was very different from the game as it is now played. During the present half century we have learned to construct tables of polished slate which cannot possibly warp, bend, or twist; to tip cues with leather—the invention in 1823 of a professional billiard-player of Paris—and to rub the leather with chalk; to stuff cushions with vulcanized india rubber, which gives an absolutely true angle of reflection; to manufacture balls of ivory taken from the very centre of the tusk, and almost infinitesimally free from bias, and otherwise to perfect the game. In consequence of these improvements the game, which for years was regarded only as an agreeable pastime, has gradually risen to the dignity of an art, and that art is now reduced to a science.

In no country, however, has billiards met with such success as in the United States. Since the days of the crusades, when billiards were first introduced to Europe, the Kings of France were its most steadfast and powerful friends. The Empress Josephine entertained a genuine love for the game, and during Napoleon's moody moments she would challenge him to a bout at billiards. In England it also met with royal favor, and Mary, Queen of Scots, may be mentioned in proof thereof. In one of her letters, written just before her execution, she wrote that her billiards had been taken away from her as a preliminary step to her punishment. Here, beginning with and just preceding the Revolution, we find the most distinguished statesmen and Generals among the patrons of the game. Later on, Governors and politicians of note, and men who ranked high in law, literature, and science, availed themselves during their leisure of the keen enjoyment afforded by this delightful game. But the most of these great men played on tables of rude construction, with timber beds, and cushions stuffed with flannel cuttings, the cue used being a tapering stick without any leather tip. Soon after the invention of leather tips, Otis Field, then of this City, afterward of Chicago, imported them to this country. A year later, Lieut. James Watson Webb (Gen. Webb now lives in this City) introduced them to Detroit, a city destined later on to be the scene of a game which, for excitement, will perhaps never be equaled in this country. It was during this same year (1824) that the first regular billiard saloon was opened in this country. It was located in the museum, where the *Herald* building now stands, and contained seven tables, "with all the new improvements," which included a new spring cushion, the invention of Mr. Abram Bassford. It was not until in 1854 that the celebrated improved cushion was invented by Michael Phelan. Later, improvements were made by Kavanagh & Decker, by Mr. Delaney, and perhaps a few others.

The first regular billiard tournament ever held took place in Detroit, Mich., on April 11, 1859. The contestants were Dudley Kavanagh, of this City, and Michael Foley, then of Detroit, the match being 1,000 points up, four balls, push shot allowed, for a money stake of \$1,000. The game was handsomely contested by both men, and was won by Kavanagh by 93 points. Both these players are still living—Foley in Michigan and Kavanagh in this City. The day after this match a game was played, which will long be mentioned as the greatest that ever took place. The contestants were Michael Phelan, of New-York, the champion of the East, and John Secreiter, of Detroit, then supposed to be the best player in the West. The match was for a money stake of \$10,000, the game to consist of 2,000 points. Phelan won the game by 96 points. It is estimated that \$150,000 changed hands on the result. This match was followed, in 1860, by a tournament in this City for a golden cue presented by Mr. Phelan. The contestants were Philip Tieman, of Cincinnati; Michael Geary, Joseph White, James Lynch, and Dudley Kavanagh. The games were 500 points each, best three in five, the two highest to play a final game of 1,000 points. In this contest Kavanagh and Tieman were equal, and proceeded to play the deciding game, which was won by Kavanagh, who was thereupon declared champion of America.

In 1863, in this City, occurred the memorable tournament which has always been considered, from the superior skill evinced by the contestants, the most brilliant ever known. The contestants were John Secreiter and Michael Foley, of Detroit; William Goldthwait, of Boston; Victor Essephe, of Philadelphia; John Deery, of Cincinnati; Lewis Fox, of Rochester, and Dudley Kavanagh, of New-York. The number of points of each game was 500, and the concluding game 1,000. This match was won by Kavanagh. The next year the champion cue won by Mr. Kavanagh at the tournament just mentioned was put up as a prize in a tournament where the number of points to be played was 1,500. The players were Kavanagh, Tieman, Fox, and Goldthwait. In consequence of illness, Mr. Kavanagh could not attend the closing game, when Fox, who refused a postponement, was declared the winner, thus wresting the cue and the championship from Kavanagh. In time Joseph Dion, then of Montreal, secured possession of this cue. John Deery tried to wrest it from him in 1864, but failed. Then John McDevitt, a brilliant Western player, played Dion twice for it and lost. Before this McDevitt, who was perhaps the most remarkable player this country has ever produced, had defeated Goldthwait in a game of 1,500 points for a stake of \$2,000. This was in May, 1865, and the best average previously made was 172.3, and 157 the highest run. McDevitt upset all calculations, and made an average of 22¾, his highest runs being 99, 101, 139, 186, 226, and 267 points. He immediately offered to play any one in the country for \$10,000. After beating Cyrille Dion in a game in which he conceded the odds of 350 points in 1,500, he contended with Deery for the championship, and was beaten 355 points, with an average of less than 11 for the winner. In McDevitt's first game with Joseph Dion, (Oct. 6, 1866,) the latter won, making an average of over 25. In June, 1867, he was again defeated by Dion, by over 600 majority. In October of that year McDevitt played the first of a home-and-home match with Goldthwait for \$2,000, winning by 574 points in 1,500. His largest run was 409, and his average 25½. Goldthwait won the second game by 363 points. On Dec. 11, 1867, McDevitt again played Dion for the championship, and this time success attended his persevering efforts. In a game of 1,500 he won by a majority of 14 points, and was hailed as champion, a title which he never after was forced to relinquish. If we mistake not, the first to attempt to win the cue from McDevitt was Melvin Foster. The game was played at Chicago, April 8, 1868, and its termination was quite unfortunate. At the end of the fifty-eighth inning the game stood: Foster, 1,257; McDevitt, 1,088. The former then made 5, and McDevitt followed with 168, and then "no count" was claimed by Foster. The claim was not allowed, which made the run 170. Foster then put on his