

UP-TO-DATE CROQUET.

A New Game with an Old Name—A Terror to Beginners.

"Oh, I can play croquet." "You can, can you?" "Of course, it's easy—nothing but whacking a lot of balls around on the lawn with a little mallet. I used to play it when I was little."

That is what nearly everyone would say if asked; but playing croquet is not so easy now as it used to be, when a fairly skillful player could start third or fourth and go clear through to the further stake in one inning. Just as in baseball, "one out, side out" need to be the rule. Now it takes three out to give a fellow a chance to bat again; so croquet has become harder and harder, until now it's a terror to beginners.

In the first place, it isn't played—at least, in match games of any importance—on grass or lawn, but upon carefully beaten dirt courts, as level as billiard tables, too. They are like billiard tables, too, in that they have raised edges of beveled timber all around them, from which carom or rebounding shots can be made; and a good player is expected not only to be able to make carom shots, but to hit his ball a downward blow with the mallet and make it jump right over another ball or wire that he doesn't want to hit.

But the most vexatious thing about the modern croquet game is the way in which the wickets, or arches, have been narrowed. They used to be ten inches wide at the start, and half the time were spread an inch or so wider before being driven into the ground with a mallet. Now the ordinary wickets are exactly 3 1/2 inches wide, and the two arches or wickets set side by side in the middle of the ground have only 3 3/8 inches of space between the wires. A regulation croquet ball is 3 1/2 inches in diameter, so that there is just a quarter of an inch to spare in going through an ordinary wicket, and in the middle wickets only an eighth of an inch. This renders it hard to make a shot when the ball is not in good position. Besides the balls are no longer turned out of wood with a lathe, but are made of hard pressed rubber. The mallet may be boxwood, but the head is often a steel tube filled with wood in the middle, with one end of soft rubber and one of hard rubber. The mallet heads are long and straight, the handles vary in length, but are commonly shorter than in the old days, running from 12 to 18 inches.

Croquet was for a time badly discredited in the popular affection by tennis, just as tennis has since suffered by the golf craze; but the older game seems now to be gaining ground again in all parts of the country.—Philadelphia Press.

HIS WIFE WAS NOT LOST.

This Man Wanted to Hear from His Absent Spouse.

The wife of a well-known newspaper man left Pittsburgh last Thursday for Atlantic City. She wrote him a letter on Friday, which he received Saturday, but that was the last he heard from her for several days. A joker and he went to the composing room of the paper for which he works and had the following notice set:

"LOST—A wife, aged 37 years, about five feet six inches in height, slender, eyes large and nose prominent; fair to look upon, and quite attractive; she is original in her ideas, a good talker, and has a temper of her own; when last heard from she was seen in Philadelphia and Swarthmore. She was accompanied by a son, aged 15, who can easily be identified by his inclination to chew the rag. Any information of the lost couple will be thankfully received by a lone and much-abused husband and three motherless children."

Then he got an issue of the paper and carefully pasted the "ad" in the proper column and mailed the paper to his wife, blue penciling the "ad." The wife is also somewhat of a joker, and she proceeded to get even. She wired, collect, the following:

"Noticed 'ad' for lost wife. You can't lose me, Charley." About an hour later another collect message came, as follows: "Friends think I am meant by the 'ad' and insist that I let you know that I am not lost. I am far from lost, strayed or stolen. We are having an elegant time, and I will be busy to write to you, but I telegraph you four or five times a day to let you know how I am getting on."—Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegraph.

Odd Names of Newspapers.

Some newspaper reader of Missouri has compiled a list of odd names of newspapers in that state. The list includes the Rock of Comfort, Unfettered Democrat, Hustler, Rustler, Buzz Saw, Silver Hummer, Eye-Opener, Cyclone, Blizzard, Whizzer, and Comet, and then comes down to the quiet Eye, Optic, Fly, Eh, Quill, Bee, and the businesslike Cash Book and Fact.

An independent fortune awaits the man who will invent a smoke-consumer that can be attached to cigarette fenders.—Chicago News.

A FAMOUS WALKING STICK.

Interesting Story of Dr. Samuel Johnson's Cane.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, by Boswell's aid, will long be a celebrity in the records of English literature. Today, more than a hundred years since his death, where is the litterateur who has not revealed over Boswell's marvelous story? And not only the doctor himself, but his relics are interesting to many, and it seems to the writer of this article that the doctor's walking stick would be a most prominent one. Where is it? Who knows? Who cares? The writer confesses he does not know, but he believes it is in his possession.

In 1853 or '53, an old lady named Merrick (also a native of Beckenham) was one evening visiting my wife, in Govington, and I was present, when they were talking about the people of their native village, and among the rest the name of Phillips was mentioned. I incidentally stated that I attended the sale of the old gentleman's effects and that I bought this stick. Mrs. Merrick began to question me about the stick, and I then gave her as minute a description of the stick as I was able to do.

Mrs. Merrick identified the stick by the description, and said it was not the old gentleman's, but Mrs. Phillips' stick; that she had many walks with her, and frequently had it in her hand; that Mrs. Phillips had often expressed her gratification for the privilege of walking with "Dr. Sam Johnson's walking stick." This is all the evidence I received from Mrs. Merrick. Mrs. Merrick had no reason to doubt Mrs. Phillips' statement; I have no reason to doubt Mrs. Merrick's, and I believe the readers of this article have no reason to doubt mine.

Some years since I read in a newspaper that a chair of the doctor's had been sold for £50, which first led me to attach any great importance to the doctor's relics.

From that time to this I have always desired to obtain more evidence, and if possible any rebuttal evidence. That which I have obtained is cumulative in its favor. Pembroke has no stick of Johnson's, I inquired of the museum at Litchfield, but have received no answer as yet. I read Boswell's "Life of Johnson" for information. Only twice does Boswell speak of the doctor's stick; in the first instance, as "flourishing his large oak stick." Further on Boswell tells us this stick was lost and never found, and that it was a source of mortification to Johnson, as he was intending to place it in the British museum.

This was in 1873, traveling with Boswell in the Hebrides, 11 years before his death. Boswell says a nail was driven in this stick to indicate, I think, a yard. The stick in my possession is a Malacca cane, subdivided by brass pegs into feet. The lower foot subdivided into inches, and when it came into my possession was a yard long.

I wrote to Dr. G. Birkbeck Hill, of the Clarendon Press, Oxford, and the editor of "Boswell's Life" in six volumes, and told him the whole story of my stick, and in reply he says: "It seems most probable that you have Johnson's stick. He frequently visited his friend, Dr. Castor, in the latter part of his life, who resided in Bethlehem. Dr. Hill in his 'Life,' speaks of a Mr. Phillips as a friend of the doctor's. Streatham, the residence of the Thrales, was five or six miles from Breckenham. Johnson lived with them a number of years. Miss Frances Burney became an acquaintance of Johnson's while he was living there, and died the same year as William Phillips, of Breckenham; Miss Susanna Burney, a younger sister of Frances, married a Capt. Phillips, and their residence was at Norbury park, about four miles from Breckenham, and two or three miles from Streatham. Johnson's wife was buried at Bromley, 1 1/2 miles from Breckenham."

Do not these various facts strengthen Mrs. Merrick's statement, and justify Dr. Hill's statement, that it is "most probable" that I have the doctor's stick? The stick that he used in the latter part of his life? Should anyone be able to throw additional light on the subject, I cannot help thinking that the literary world of the English-speaking people would feel that they are their debtors. The undersigned will be well satisfied to be the humble instrument in redeeming the doctor's stick from imminent oblivion, and only too happy to know that such an amount of "probability" can be obtained for it as to accomplish the privilege of being placed where he desired his "large oak stick" to be placed—in the British museum.—Cincinnati Commercial-Tribune.

Huge Nugget of Gold.

Three miners at Nuggetty Gully, Maryborough, Victoria, Australia, had a good find the other day. They were working in a 40-foot shaft when they came across a nugget of gold weighing 115 ounces. It was covered with cement and mud, and would have been thrown aside if its weight had not attracted attention.

NATURE IN SIBERIA.

Six Feet of Snow Covers the Earth Eight Months in the Year.

The history of animal and vegetable life on the tundra is a very curious one. For eight months out of the 12 every trace of vegetable life is completely hidden under a blanket six feet thick of snow, which effectually covers every plant and bush; trees there are none to hide.

During six months of this time, at least, animal life is only traceable by the footprints of a reindeer or a fox on the snow, or by the occasional appearance of a raven, or snow-owl, wandering above the limits of forest growth, where it has retired for the winter.

For two months in midwinter the sun never rises above the horizon, and the white snow reflects only the faint light of the moon, the stars or the aurora borealis.

Early in February the sun only just peeps upon the scene for a few minutes at noon, and then retires. Day by day he prolongs his visit more and more, until February, March, April and May have passed, and continuous night has become continuous day.

Early in June the sun only just touches the horizon at midnight, but does not set any more for some time. At midday the sun's rays are hot enough to blister the skin, but they glance harmlessly from the snow, and for a few days you have the anomaly of unbroken day in midwinter.

Then comes the south wind, and often rain, and the great event of the year takes place—the ice on the rivers breaks up and the blanket of snow melts away. The black earth absorbs the heat of the never-setting sun; quietly, but swiftly, vegetable life awakens from its long sleep, and for three months a hot summer produces a brilliant Alpine flora, like a flower garden run wild, and a profusion of Alpine fruit, diversified only by storms from the north, which sometimes for a day or two bring cold and rain down from the arctic ice.—Gold-Days.

WHAT IS EQUALITY?

The One Sense in Which Men May Be Called Equal.

What is equality? In what sense can men be called equal, when we consider what vast differences there are between them in respect to character, intellect, education and refinement? Two men are equal when they meet freely and pleasantly without condescension on one side or suspicion on the other, and when the consideration which each shows for the other is not dependent upon or qualified by the station or outward circumstances of either. This condition prevails in some New England towns, especially in those remote from the railway, and I presume that it prevails in most parts of the west. In such communities every man who is not a criminal or an outcast does feel himself to be in a very real sense the "equal" of every other man.

Wealth, though it is respected as a source of power, is never thought of as conferring "social position;" in fact, that hideous phrase is not found in the rural vocabulary, and as to the word "snob," it would be difficult to make its meaning understood among the people whom I have in mind. Among them an employer of labor would of course expect those whom he employed to obey his orders, but it would strike him as ludicrous beyond expression that his hired man should wear a particular kind of dress, touch his hat when he was spoken to, and in general comport himself as if he belonged to an inferior order. Under such conditions, want of respect is undoubtedly carried too far, but equality is attained, and that self-respect which the feeling of equality produces makes the best members of the community equal to any society; it gives them simplicity and sincerity. Take them to New York or Boston, and no magnificence or display, no society of rich or eminent persons will put them out.

The Prince's Dogs.

At his Sandringham home, the prince of Wales takes great interest in his kennels, which comprise about 15 houses, each having its own yard, and every group of five or six grass plot. A paddock where the dogs are allowed to romp in turn, and a hospital for invalids, have also been added. The prince's kennelmen has some 70 dogs under his care, of various shapes, sizes and breeds, and most of which have been presented to the squire of Sandringham. Two noteworthy animals are "Luska," the Siberian, and "Perla," the Lapland sledge dog. In their northern homes these dogs are expected to draw 150 pounds each for a distance of 30 miles a day, without effort. But then the temperature is 50 degrees below zero there.

Coffee and Eyesight.

A writer maintains that coffee is responsible for the large number of blind men one sees in the streets of Moroccan cities. The Moorish merchants drink coffee all day long, and it has been noticed that many of them lose their eyesight between 45 and 50.

Bulletin Financier.

Mardi, 26 octobre 1897.

COMPTON D'ÉCHANGES (CRÉDIT) A NOUVEAU DE LA NOUVELLE-ORLEANS.

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