"STUDENT" GEORGE F. SLOSSON ON HIS COMING BILLIARD MATCHES WITH "WIZARD" JACOB SCHAEFER.

The interest in professional billiards has fallen off to some extent during the past winter, owing to the fact that there have been no matches between players of the first class. It was to stir up affairs before the season was over that I issued a challenge on April 1, in which I stated my willingness to play any one in the world at billiards first come, first served, under the following conditions: That there be two matches, one at 18 inch balk line, another barred, 60 points up, in accordance with the rules governing the respective championships of the world's championships at that style of game—that is, no shot is talk, another barred—and one game at cushion caroms, 1000 points, according to the rules governing that style of game, each match to be for $2,000 a side or less and to be played in some public hall in New York city between the dates of May 8 and May 22, inclusive, one week at least to intervene between the playing of the two styles of games and the receipts of the house above expenses to go to the winner.

As everybody knows, my challenge was accepted by Mr. Jacob Schaefer of Chicago, who agreed to play the two games, stipulating only that the stakes should be $500 a side on each match.

The preliminaries were soon arranged, and the games will take place at the Lenox lyceum in this city. That building was once before the scene of a contest between Schaefer and myself. I lost, but for all that, I think it is an ideal hall for billiard tournaments or matches.

According to the terms of agreement between us, the first game will take place on May 15 and will be at 18 inch balk line. This is undoubtedly one of the most difficult styles of games played. For the benefit of those who are unfamiliar with the game, which is only played by professionals, I may state that before the match begins a chalk line is drawn parallel with and 18 inches from each side of the table, which is of the regulation 5 by 10 foot size. When this is done, there is necessarily a square space 18 inches in diameter at each corner of the table. The rules say that there shall be "no shot in balk," or, as some people express it, "one shot in balk." This means that if the ball to be hit happens to be in one of the eight spaces then one or both of them must be driven out.

The expression "another barred," which is also used, means that the player is not allowed to get the object balls close together or so near the rail so that one is just inside the balk line and the other just outside and then deliberately play the cue ball from side to side and just touch them so as not to change them from their positions. A skillful player will make a great many points in this way before the balls are moved from the cushion.

The cushion carom game is as difficult as the balk line game, if not more or less. In this style of billiards the cue ball must first hit an object ball, then a cushion, then second object ball or, then strike a cushion and then hit the two object balls.

Schaefer and I are supposed to be very evenly matched at both these styles of game, and our contests should not only result in billiards of the very highest order and furnish a true test of our relative abilities. It is a singular fact that we have played our professional careers played 19 games of record, of which Schaefer has captured 10 and I have won 24. It is an interesting coincidence that beginning with the twenty-fifth game scores are almost the same ago, Schaefer being 44 years old and my years numbering just one more.

I am glad that it was Schaefer rather than any other expert with the cue who accepted my challenge, for I regard him as the hardest man to defeat, taking all styles of games into consideration. Consequently it will afford me greater satisfaction to win from him rather than from any other man.

I am in accord in hope that the coming contests will have the effect of making things boom in the billiards world next fall and winter. I believe it very possible that it will result in the visit of several European experts to our shores next season. The most prominent of these foreigners and the one we should be most anxious to see are M. Vignaux, the acknowledged champion billiard player of France, and H. Piet, who is the second best player in that country. As Vignaux is about 50 years old, I hope to have him over here once again to take part in a series of games before he goes too old to play his present wonderful game.

It may be interesting to mention that my first match game with Schaefer took place at Indianapolis in 1878, as that was the first year in which I devoted my entire time to billiards. Since then I have played in every state in the union except Nevada, and have been in every city of any size in the country. I have been playing billiards for 34 years, having succumbed to a fascination for the game when I was but 11 years of age. At that time, and in fact until recent years, billiards did not hold the high position in public estimation that it has now attained. I remember the time when it was considered somewhat of a disgrace to be known as a billiard player, so much so that Mr. Wayman C. McCreery of St. Louis, one of the three men who took part in the second American billiard tournament at the Knickerbocker Athletic club in this city, used to play in those days under an assumed name.

Speaking of billiards, by the way, have been so busy during the past season as the professionals have been idle. The managers of the old days, many of them have taken up the managerial troubles in big minor organizations. Among the latter none stands stronger with the public than Charley Comiskey of St. Paul, Jim Manning of Kansas City, Connie Mack of Milwaukee, Van der Beck of Detroit, Marsden of Worcester and Barrow of Providence. In the latter class there are several who, by their superative administration of minor league affairs, have shown that they are not only capable of talking to big teams on any of the champion handicaps in the major league.

"Arthur Irwin of the Washington club comes back to the greatest league in the business this season after a long absence in minor leagues. He has shown capabilities in the past that should have made him a successful manager, if the players had "delivered the goods."

"Developing winning teams is a lengthy, laborious task. Ned Hanlon, one of the Brooklyns, is the best in point of experience of anybody. Pat Tebeau, who is in St. Louis under the terms of the Cleveland-St. Louis amalgamation, is next to Hanlon in ability to manage a team of ball players. Hanlon's methods are distinct and separate from Tebeau's. The latter is a western today. Hanlon has long since quit the west and adopted eastern ideas. He is more an adviser than a driver. He manages in counsel and handles his players the way they must be treated—as spoiled children—when they become envious. Tebeau "drives" his men into submission, and, by impressing him with the necessity of doing as he does, gets the best results. Hanlon is honest with his men on salary questions and he always makes the performer satisfied with his lot, if possible.

"Tebeau gates the same results, but without anywhere near the money outlay of Hanlon, for he has little art and knowledge of the players' wants, through long connection with the boys himself. Selee of the Boston team as a successful manager in consequence of his ability in the financial end of the game."

HOW TO LOCATE PUNCTURES.

Every article of instruction for mending a punctured tire begins with "first find your puncture," but this, while it sounds simple enough, is often the most difficult part of the job. The puncturing of size manifest themselves as soon as a tire is inflated, but there are most little pinhole punctures which sometimes put riders to complete confusion by defying detection and leaving the victim in doubt whether a puncture really exists or whether the valve is leaking. Such punctures consist of nothing at times, and it is well to have some way of locating them.

Putting the tire in water and watching for bubbles is the time honored remedy for such cases, and it is, in fact, the surest way of locating tiny holes. The bubbles cannot always be detected in such a test. Passing the tire along by an immersion throughout the country for their remarkable skill with the cue and are close up in speed with the so called "shortstop" professionals at the top of the ladder in this game. Last February a class A tournament was held in the Knickerbocker Athletic club theater in which McCreery, Foss and Hillier took part, the latter being the winner. These tournaments among the amateurs all help to increase the interest in the great game.

Ever since the completion of arrangements for the coming contests I have been practicing daily, so as to be in good shape. I have had a table specially fitted up and have been practicing against good men in the metropolis. I have also been careful as regards my diet, but in other ways I do not "train" for a match in the commonly accepted sense. Certainly these scores are almost the same age, Schaefer being 44 years old and my years numbering just one more.

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TWO FAMOUS CHAMPIONS OF THE CUE.

billiard committee of the A. A. U. decided at the close of the national handicap tournament played at the Knickerbocker Athletic club in May, 1898, to divide the amateur into classes A and B and to play each class separately for national championship honors without handicaps. This subdivision seemed imperative at the time, because three players in America had attained such proficiency in the game as practically to tie in a class by themselves.

On Oct. 3, 1898, the first A. A. U. national championship tourney (class B) was held in the theater of the Knickerbocker Athletic club. Seven players took part. The winner was Mr. J. H. Stark, who won all his six games and made a grand average of 1.34. This performance put him practically into class A, his average being almost, if not quite, a tie with that of C. E. Ellison, made in 1895.

The players who now compete class A in amateur billiards are Martin Molloy of Cleveland, William P. Foss of Havverstraw, N. Y., and Wayman C. McCreery of St. Louis. They are known by all billiardists throughout the country for their remarkable skill with the cue and are close up in speed with the so called "shortstop" professionals at the top of the ladder in this game. Last February a class A tournament was held in the Knickerbocker Athletic club theater in which McCreery, Foss and Hillier took part, the latter being the winner. These tournaments among the amateurs all help to increase the interest in the great game.

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"ROBESPIERRE," IRVING'S GREATEST TRIUMPH.

London, April 14.—That the old adage which sets forth that it is always darkest just before dawn is not without force is exemplified by the recent experience of Sir Henry Irving, the great English actor. A few months ago he was broken in health, broken in spirit and, according to common report, also broken in purse. He had gone through the awful trial of a series of failures. A failure is the ordinary producer means much, but to Sir Henry Irving it means much more, for he is one of the few producers in the world who absolutely eliminate the question of money when about to make a new offering. When the announcement of his illnesses was published in America, he many admirers in that country seemed ready to believe that accompanying story to the effect that he had finally succumbed to the terrific strain and that he would never again appear upon the stage. Fortunately the rumor had no foundation in fact, and the great actor recovered sufficiently to make his preparations for the production of "Robespierre," for which he had previously entered into a contract with Victorien Sardou, the famous French dramatist. Meanwhile the Lyceum theater practically passed from the hands of Sir Henry to a stock company, in which he or such his sons or stepsons, now management inaugurated its reign by making wholesale discharges of employees who had faithfully served Irving for many years. The veteran was wounded to the quick, but was obliged by force of circumstances to hold his peace.

There were many predictions here that the public would resent the almost brutal disregard of the wishes and feelings of the distinguished actor, and it is likely that the aforesaid public might have done so had it not found itself in the position of being unable to infer the objects of its resentment without also working harm to its favorite at the time when, if ever, the most enthusiastic good wishes of the public were necessary. So the public smothered its resentment and turned out to give Sir Henry a royal welcome upon the occasion of his reappearance at his home theater. It was generally realized that if "Robespierre" should prove to be a failure Irving's reign as the monarch of the London stage would be practically at an end. The house was sold out a week before the opening date, and the sale extended well into the following month. Enormous prices were paid for choice stalls, and Sardou's latest drama was certainly given a "send off" which must have gratified author, producer and company alike.

At the close of the first act the stalls were asking: "Will it do?" Is there enough substance in it? Has the action been sufficiently rapid to awaken interest in the fate of the important people?" The general impression seemed to be that not all of the questions could rightfully be answered in the affirmative. Irving's worshippers were blind, but when the same questions were asked in the lobbies the answers had to their different a "Yes" to each of them. And a "Yes" broken that was given with a hearty ring that indicated the wish was the father to the thought, but that the conclusion was the only one possible. When the third act half ended, the enthusiasm ran high, and at the close of the play there was a veritable furore. It was not a manufactured reception either. Irving had too many sincere friends in the audience on the opening night for that to have been possible. They fully realized what the thing meant to him, and if "Robespierre" had fallen short of success they would not have permitted their favorite to be deluded into an exaltation which, in view of the inevitable shattering of the dream, would amount merely to a gleam of refined cruelty. But "Robespierre" was a success, and it has now developed into a sensation. Indeed, many of our blase theater goers declare that nothing so sensational has ever been seen on the London stage. Sir Henry Irving is once more firmly intrenched in a prosperity which has been shaken to its foundations, and threatened by Beerbohm Tree and Forbes Robertson, and it will not be long before, from the pecuniary standpoint, he will once more be in easy circumstances.

Kyrle Bellew enacted the role of Robespierre's national son, the part originally assigned to Robert Taber, the American actor and husband of Julia Marlowe. Mr. Bellew's former associate, Mrs. Jamie Brown Potter, had scored the success of her life a short time before in Tree's production of Grundy's "The Musketeers," but her hit was no greater than that made by Mr. Bellew in "Robespierre." He fully divided honors with the star, and his services are certain to be in great demand at a large salary hereafter in this city.

Incidentally it may be worth while mentioning that the enormous hit made by "Robespierre" has caused Sir Henry and his manager to consider the advisability of producing no other play during the extended American tour, which will open probably in New York. It certainly ought to be good in New York for several months, if Sir Henry proves able to give so much time to that city.

The discussion is likely to arise in the United States as it has already arisen here, as to the phase of "Robespierre" which is in the greatest measure responsible for its remarkable success. Some persons declare that it is the magnificent art of Sir Henry and his charming and talented leading woman, Ellen Terry, upon which it is said, it is asserted that it is the magnificence of the production, coupled with the convenience and good taste of the stage investiture and the natural and effective adaptation of the cowards, which is mainly responsible for the furore created by the play. Still a third section avers that it is Sardou's work, which is good alone, that Irving has simply happened to strike a piece of good luck at the time when it was most needed. These people think, or profess to think, that any actor of reasonable ability would succeed in "Robespierre" just as emphatically as Irving has done, even though he had only enough money to give the piece a fairly respectable mounting.

I shall not attempt to express my own opinion except to say that all these factors are probably somewhat correct, as it is the profession of each of the phases of the production which has served to make it the most remarkable stage representation seen in this city during the last double decade. If there were a falling short in any respect, it would be simply a good success, whereas it is now a sensation.

It cannot be denied that the dramatist has done his work remarkably well, keeping Irving him constantly the strong points, to say nothing of the marvel popularities of the actor. Thus, realizing that Irving's personal appearance and even his physical shortcomings make him a peculiarly forceful interpreter of the emotion of fear, especially when it degenerates into abjectness, he gives the player a magnificent opportunity in the closing scenes of Robespierre's condemnation by the tribunal to death under the same guillotine blade to which a scratch of his pen had condemned thousands of his countrymen, including his one-time friend, Danton. This is the strongest scene in the play. The distorted faces of the members as they hurl imprecations at Robespierre and one another, the attempt of the presiding officer to preserve a semblance of order, the scores of arms thrust out from the front seats owners' heads, the Scottish taint of ochre, and above all the center of attraction, the "monster in sea green," Robespierre, standing livid with fear, his face painfully drawn by the terror which has overpowered him—all this makes a picture which can never be forgotten.

When the man who has slain thousands without so much as a thought of remorse, he will find himself accused of crimes, he, who, if he chose to suggest itself was a woman, especially since history is authority for the statement that Robespierre once loved his landlord's daughter, M. Duplay, whom he has sent to her father for her hand. He is rejected because he is poor and unknown, and he seeks revenge for the slight by denouncing the father of the young woman's child, and he then explains to her why he hates the aristocracy. Again he has a scene with the son, whom he has condemned to death, and it is one of the many strong bits in the play.

Sardou was evidently determined first of all that he would write a play which would be successful, no matter what charges of lack of originality might be brought against it. Therefore he "borrowed" from Shakespeare's plays. "Who is doubt, can guess?" He permits the spectres representing the victims of the "sea green monster" to pass in review before him, while walking through the gloom of the darkness: "Time time is near at hand, Robespierre! Time time will come!" The effect is indescribably weird, and Irving's acting of the scene is so good as any that he does in the play.

The main fault, and almost the only fault, in "Robespierre," is one that is common to most of all Sardou's dramas. He engages too much time in setting to the heart of the story. But once he has reached it he grips it with a firm hand and his touch, if light, is at a moment uncertain. This fault will doubtless be remedied by judicious pruning of the dialogue in the earlier scenes, and "Robespierre" will be as nearly as possible a perfect specimen of dramatic writing. It has proved the salvation of Irving and will also in all probability remove the cloud of failure which had begun to wane somewhat in this country. ELMER WOODSON.

SOME REAL THRILLERS.

A curious lot of melodramas is being used in different parts of England. They all have their special thrillers of one kind or another. One, "The Blind Witness," has for its heroine a girl who goes blind, so that the complications may progress unseen by her, but she recognizes her sight when things must be cleared up. The scene of this play's thriller is on a rocky coast, with a smugglers' cave just around the corner. The blind girl wanders out on the rocks so that she may be caught there when the tide rises. She is followed by the good seafarer, who finds that their only way to safety is to climb an impossible cliff.

This impossible cliff being impossible is really strange thing for melodramas, the girls scream in chorus for help. The villain is on the cliff above. In a spasm of goodness he decides to go to their aid. He leaves the smugglers' hoisting tackle and pulls them up. The seafarer he discovers to be the witness to various crimes of his. He promptly hoists her.

At this critical moment a stroke of lightning restores the heroine's sight. With the aid of this physical improvement she discovers that her escort is the long lost murderer of her long lost father. On crying out to this effect, the villain's kindly spasm comes to an abrupt end, and he decides to kill her. He is interrupted by the opportune arrival of the good fairy man, who injures a bullet into his cranium.

Another melodrama, "Grace Harte," abounds in a series of thrillers. When the time comes for the main one, the hero and heroine are slightly the worse for wear, having just escaped in a damp condition from a water tank. They are therefore easily overcome by the villain, but only at first, mind you, only at first. The hero is thrown down upon a table. The heroine is tied to a tree with a dynamite cartridge just under her toes. A lighted fuse is attached, of course, and also, of course, the hero returns to consciousness in the nick of time. A fierce fight with knives ensues. All this time the bomb is close to the exploding point, and, as one is the hero, there is no chance to be getting the best of it, when the sentimental bad man shoots him from the rear. Just at this moment a rescue party arrives, lowered into the place by perilous position and, wonder upon wonder, extinguishes the bomb by jumping upon it.

The audience may smile at all this, but nevertheless when "Known to the Police," a melodrama produced recently in London, was found to lack a thriller it was disappointment to the folk. Much had been expected of this play from the author, John Douglass, was the inventor of the tank in drama. In his new piece, however, he contented to the old situations as well as the old thrillers, without providing a new excitement. So his work was all in vain.

BERNHARDT'S EARNINGS.

In 25 years More, Sara Bernhardt has, it is announced, been paid nearly $1,200,000 for her services on the stage, and she is now fulfilling a remunerative short engagement which will add about another $100,000 to that large sum. In the last ten years her average gains have been $60,000 a year, in the last five, $100,000. Yet in 1872, at the Odeon theater, Paris, she earned only 10 a month. Barrett's new romantic extravagance, is said to be constructed upon the lines of burlesque building that made John Brougham's burlesques so popular.

A device into statistics has discovered that stage dancing is conducive to longevity. Taglioni lived to be 84 and Fanny Elsler to be 78. It will be noted, however, that these ladies were ballet dancers.

Sara Bernhardt says that in train her voice she adopted measures like those recorded to Demosthenes. "All day long," she says, "I kept a rubber ball in my mouth so as to be able to open it wide enough." This is something in line with the general feminine belief of chewing gum.

Playwrights, the book curators, must keep up with the latest scientific discoveries and inventions. In the last act of a new Paris play the servant sets and lights a gas stove in an alcove.

Williams and Walker, the two real comedy men who have gained for themselves an enviable reputation throughout the country as comedians and singers, were at one time waiters in a restaurant. Mr. Williams and Miss Lillian Green will be married after the season and their home will be Paris, discard "The Typical Girl" and turn to the more suitable subject of domestic life.

The English version of Rostand's "Rodenstein" contains over 40 speaking parts. It would seem that Mr. Rostand, in the belief that the more the merrier, contributed with a play the better it chances.

Stories of The Stage.

John F. Sheehan, who managed the tour of the Broadway Theater Opera company, tells a New York reporter the following:

"In one town we played a one night stand in a house filled with what looked like cowboys. All during the performance a big fellow with fierce looking face and armed at the belt, strode nonchalantly up and down the center aisle, casting furtive glances right and left. The curtain on the first act went down in silence on the part of the audience. The singers looked at each other in astonishment, as the female had always previously called forth a burst of applause. During the second act the same apathetic conduct was maintained by our hearers to the close. They seemingly enjoyed themselves, and take a few Texas audiences, but when through the drop curtain and dismantled the scenery and furniture were in place for the third act, before the last act, many of the lightning rods located the fire escapes and other means of rapid egress to be taken advantage of when the trouble would commence. The curtain went up and all went pleasantly and uneventfully by, each almost losing his fear to relegate the sensitive nine failure of the two preceding acts. The cowboy looking audience came to its feet, and it was whispered in the dressing rooms that they were running their wrists until they could catch an an hour's rest. I was sitting in one of the dressing rooms when a tremendous big knock was heard at the door. The big fellow who had trapped the aisle stood towering before us with a wicked face.

"'Where's the manager of this you troupe?'

"Trembingly I replied that I edited that distinction.

"'Well, put it that, pard,' he said, holding out a heavy hand. 'That's the best theater show we ever had in this town.'

"We were struck dumb with astonishment, but the fellow's tone disarmed us immediately. Finally I managed to gasp:

"'But they didn't seem to like it. They didn't clap their hands or stamp their feet or even laugh.'

"The fellow's face became corrugated with frowns, and his hands nervously moved in the direction of his hips as he fairly hissed:

"'Clap their hands! Stamp their feet! Laugh! I'd like to have caught the laughing! Laugh raises a rumpus of a good sort like that was.'"

Harry Fisher of the team of Fisher and Carroll is an old time music hall comedy, a devout disciple of Izaak Walton, and he is never so happy as when spinning a fish story, no matter how old. Here is one, of the truth of which no fabulous individual will have a doubt: Several persons had gathered around a large fire in the bar of a one night stand hotel after the show on a frosty winter's night talking about adventures of various sorts when one of the company remarked that he should like to see a mermaid. One man soundly denied the existence of such being, whereupon Fisher, who happened to enter at that moment, stated that he positively knew they existed, for he had seen them.

"When and where?" was the eager inquiry.

"Well," said Fisher, "I'll tell you. Two, years before I became a trouper I sailed the ocean blue, and one Sunday morning, when on a trading voyage the ship was becalmed off the island of Pentatra, chase lookers, and we let go the anchor to prevent the current from setting us ashore. We had been there a short time after the anchor was down a little mermaid poked his seaweedy head over the rail and said he wanted to speak to the captain. The captain came out.

"'Please, sir,' said the little fellow, 'daddy says you have dropped your anchor right in front of the door to our cave. We can't get out, and he and mam want to go to church.' The captain, being a religious man, ordered the anchor to be hove up, and in a few moments the old merman, with his wife and a little mermaid were seen alongside of the ship and thanked the captain for his courtesy."

Carroll says that an accomplished elocutionist, such as Fisher, ought to be "at home" in the title role of author-manager of Edgar Selden's farce, "The Lobster."

The instinct of the actor-manager showed itself very early in the career of Charles B. Hanford of the MacLean-Tyler-Hanford company. When he was a striving scarcely out of his teens, he undertook to pilot a company of new players to success in rural regions. He bought a wagon and horses, and they were serious times. He had engaged a boy to blazon the sidewalks of his native village with the announcements of Hanford's great show. He would display a varied list of accomplishments at the hall that night. Another boy desired to be engaged to help, but he could not have the wagon, lest he would vengeance. When night came, the number of people in attendance could be counted on one hand.

The youthful manager calmly attempted to account for his business as he walked to the railway station. It was explained when he caught sight of one of his sidewalk announcements, which had been pasted on a fence with shaggy whitewash. It originally read, "Hanford's show will be given tonight." The youthful small boy had finished the sentence with a pen and ink brush and had inserted the word "not" between the words "will" and "be."

Mr. Hanford said he never expected to live to see the day when he would smile at that experience.

In the last act of "Cullnette" John Mason and Miss Isabel Irving put after William Beach, as Louis XVIII, a faintly broken during a very pretty comedy scene. The other evening Miss Irving could not resist the temptation to play a practical joke, and when Mr. Beach opened his mouth for the cayenne she dropped in a full grown marshmallow. His entrance should have broken a night of at that point, but his face took on surprise, then anxiety, and his efforts to speak his lines and at the same time to get the marshmallow into the proper consistency for swallowing were unavailing.

NOTES OF THE STAGE.

James A. Herne may produce "Griffith Davenport" in London.

While the interest does not lack development in the gold region there are some heights of the exploiting business he has not yet scaled. On the last night of a London play called "Women and Wine," which no doubt had a small tour just ahead of it, "a white haired clergyman rose in the stalls and in a ringing voice thanked the management and the authors for the production of such a play, which, he stated, was a most powerful sermon against the degrading effects of wine and vice than any which could be preached from the pulpit. He concluded by an appeal to the audience to by the large audience, and as he finished there was continuous applause.

"What's your specialty?" inquired the visitor at the dime museum, addressing a man who was therein exhibiting some of the curiosities and appeared to be doing some farming. "If you had happened in a little sooner," replied the man, "I might have been seen and in my great weekly act of paying off the other freaks. I'm the proprietor."

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