BILLIARDS.

AT REST.

Melvin Foster, the Great Expert and Professional Passes Away.

Melvin Foster the once celebrated expert, room-keeper and master of billiards generally, died at his apartments at 1521 Broadway, New York, at midnight on the 5th inst. Many are of the opinion that Foster's illness was asthma, while others attribute his death to consumption. At all events, it is certain that Foster did not suffer from consumption as that dreadful disease is generally known, or at least was not suffering from it when we last saw him a few month's ago at the Rossmore Hotel, while it is equally certain that he had not that violent form of asthma which resulted in the death of Isidore Gayraud. Death, however was plainly visible on Foster's countenance for the past year or two, although his general appearance suggested dyspepsia to us more than anything else.

Although but little known to the present generation outside of New York, Foster was celebrated as a master of the game before Slosson, Shaefer or Sexton were scarcely known. Yet, Foster was barely ten years older than the oldest of the experts named. Melvin Foster was born in Cavendish, Vermont, September 12, 1844. When he was but eight years old his parents removed to Rutland, in the same State, when young Foster was sent to school. After school hours for some two or three years it was his custom to make spending money by working in a billiard room kept by Robert Kingsland, a brother-in-law of Wm. Goldthwait, who was then assisting in the room. When Goldthwait left Rutland, Foster left school, taking the place made vacant by Goldthwait, and rapidly gained a knowledge of the business.

He next removed to Burlington, Vermont, where he began to astonish his friends by his skill in handling the cue. It was not long before the more prominent players of Boston became aware that a young rival had started up in their midst. It was determined to test his mettle. In the winter of 1863 a match for $250 was arranged between Foster and R. E. Wilmarth, which was played in Essex Hall, Foster winning by 96 points in 1,000. This gained him considerable notoriety, and he was at once admitted without cavil to a prominent place among the great experts of the profession. At the close of the year Foster turned his steps toward New York, where he at once entered the services of Dudley Kavanagh, at the latter's billiard hall, corner of Broadway and Tenth street. His engagement with Kavanagh lasted until the room was closed, which engagement was alike profitable to owner and employee or manager.

Foster did not long remain idle, for he opened a room of his own at 206 Eighth avenue; this room was a favorite resort as long as it lasted. In 1864 he played his celebrated matches with John Deery—one in Washington and the other in New York. Foster won the first by 55 points in 1,500, averaging 19¾ and making runs of 173 and 175. One month afterwards he won the second game by 382 points in 1,500, averaging 17. In July of the same year he played Dion in Montreal and was beaten 394 points in 1,500. Dion averaged 21½ in this game. Foster's being a fraction over 16.

In February, 1866, Foster attended the Memphis tournament and played against six competitors, winning the first prize, $500. His general average was 23, his best runs 185 and 282. In one game of 500 points he went out in ten innings, averaging 50, on a 6x12 table! After numerous impromptu matches with Kavanagh, Eaton, Boyle and other players, in which he exhibited a skill which only required more study and ease to make him almost unsurpassed, he issued a challenge to Joseph Dion, of Montreal, to play him a match game in New York for $2,500 a side, the game to be 1,500 points, on a 6x12 table. This match was never played, inasmuch as that Foster wanted to have things all his own way.

Toward the close of 1866 Foster became the superintendent of the room at 616 Broadway, New York, known as Kavanagh Hall. It is said that Foster's salary was $2,000 a year in this room, a remarkable sum certainly for those days. Foster remained here but a short time, when he opened the Empire Billiard Room in Newark, N. J., with twelve tables. Being of a roving disposition, he soon tired of Newark life, and once more found himself in the metropolis of America and was engaged to manage Marron's room, in the *Times* building, and subsequently purchased an interest in the same room, which he sold out about a year later.

In February, 1868, during the short sojourn in New York of Joseph Dion, Foster and himself played four practice games, two of which were remarkable. The games were the four-ball 1,500 points each, push being allowed and jaw barred, and played on a 5½x11 four-pocket table. In one of the games Foster made an average of 62½, and 51¾ in the other, with runs of 206, 245, 205, 445, 190, 388 and 239. Dion's best runs were 105, 116, 184 and 649. Dion won three games out of four.

On December 11, 1867, Foster defeated Dion 12 points in a contest of 1,500 for the championship. In the following April he defended the emblem against John McDevitt, but was declared the loser in the contest, as he refused to finish the game. In this match a purse of $2,000 was also at stake.

Toward the close of 1867 Foster played frequent contests with Rudolphe for money, and often defeated the Frenchman. On September 30 he and John Deery played a three-ball game for $250 a side at Irving Hall, New York. This was the second public contest at the three-ball game played in this country—the first having been between Kavanagh and Carme. Foster won by 116 points in 107 innings, and averaged 2 4-5. His best run was 40. Deery averaged 1 2-3, his best run being 24. The game was played in two hours and forty-five minutes.

On the night when it was made known in New York that McDevitt had made the astonishing run of 1,483 points while playing a match with Dion, Chris O'Connor offered to match Foster against either of these players for $2,500 a side at the same style of game, but his offer was not accepted.

On December 28, 1868, at the Academy of Music, New York, Foster and Dion played a three-ball match of 300 points for $1,000 a side, the former winning by 4 points, with an average of 1¾. His best runs were 10, 11, 11, 18 and 21. The same experts played a return game on January 28, 1869, at Montreal. The game was the four-ball, 1,200, push barred, for $1,000 a side, and was won by Dion by 84 points. Foster's best runs were 140 and 355. On April 6, 1869, Foster and Dion met at Mechanics' Hall, Montreal, to play their third and final game for $1,000 a side, 1,200-points four-ball, push and jaw barred, on a 5½x11 table. The playing at first was slow and tiresome. In the 21st inning the score was 417 to 412 for Foster. The game proved to be one of the most interesting and remarkable in the history of billiards, and was finally won by Dion by a score of 1,200 to 1,118. Foster now virtually retired from the professional and public arena until May, 1876, when there was a demand for American experts to show the world what they could do with the cue. Consequently, in the great Centennial tournament which was held at Horticultural Hall, this city, which tournament was given by H. W. Collender ($1,000 being subscribed by Frank Green). Foster was one of the contestants. His hand, however, had lost its cunning, and as a great expert of billiards he was little more than the ghost of his former greatness.

Melvin Foster, being human, made, no doubt, enemies in his day. It is to his credit to know, however, that, if such really was the case, we have never heard of it. On the contrary, he was probably one of the most respected experts and professionals that this country ever produced. Indeed, his whole professional and private life seems to have been singularly free from blemish and stain. Living as he did in an age or era when billiards produced many a black sheep, if not many a blackmailer, it must remain to his lasting credit that his opinion was never on the market, ready to be sold to the highest bidder. Foster was, in every sense of the word, a student of the Michael Phelan school of billiards. Unfortunately the game has but few such students at the present day, the motto of the leading experts of to-day being, cash first and billiards afterwards, if at all. Under such circumstances it is not surprising to know that Foster died a poor man. If the history of American billiards, however, is ever written, there will be no name more cherished or honored in the pages of that history than the name of Melvin Foster.

The Saratoga Tournament Assured.

It has at length been definitely settled that there will be a billiard tournament at Saratoga, between George F. Slosson, William Sexton and Maurice Daly. A purse of $1,000 has been subscribed by Messrs. Tompkins, Gage & Perry, of the United States; John M. Otter, of the Grand Union; Colonel Henry S. Clements, of Congress Hall; Paul C. Grenning, of the Kensington; ex-Sachem Edward Kearney, Harry S. Leech, John J. Scannell and others. Mr. Slosson has secured the Town Hall for the evenings of the 6th, 7th and 8th of August, and has engaged carpenters to convert the place into a handsome amphitheatre. A $300 Brunswick, Balke & Collender table will be sent there, and it will rest upon a costly rug placed on a large platform large enough for it and the players. The original idea that the players should appear in full dress will be carried out, and the affair will be the most recherche of the kind in the history of billiardom.

Caroms.

Henry Behrens, the well-known billiardist, of Meriden, Conn., is seriously ill at Los Angeles, Cal.

The Cincinnati billiard tournament has been declared off. This is a mere formality. Everything in billiards has been a little "off" for a long time.

Henry Callahan, who recently opened a fine bar and billiard room on West Twenty-third street, New York, was killed on the morning of July 7, through falling from a window at his residence in Harlem, while adjusting an awning. The deceased was well known in Chicago.

A GOOD SUGGESTION.—"John D. O'Connor and Henry Beeny, Jr., of Boston, advocate the holding of the next annual meeting of the National Billiard Association in the Hub City. They are of the opinion that twenty names could be secured for membership."—*Spirit of the Times.*

George Phelan, son of the late Mrs. Ann A. Phelan, is contesting his mother's will before Surrogate Lott, in Brooklyn, charging that undue influences were brought to bear which caused her to cut him off, and also that she was of unsound mind when the instrument was executed. The case will come up in September.

We have a letter for George Turner.

PIGEONS.

THE PRIZES OF HONOR.

The George W. Childs Cup, for the greatest distance in the day in the season of 1888 previous to Aug. 4, SPORTING LIFE Rules to govern.

THE RECORD TO DATE.

Owner.	Date.	Distance. Miles.	Speed per minute.
C. Adam, Philadelphia,	May 19....	206.8	777 yards.
C. Adam, Philadelphia,	May 27....	323.5	924 "
T. Hunsberger, Philada.,	June 8....	365.7	878 "
Fred Bowers, Fall River,	July 12....	365.7	966 "
J. Blood, Philadelphia,	July 12....	386.5	1002 "

"THE SPORTING LIFE" CUP.

The Report Without Question—Jem Blaine the Winner and Ten-Seventy-One a Close Second—Congratulations in Order.

By the conditions governing the competition for THE SPORTING LIFE Cup the results of the several journeys made for it were to be published in the issue of THE SPORTING LIFE following the close of the race, and to remain open for appeal from its decisions. No appeal being made, the winner was to be named according to its figures.

The prescribed limit having passed without question being received and without comment other than commendatory, and the report as rendered being to the best of our knowledge and understanding of the details correct and without reason for question, the winner of the cup is declared to be the red checker cock, Jem Blaine, reg. 1056, owned by Mr. John Blood, Seventh and Somerset streets, Philadelphia, Pa.

The journey in which this prize was won, was from Gordonsville, Va., to Philadelphia. The start was at 7:01 A. M., June 6. The first return was at 11:33 A. M., certified at 11:42 A. M. The air line distance 208 miles, 478 yards. The average speed, 1,347.6 yards per minute. The second best speed was made in the same journey by Mr. James Work's, reg. 1071. In loft at 10:33 A. M. Distance, 207 miles 1,522 yards. Average speed, 1,345 yards per minute.

JOURNEYS FOR RECORD.

The Fall River Birds Take the Lead for the George W. Childs Cup, But Lose It to the Cresson Club--Greater Distance to be Tried For.

The third journey for record of the first nine of the C. O. Barrett birds, of Boston, was with start from Newark, Wayne County, N. Y., at ten minutes past six o'clock, the morning of the 11th, and arrival at home together at two o'clock, but Pathfinder, the first to enter, did not pass the wires until about five minutes after, being certified at 2:15 P. M. The air line distance covered is 307.9 miles. The average speed 1,139 yards per minute. The second nine will not do Newark, but will be sent to about 415 miles; its last journey was from 200.

The three birds, Nameless, Skewer and Lonesome owned by Mr. Fred Bowers, Fall River, Mass., were liberated from the chief signal office, Washington, at 7:10 A. M., the 12th, and were in the loft at 6.17 P. M. The air line distance, 365.7 miles, is the same as that by which Mr. J. R. Hunsberger's Saranac has held the lead for the George W. Childs cup since June 8, but the average speed, 966 yards per minute, gives the Bowers birds the precedence, which, however, they were unable to hold, inasmuch as the Blood return in the Cresson Club's race was from a greater distance and in a still better average. The Bowers trio will try again on the 20th from 450 miles.

The third journey of the Cresson Club's birds for record was from High Point, N. C., and one of the closest in the average speed of any flown this year. The entry was Henry Hackman, 3; George Hornberger, 4; John Blood, 3; Herman Dienelt, 2; W. Hunter, Jr., 1. The start was at half past 5 o'clock the morning of the 12th. The returns as reported at evening were George Hornberger's C 295, by telegram giving countermark and concluding "Delivered 4:58; W. J. Carrington, operator." The allowance of two minutes is ample for this loft, giving "in time" as 4:56 P. M.

John Blood's XX 10, Tippecanoe, at 4:54 P. M; certified at 5:02¾ P. M. (one-fourth of a minute less than his allowance in THE SPORTING LIFE cup race from Gordonsville). The record thus stands:

In Loft.	Dist., Miles.	Speed, Yds.
Blood, 4:54 P. M.	386.8	1,002.7
Hornberger, 4:46 P. M.	386.5	991.5

One Hornberger and two Blood birds have been reported since. The next journey will be from about 450 miles.

The birds of the Hub Club, owned by the Messrs. Gould, Hicks and Wagner, arrived in Warren, Pa., the 13th, for liberating at sunrise of the first favorable morning after. The distance to the homes, near Boston, is about 411 miles.

The Bedford Club, New York City, names Morganton, N. C., 530 miles, as its next station, the last being Liberty, Va., 380 miles. We endeavored to persuade the management thereof to try once more from a day's distance before going beyond it, but the laws of the Medes and Persians were more easily to be changed than this club's schedule. The entry will probably be G. B. Edwards 15, T. F. Read 1. The 16th is named for shipping the birds and the start is to be, a la Shepard, before sunrise.

From Abroad.

The first birds of the Oldham Club made the 210 miles from Ventnor in about 711 yards per minute, and the 270 miles from Cherbourg in 860 yards per minute.

The Yorkshire Club, from 150 miles, made 972 yards per minute for its best speed, the first prize being won by Mr. J. M. Walker. From 200 miles the best average per minute was 775 yards.

The Southern Counties' birds were liberated for their 300 miles race from Ripon. The average speed of the winner of the first prize was 1,320 yards per minute; of the fourth, 1,295.

The Bristol Club, from 170 miles, had 904 yards as its best average speed, and from 200 miles the best was 867 yards.

The English Convoyeurs report the most trying experiences with the French officials. The Preston Club's birds in crossing the Channel were confined in the hot and stifling hold, in spite of their attendants pleading that they might be given place on deck. They arrived out of condition, and he was not permitted to give them the attention they so much needed. At Granville Mr. Carrad was obliged to give the Midland Club's birds over to the police immediately upon their arrival, and in spite of all his letters, passport, affidavits, etc., it was only after the most persistent efforts that he was permitted to give them the necessary food and water, and then only when under the surveillance of the inspector of the police. In the morning he was compelled to start them at exactly seven o'clock, or not at all, and with the chief of the detectives as witness. This in spite of the weather so unfavorable that the birds did not leave the vicinity until some time after.

The President's Badge.

In 1887, Mr. Morton Clark, president of the Paterson, N. J., Homing Club, offered a valuable gold badge, to be flown for once each year by old birds from a distance not less than 350 miles, until won twice by the same loft, when such winner should be declared the owner. The winner for 1887, was Mr. J. Geroe, in the journey from Liberty, Va. This year it is Mr. Edward Bolton, for the journey from Lynchburg. This fly was under club rules and management. The start was the morning of the 12th. Of the journey, Mr. Clark writes under date of the 13th:—"Our birds were liberated in Lynchburg yesterday, at 6:02 A. M. With us the wind was northwest, and a hurricane all day, forty miles an hour. A bird might make four or five miles an hour against it for two or three hours, but would be just as likely to land in Florida as in New Jersey. Of the thirty birds shipped, three Boltons and one Byrom arrived home at evening. Bolton wins the badge for the year. I do not know if we will have any birds for a fly from Danville."

The Pigeons of Providence.

SOUTH PROVIDENCE, R. I., July 13.—Editor SPORTING LIFE—The entry for our club's cup closed with twenty-four birds being marked and the station for the start was drawn for Stonington. We have begun training, and the manner in which some have returned is very suggestive of the habit of stopping at road houses on the way. It would afford plenty of amusement to old fanciers to see our members watching for the return of their favorites. One would think they were a class in astronomy. If this excitement continues I am afraid the treasury will be drawn upon before the day of the race to pay board for some of us at the Dexter Asylum. Should we survive until the finish will forward the name of the gentleman first entitled to relieve his parching throat with a sip from the silver cup. BOUTELLE.

Caught or Shot.

[Have your birds registered and mark each one. "If Caught or Shot report this number to THE SPORTING LIFE, PHILADELPHIA, PA." We will act the owner's pleasure in publishing those reported to us, but we will not correspond with finders except in case of birds entered in a journey for record.]

Mr. P. P. Brown, Taneytown, Md., reports Mr. James McGauhey's Restless, No. 8,115. He says:—"This bird is hurt in one wing, but I think it will come out all right."

X 139 is a visitor at the loft of John Blood, Seventh and Somerset streets, Philadelphia.

Transfers of Stock.

From the loft of J. G. Ward, Keyport, N. J., 1—to Charles Klannenberg, Keyport, the b. c. c. Whiteley; b. h. Gits, Hausenne; b. c. Washington Blue; b. c. h. Whitesides; b. c. Gits-Husson; b. c. h. Hausenne-Whiteley; b. c. h. daughter of Boots and Lighting, 2—to Mr. Budd, Keyport, the w. s. b. c. Earrings.

Names Claimed.

By John Blood, Philadelphia, Jem Blaine for reg. 1,056; Silver King for 1,057, and Tippecanoe for X X 10.

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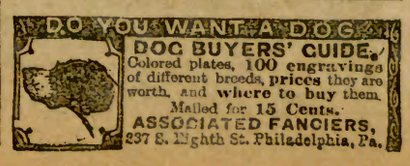

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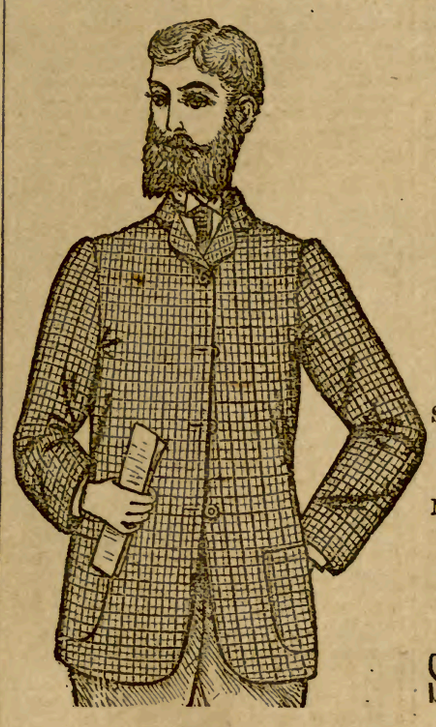

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