



GEORGE F. SLOSSON.

## **BILLIARDS.**

### **A REMARKABLE BILLIARD MATCH.**

At Tammany Hall, in this city, on the evening of October 4th, there was played a game of billiards which eclipsed in brilliancy and interest all previous contests of the kind in this country, and which placed on record a victory that will shine lustrously in billiard annals. The game in question was the fourth regular match for the Collender Badge of the Championship of America and a money stake of \$1000, and it brought together the popular billiard champion and holder of the badge, Mr. George F. Slosson, and his skillful rival, Mr. Jacob Schaefer. It was the third time the two experts had tried conclusions at the new "Champion's Game," and it proved to be the third time that Mr. Slosson showed himself to be the superior player. On the first occasion of their meeting they played a game in the grand tournament, in which the badge was first competed for, and Mr. Slosson came off a victor with flying colors, beating his rival 189 points in a game of 300 points. They met again on the evening of June 19th, when Mr. Slosson was once more victorious and wrested the trophy from Mr. Schaefer, who had twice successfully defended it against Mr. Sexton. It was in this game that Mr. Slosson showed such striking evidences of the improvement gained by his trip to Paris, and in

which he made the remarkable average of 30, placed on record the two memorable runs of 198 and 236, both made by playing ambidexterously on the "unnatural" rail.

Mr. Schaefer was apparently not satisfied that this proved his adversary to be the more skilled player, and accordingly issued a challenge to Mr. Slosson, which the latter promptly accepted. Both experts began their practice, when Mr. Schaefer was suddenly taken ill, and was obliged to abandon his play for the time. Mr. Slosson at once generously offered to postpone the match, rather than cause his fellow craftsman to forfeit by non-appearance; but, after a few days, Mr. Schaefer announced his desire to play on the day originally fixed, and resumed his practice, playing so finely toward the last days preceding the match as to indicate his full recovery of health. Meantime Mr. Slosson had developed at practice such remarkable strength both at "open table" and "rail" billiards as to astonish even those who were familiar with his play in private. News of the playing of the experts got abroad, and awakened great public interest and expectations of an exceptionally fine game. These expectations were destined to be most brilliantly realized.

The management of the match, by the judicious choice of both experts, had been entrusted to Mr. Leslie E. Slosson, and his tact and good judgment were rewarded in drawing an assemblage which more than filled the hall, many people being compelled to witness the game standing. The attendance was as fashionable as it was numerous, and it was graced by the presence of an unusually large number of ladies.

Mr. Slosson was the first to arrive, and in his looks he exhibited his fine condition and confidence of success. Mr. Schaefer came somewhat later, and was heartily welcomed by his many friends in the assemblage. After some delay, the usual preliminaries were completed by the acceptable choice of Mr. Dudley Kavanagh as referee, and the appointment of Mr. Samuel F. Knight as umpire for Mr. Slosson, and Mr. Randolph Heiser as umpire for Mr. Schaefer.

The game opened at a quarter past eight. As before stated, it was the new "Champion's Game," in which "rail-nursing" is restricted by the drawing of "balk" spaces at the corners of the table, cutting off a part of the "nursing" surface of the cushions. Mr. Schaefer won the lead, but retired after scoring a counting-stroke from the string. Mr. Slosson failed to score, and then his adversary followed his example.

Mr. Slosson began early to experience difficulty in gaining control of the balls, which seemed inspired with a perverse desire to thwart his every attempt to win them into favor, and as Schaefer did not play well, the first stages of the game were uninteresting. In his third inning Mr. Schaefer gained the rail, and for a moment the caroms rang out rapidly, but a miss on a "reverse English draw" cut short his opportunity of making big figures after he had counted 27. Mr. Slosson began to warm to his work by this time, and after some very delicate caroms upon the balls, sent them whirling dizzily about the table with many a brilliant stroke, until he was interrupted by a claim of "freeze" by Mr. Schaefer's umpire. The balls were spotted, but

he failed to count, after having made 45. Mr. Schaefer played wildly and missed, but subsequently made 9 fine open table caroms, to which his rival responded with an equally well-played 19. which were received with loud applause. In the next inning his splendid open table play again drew forth plaudits, but just as he had gained a rail position, the balls "froze," and cut short the run. He had counted 32, which turned his first string, the score standing at the time :—Mr. Slosson, 103 ; Mr. Schaefer, 44.

The "miss" from the string left Mr. Schaefer a very fine position, but he failed to acquire any substantial profit from it, and after rapidly nursing 44, by a careless stroke missed an easy "massé." However, an unlucky "massé" stroke by Mr. Slosson in the tenth inning, missed in an effort to procure a favorable position, left him immediately afterwards a most admirable position on the "natural" rail. Here was an opportunity to atone for carelessness, and Mr. Schaefer was not slow to avail himself of his piece of unlooked-for good fortune. With a rapid and graceful wrist-movement, he tapped the cue again and again against the surface of the balls, and on and on the balls rolled, chiming out the caroms right merrily. The enthusiastic spectators encouraged the expert with liberal applause, and he played in beautiful style, turning the interdicted "balk" spaces to perfection. The ivory spheres seemed held by a charm, so obediently did they glide along, rolling up the caroms in a way that filled the player's friends with gleeful exultation. On and on they went, until over 300 had been scored, when a few moments later the charm was broken, the balls separated, and the player missed, after completing a run of 312—the greatest ever made at the new game in public. It was gained by a great piece of good luck at the start, but was earned by great skill in technical execution. It carried the fortunate expert's score at one bound up to a round 400 points, and was hailed with a great storm of applause.

So tremendous a lead might well have crushed the hopes of any antagonist. It would have been excusable to have been unnerved by the disheartening prospect, for to overcome the great advantage seemed to be an impossibility. Anxiety was in every eye as Mr. Slosson approached the table to essay the task of retrieving the all-but-lost battle. Astonishment was marked on every face after the events of the next few minutes. Contrary to the expectations of all but an intimate few, the young champion stepped forward as if the game were but just opening. There was no indication of dismay in his features, nor the slightest tremor of nervousness in his stroke. He had nerved himself for a supreme struggle, and from thence until the splendid finish, played with a caution, judgment, and brilliancy that furnished the spectators with an exhibition of masterly play—play in which the head rather than the hand was the chief controlling power. He thought out every shot with a judgment that was well worthy of the appreciative recognition it won from all quarters. To the Champion's splendid form, Mr. Schaefer's play was in striking contrast. Unaccountable reaction seized him, and the confidence his lead should have given him, vanished. His features paled, and a panic paralyzed his stroke, and robbed it of its skill.

The balls still resisted Mr. Slosson's efforts to force them into obedience, but nevertheless he counted from all sorts of difficult positions, and scored 46 before he missed. This was followed by an admirably played run of 138, scored largely upon the open table and partly upon the "unnatural" rail. Mr. Schaefer by this time appeared to be thoroughly demoralized, and with the exception of a spurt of 21 remarkably brilliant caroms which closed his eighteenth inning, did nothing worthy of his reputation for skill.

It was now smooth sailing for the Champion, who gallantly recovered his lead and closed his display of skill with four exceptionally fine runs of 114, 83, 31 and 74, winning one of the best billiard battles ever fought, and establishing, beyond question, his title to rank as the leading and representative billard expert of America. His victory was greeted as only such a victory should have been.

The following is the complete score :

SLOSSON—0, 6, 0, 1, 45, 0, 19, 32, 8, 46, 138. 0 114, 0, 83, 3, 31, 74—600.

SCHAEFER—1, 0, 27, 1, 6, 0, 9, 0, 44, 312, 0, 2, 3, 2, 0, 6, 4, 21—438.

Winner's Average— $33\frac{1}{3}$  (the highest on record).

Loser's Average— $24\frac{1}{3}$ .

Winner's best run—138.

Loser's best run—312.

J. R. S.

---