ONLY MEANINGLESS WORDS.

Gere's Whitewashing Report of the Useless State Railroad Commission.

IT WILL NEVER SEE THE LIGHT.

A Chance For Legislators to Keep Their Promises—The New Methodist Church Dedicated—Other Lincoln News.

[FROM THE BEE'S LINCOLN BUREAU.]

There is an interesting bunch of manuscript at the office of the railway commission, largely the work of the deposed member, that was prepared during the hazy days of early autumn to be fired at the legislature and rushed through, if possible, during the days of the session.

his embryo report would as completely whitewash the useless commission as a job of that kind could have been done if it were to go in, but it is evident that the change in the board that placed Judge Mason as a member will bury this presumed report, and if any report is handed in it will not be one wholly given over to whitewash. What little railway legislation has ever been passed tending toward regulation is drawn and quartered in this mass of nothingness and shrouded in all the sophistry that an eminent corporation tool could muster. The partial report pretends that a great deal has been done when nothing at all has been accomplished, and the coal monopoly and the rate on grain, that consumes one-half of its value in the single item of transportation, are held up as measures that, if interfred with, would ruin the dear corporations, and any means of cheap transportation, such as a water route, are held up in long pages of brief as measures that, it crowded, would ruin the very people themselves. The elaborate verbiage in this partial report hammers away at the Reagan interstate commerce bill, and after shearing the Cullom bill of what antagonistic clauses to railways that it possesses, it holds it up as the right kind of a measure to bring relief to Nebraska. Special rates are upheld, of course, and on the question of state regulation of rates this eloquent report, of course, does not favor such an interference on the part of the state in self protection. It is the opinion of this report that the commission should not have power to alter or amend rates. It is the opinion of the report that power should not be given the commission to enforce schedules of rates on the roads. The commission fraud has just exactly such power now—that is, no power at all more than to draw salaries and recommend. To reform this uselessness, this quasi report would rise up in its might and have its powers increased so that when it saw fit to recommend that a rate be evened up a little that if it were taken into court the evidence of the commission should be prima facia. This was the magnitude of reform that it was expected to dole out to the people to keep the commission on its feet in the future and make it take the place of flesh and blood legislation that would not be a farce and fraud as the commission is, has been and will be so long as it is perpetuated. But this sort of a railroad report on the railroad's commission will not be railroaded through the coming session, and that fact is already apparent. This elegant report in fact, that now lies pigeon-holed in the rooms of the commission, lost what life and vitality it had when Secretary Roggen arose and discharged its author. If any report is handed in at all it will not be such a mass of meaningless matter that possesses no worth except to mislead and confuse and argue over until the time of action passes by. Judging by the fact that these things are coming to the light, that the commission itself knows its uselessness, and that there is no one on the board now whose entire system is for railroad work, and whose check would be sufficient to foist such a report upon the legislature and expect the people to swallow it, the burial in the pigeon-hole will remain undisturbed.

PLEDGES AND FULFILLMENTS.

The work upon the city charter to be submitted should not be concluded without the proper restoration clause that will bring back for city taxation the five hundred or more lots in the city that have been taken by the railroad for right of way, and the forty miles or more of tracks in the city that now are taxed as only a mile and a quarter in length. Presumably the legislators-elect from this county, however, are looking after this matter, for during the canvass they readily pledged themselves to look after Lincoln's interests, and did all possible to have it understood that they were for the interests of Lincoln, and were in no sense to be elected in the interests of the corporations. The people, in realizing the vast amount of property right at their doors that is covered from taxation, will be anxious that the charter pay attention to this matter; and when the legislators insist, it it shall become necessary, that the charter committee prepare that instrument so that these wrongs shall be uncovered, the people will not be slow in giving them credit for carrying out their pledges so willingly made during their canvass, and they will, in so doing, entirely establish the fact that they were elected in the interests of Lincoln.

CHURCH DEDICATION.

Yesterday morning the new, handsome and commodious Methodist church, located on East R street, and known as Grace M. E. church, was formally dedicated, Bishop Warren, of Denver, preaching the sermon and conducting the services, that were most impressive and listened to by an audience that completely filled the building, many desiring admittance failing to get inside the building. The sermon of Bishop Warren was a powerful one, clear, logical and convincing, and that it was a feast of reason and knowledge to all his hearers was the universal verdict. Grace church, just completed, is one of the many handsome edifices of the kind in the city and a handsome landmark to the eastern part of the city.

REACHING FORTH ITS TENTACLES.

The Lincoln street railway, that since its assimilation of the Durfee Capital City line has become one of the strongest corporations in this or any other western city, is reaching forth for new territory and booming new lines out in the suburbs that will greatly enhance the value of real estate in the direction taken by the new lines. A new line has been laid on Twenty-seventh street from R to V, and the line is being graded forward on V toward Peck's grove and in the direction of the Touzalin purchases out in that vicinity. It is also announced that the company will build the present winter and early spring a line in South Lincoln out to the penitentiary.

LAYING THE WIRES.

A number of the alleged politicians who wasted their substance in wagers upon the election of Church Howe have been holding two or three consultations with their late lamented chief, one of them being held in Omaha but a short time ago. There is a scheme in all these gatherings, and it all points to the fact that these worthies are anxious to enter into a general punishment of those whose stomachs were not strong enough to swallow Lord High Poo-Bah of the late First congressional district Mikado company. One step in this will be the entrance of Mr. Howe as a prohibition lobbyist, the crowd to make it especially warm for the liquor men, who introduced liberal Church Howe punches in the late campaign.

TOPICS OF THE CITY.

One of the coming additions to the business interests of the capital city that will open a new field in the wholesale trade line is the establishing of a wholesale dry goods and carpet house that will be one of the heavy institutions in the state. It is unauthentically announced that one of the double three story blocks in the city now nearing completion has been leased for this establishment; that the entire three stories and basement will be occupied with the stock, and that the firm will commence operations with five men on the road, and that business will be opened by them inside the coming two months.

The Congregational church of this city, it is announced, will be formally dedicated on the coming Sabbath, and thus will be completed the final act in the history of the construction of this handsome edifice, one of the finest churches in Lincoln.

The carpenter's local union will have a grand Christmas ball and social at the Metropolitan rink on Thursday evening next. They will see to it that it will be one of the most enjoyable events of the season.

On Tuesday next the convention of county superintendents, called by Prof. Jones, will convene at the office of the state superintendent, and the prospects are that the attendance at the convention will be large.

M. Ackerman, proprietor of the Famous, had a birthday celebration at his home yesterday at which all the employes of the store were guests for the day. Mr. Ackerman received a number of handsome presents in commemoration of the event.

Mrs. Weber, the prima donna soprano for the grand firemen's fair, exposition and concerts the coming week, will arrive in Lincoln to-morrow to fulfill her part in the programme. The firemen's entertainment will be the event of the week.

The new ice ring on O street, occupying the entire half block between Fifteenth and Sixteenth, is graded, fenced, waiting rooms and offices completed, and is now ready for flooding and the consequent amusement and profit that it will furnish.

The Capital City Courier has moved its office from 1006 P street to ground floor rooms in the Bond block, and it will open the new year in an entire new dress with a job department in connection. Mr. Harry Dobbins has joined Mr. Wessel in its publication.

Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Templeton, of Omaha, relatives of Captain and Mrs. Phelps Paine, and Mrs. E. A. Paine, mother of the captain, were visiting with them over the Sabbath.

Mr. A. E. Touzalin, the railroad magnate, who has been making large and extensive purchases in Lincoln real estate, farm lands and the street railway corporation, is expected on a business visit to the capital to-morrow.

Mrs. Goldberg, of Chicago, mother of Mrs. David Wise, is in Lincoln, where she will remain through the holidays and the greater portion of January visiting with relatives and friends.

John Nelson, one of Myres, Nissley & Co.'s popular salesmen, has accepted a position with Mayer Bros. Mr. Nelson is one of the promising young men of the capital city.

The members of Lincoln Post A of the T. P. A. held a very interesting social and business meeting at their rooms Saturday evening, which was well attended by the boys who were in the city. An additional list of hotels recommended for patronage was reported, and other minor matters transacted.

The latest investment of Mr. Frank Sheldon is reported the purchase of the handsome lot on the northwest corner of R and Fourteenth, upon which it is stated Mr. Sheldon will build a $20,000 residence the coming summer.

The Woman's Relief corps, G. A. R., will give a supper at Temple hall to-morrow (Tuesday) evening, between the hours of 6 and 8. The announcement of the ladies is that the object is to raise funds to assist destitute families of old soldiers.

C. W. Green, Omaha; Church Howe, North Auburn; T. M. Hopwood, Holdrege, who were in the city Saturday, were passengers east, south and west yesterday, en route homeward.

Some heartless farmer turned loose three bushels of cats, all colors and sizes, in Schuyler. Every backyard is now provided with a double back action orchestra.

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THE GAME OF BILLIARDS.

France the Nursery of the Sport While America Provides Players and Tables.

GOSSIP ABOUT THE NOBLE GAME

The Great Players of the World and Their Relative Standing—The Requisite Qualities of Good Players.

PARIS, Dec. 3.—[Correspondence of the BEE.]—Although not of much interest today, the fact is probably true that France might claim to be the cradle of the noble game of billiards. In an old book dating back to 1655, we find the mention that an Augustin friar under Charles VII. "brought about some marvelous changes by his preaching. At the sound of his voice fires were lit in several quarters, and the inhabitants, vying with each other, ran and threw into the flames their cards, balls and billiard tables." Already well-known in the second half of the sixteenth century, billiards became fashionable under Louis XIV, who was recommended by his physicians to play for awhile after his repasts in order to aid his digestion. Michel de Chamillard owed his political fortune to the skill that he showed when playing with the grand monarch and was immortalized in the well known quatrain.

A great king's protonotary dies,
For here the famed Chamillard lies;
Though in the ministry a zero,
At billiards he was quite a hero.

Samuel Bernard, who played with great talent for those days, gained, they say, the first million of his colossal fortune in pushing the balls against Chamillard, and it seems to be beyond doubt that the game continued for a long time to be one of the accomplishments of persons at court. In our time billiards has become such

A DEMOCRATIC SPORT

in France as well as in the United States, that there is scarcely a little village without its tables and amateurs, and in a city like Paris if a count were made there would be found at least twenty thousand tables. Under Louis Philippe, the police regulations required that whoever wished to open a billiard hall must procure a special licence, which was posted in the hall, together with the rules of the game; it was forbidden to play after 11 o'clock at night.

The improvement realized during the past ten years in all the materials appertaining to the game has caused an equal progress among those who follow it as a profession.

THE BEST BILLIARD TABLES

are made in the United States, where two large houses struggle for supremacy in the manufacture and sale to public and private establishments of everything necessary to the game. The splendid Brunswick and Collender tables are used in France for all the principal matches. With such perfect implements the game has been entirely changed, and the series of carroms have become so long that the spectators find them interminable. Consequently certain modifications have had to be found in order to please the gallery and at the same time to restrict the runs by rendering nearly every shot uncertain. When the balls are grouped near the cushions the professors contrive to keep them there by utilizing the return stroke, and they can make the three balls travel over the table without parting company, nor are they often obliged to play a strong shot if, by chance, the balls become separated. An important restriction has, therefore, been imposed in order to prevent what is called the American run. Parallel lines are traced in chalk on the tables at about thirteen inches from the cushions; these lines form eight divisions or "frames." When the two balls upon which the player has to carrom are in one of these division, the marker cries "Gone in!" At the second shot, if the two balls still remain in the space, the marker cries "In," and then a carrom must send out one of these two balls; otherwise the player loses his chance.

CUES.

The weight of the cues is about equal to that of the three balls; some players, however, can only use very light and tapering ones, whilst others are accustomed to handle heavier and more massive instruments. Mangin, Damans and Garnier play with cues weighing over a pound, while Vignaux, Piot and Slosson use cues four feet and a half long and weighing several ounces heavier than those handled by Mangin and the others.

HOW TO BECOME A GOOD PLAYER.

What are the qualities necessary for a professor to become a Vignaux in his art? and what are the conditions and circumstances in which he will be obliged to show these qualities, insisting with tact and judgment upon those that the necessities of the moment demand? That is the great question, and it is one that could not be exhausted in a hundred pages. I shall simply try to briefly sum up these qualities.

Three elements are necessary in a good game of billiards. First, aptitude; and by aptitude, I mean the combination of physical, intellectual and practical qualities that the great masters of billiards all possess. Vignaux is an admirable type of this important element. He is tall, stout and well proportioned; he has an intellectual forehead, bright eyes, and a face that denotes acuteness, self-possession, serenity, firmness, patience and energy. So much for the physical and intellectual part of the man. He has, besides, made a profound study of his art. Not that he is a hard-working man, but he has been in constant training since his youth. In his frequent matches played during his visits to America, and while on his continental tours, he has familiarized himself with all styles of playing, without in any way lowering his own masterly, free, simple and easy manner of putting the balls in motion, which was taught him by a master whose merit has scarcely been surpassed, and who enjoys a high reputation throughout the United States. I allude to Ubassy, surnamed the "Ferret," whom I lately saw and applauded during a public performance in this city. He was pitted against his pupil, and felt happier and prouder of Vignaux's success than of the admiration bestowed by the connoisseurs upon his own personal play. He was enthusiastic over the magical resources at the command of his adversary, and said to me:

"I am but little in advance of him at present; you will see what results he will attain when his blood is up. I can only count upon an honorable defeat."

scarcely had Ubassy finished his remark, when Vignaux, piqued at being so much behindhand, set himself seriously to work and succeeded in making a splendid run, 248 carroms, one of the longest ever made under the new regulations of the frame game. He was in such good trim, that, at once time, we thought the man might go beyond the third hundred; but it ended accidentally at a moderately difficult shot.

Among all the great players Berger appears to me to have possessed the most traits in common with Vignaux, as such in his physical aptitudes as in his general conception of the game. They are not contemporaries, and the younger player has over his predecessor the advantage of being able to appropriate all the various improvements. Berger still lives in the memory of experts, and may be called the veritable

INVENTOR OF THE RUN.

I venture to say, also, that if he did not originate massing, he at least analyzed it and popularized its use. The force of his stroke was in proportion to his robust frame. He gained glorious triumphs throughout America, and also in England.

If statue and strength are advantages in the game of billiards, it does not follow that they are indispensable in order to become a first-class player. Look, for instance, at Mr. Jacob Schaeffer, M. Mangin, Mr. Slosson and Mr. Lucius Piot. Not one of them is built like Hercules; yet they are each and all capable of giving the most vigorous impulsion, and seem no more embarrassed when their ball happens to be in the very center of the table than when it is at the side, well within in their reach. I have seen these admirable artists overcome the difficulty of execution by prodigies of address and combination; and, by the way, I may mention here, a Spanish amateur, Senor Polanco who, whilst supporting himself on crutches, makes runs of a hundred points. M. Mangin, who is nowadays rather in the background, was of such strength as a player, that in the opinion of many excellent judges, no one else could be compared to him. What was wanting in him to become the champion? Somewhat better health, perhaps, more dash, a sharp contest or an opportunity?

AMONG FRENCH PLAYERS,

the one who occupies the second rank and nearly reaches the first, is M. Lucien Piot. M. Piot is an artist in love with his art. The game of billiards has no longer any secret for him, and his finished style is equal to his science. In spite of his brilliant successes, I am convinced that he has not yet shown all his strength. If he could only resolutely master his irritability and the occasional wavering of his excitable temperament, he would share the fame of Vignaux and Schaeffer.

ACTUAL CHAMPION OF THE WORLD.

Last, but not least, I wish to acknowledge the merit of the most celebrated of American players, of the one who has succeeded in shaking the pedestal of our Vignaux. Younger than his rivals, Schaeffer has marched towards perfection with a more rapid step, and is actually the billiard champion of the word. It is said that Slosson executes in better style, and far quicker, the American "break." That is possible; nevertheless, I am inclined to believe that on the whole Schaeffer is his superior. What makes him peerless is his gift of decision. His all-embracing glance is extraordinary; the pluck with which he affronts difficulties, his endurance during a crisis, the mastery of his attack, and the consummate science of his return strokes compel admiration and explain the results achieved. I am reluctantly obliged to merely name some of the

STRIKING INDIVIDUALITIES

whose portraits I should have been delighted to sketch. The pleiad of great players opens with Mingaud, the inventor of the cue tip, Saucat, Paysan and Noel; then Barthelmy, Nicolas, the Giblein brothers, Charles Barger, Romain, Desire, Venance, and, in our day, Joseph Constant, Leullier, Dumans, Garnier, Gay, Gabriel, Daly, Dault, Bataille, Barbaroux, Antonin, father and son, Roberts and Randolph. May they pardon the journalist, kept within limits by an inflexible barrier! All these eminent professors, and others whose names my memory fails to recall, possess or possessed in different degrees that harmonious combination of qualities that I have called aptitude, and which is the first element in the game.

THE SECOND IMPORTANT REQUISITE

is will, and by will I mean the effort of moral qualities entirely distinct from physical properties, from knowledge of the game and from manual dexterity. In order to win a match it is not enough to know how to carom; the player must show energy, prudence ann appreciation of the pace of the game, tenacity, close attention, quickness and daring; in short a will such as the cleverest men possess only at intervals. Those of us who saw the match between Vignaux and Slosson at the Salle Valentino, will always remember the manly resignation of the American player while his redoubtable adversary was piling up a run of 1,531 points. In his turn Slosson showed his skill, and in a desperate position made a run of 1,103 points in less than an hour; it was a marvelous piece of work, but was especially admirable as a demonstration of the force of will that nothing could shake. Sheffler and Vignaux have more than once shown similar examples of energy. Experience of match games teaches a professional player that he must have a certain suppleness in his play; that is to say, that he must adapt it to circumstances. He knows and feels that in a given moment in

BOLDNESS

alone lies his chance of success. Should the opportunity be favorable he will crush his opponent by risking dangerous shots; at another moment he will have to concede liberally to adverse fate, play with great prudence, be calmer and more calculating and, as it were, lend an ear to the heart-beats of the game in progress. At the beginning of a match the stroke of the cue is more uncertain; there is precision sometimes, but a correct measurement is rare. As it is, runs depend upon these two factors. With precision alone a player can only obtain single carroms; whereas when there is also proper calculation the runs can be made.

Will is the more essential element, inasmuch as spectators are at times intolerant and unjust, and do not hesitate to annoy by their outcries the player with whom they do not sympathize. Great matches induce heavy wagers, and the persons betting, not content with upholding their own champion, imagine that they have a right to bother his opponent. Even in the presence of an impartial and kindly disposed company, I have seen players lose their presence of mind under the influence of a sort of nervousness. Every one is nervous at times; but the clever player when he is seized with what the French call le trac redoubles his care and attention. He is slow and cautious, chooses the easiest and simplest means of making carroms, and only begins free play when he is master of his nerves.

Finally, we must acknowledge that, however mathematical the noble game of billiards may be, chance is

A THIRD ELEMENT,

the perpetual instability of which singularly modifies its results. No one is beyond the laws of chance. I know some particularly lucky persons who have no cause to complain on that ground, and to them I would say: "Take up, in an analyzing spirit, the chain of shots that have been made during the course of a game, and if you are not blinded by self-conceit, you will see, after all, how little you real merit had to do with them." The variation of a millimeter decides the fate of a game. This imperceptible distance, which has not been estimated while aiming and giving the stroke, becomes the yawning crevice wherein your fortune may be suddenly engulfed. Among amateurs, the less skill there is, the more frequently luck intervenes, and this is so true that games of a hundred points, between poor players, daily show unexpected results, which resemble the thousand and one chances that come in the dealing of a pack of cards. A very common error is to believe that chances become equalized. The tendency to equalization leaves room for the formation of considerable differences in the scores, and as the number of games contested by the same two players is not sufficient to form an average, the final result is not at all convincing. If, on the other hand, instead of examining the games of amateurs, we scrutinize those of professionals, we see that their science averts many lucky strokes; nevertheless, hese lucky strokes will occur sometimes, and this is sufficient to incalculably change the results expected. Thus these same causes produce the same effects through widely different channels. What then is there left for a player to do when he is in ill luck? Laugh it out if he is a simple amateur seeking relaxation; triumph over it by strong and patient will if he be a professional. I would strongly dissuade everyone from playing what is here called in carrom, that is

LAYING THE BALLS SAFELY.

I hold this practice in contempt. It is fit only for the weak and timid. The worst of all methods, from an artistic point of view, is the one that consists in this sort of play and in purposely making one single carrom at a time. To carrom with a very fine side on, and to play forcibly enough to lay the ball up against the cushion at a distance of about eight feet from the red, seems to be the object of a certain class of players who, by following this system, retard the progress that they ought to make. I have met players who succeeded in thus making carroms with a phenomenal dexterity; but much luck is needed, as it is constantly necessary for them to play on balls lying widely apart. These amateurs, when pitted against a fairly-strong adversary, are invariably crushed; they cannot hold their own. This kind of play ought to be condemned by amateurs, though it does not follow that it is mean or unfair to act on the defensive, either by a series of prudent shots, or even by shots intentionally and necessarily. To attempt a carrom that is beyond the player's skill is the sign of ignorance or of rashness. Give up the idea of making carroms, and play the negatory shot, which it is difficult enough to execute cleverly.

This letter is long and I have only lightly skimmed over a vast subject. I cannot conclude, however, without offering a welcome to the great American billiard players. May they return among us this winter. They may depend upon finding in France that hospitality which constitutes the appanage of our beautiful land. I can see many kindred feelings and much sympathy between the two races stretching their arms towards each other across the Atlantic; there are also two characteristic traits common to both the worship of liberty and the passion for billiards. A FRENCH AMATEUR.

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OPINION OF AN EXPERT.

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