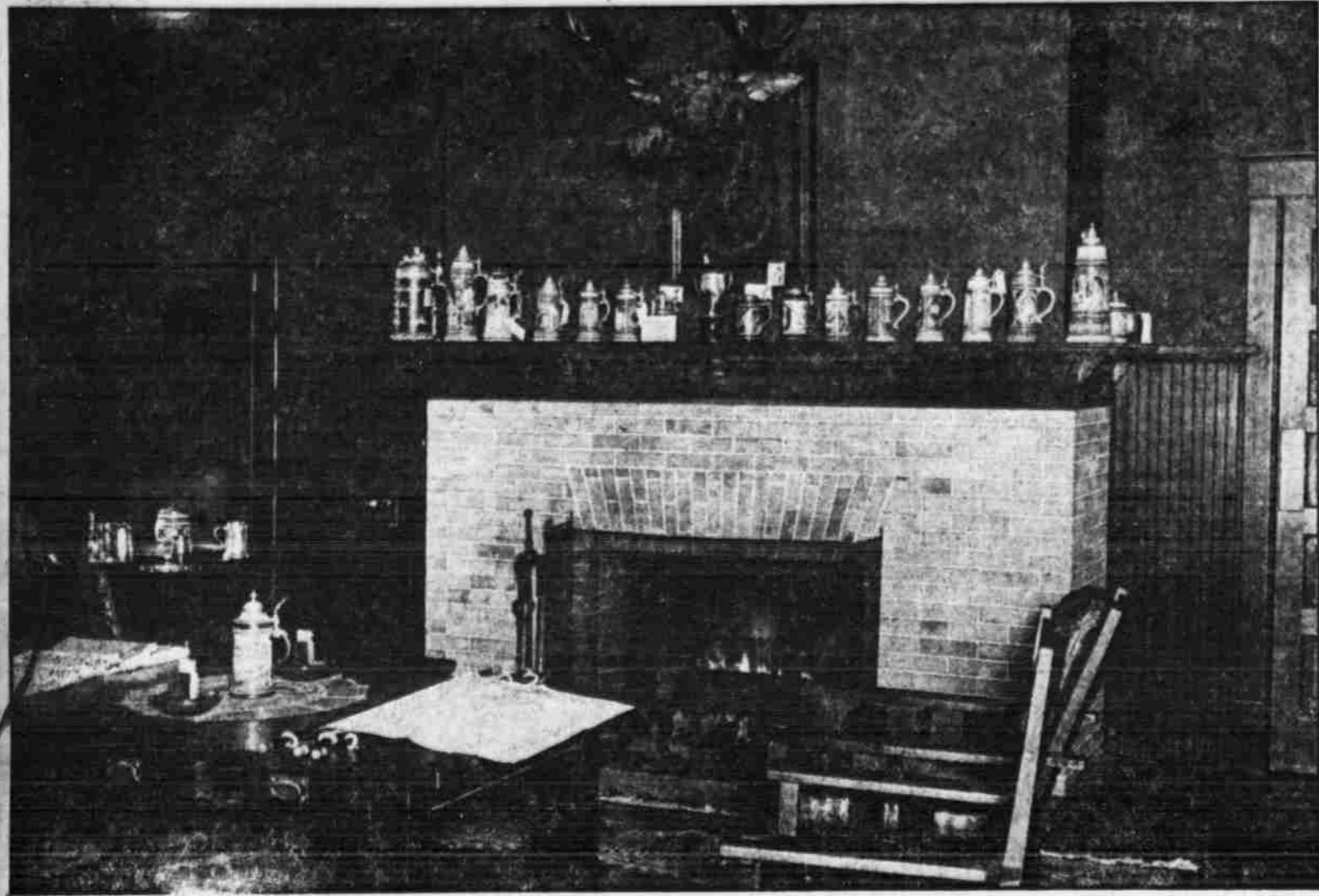


# Home of Omaha's New Racquet Club and the Games Played There



FIREPLACE AND MANTEL IN RECEPTION ROOM, OMAHA RACQUET CLUB.—Photo by a Staff Artist.



SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THE OMAHA RACQUET CLUB.—Photo by a Staff Artist.

THE recent incorporation of the sport of racquet by a party of young men of more or less affluence and social position is interesting from the fact that anciently, when the game of racquets first began to be played, it was not the sport of the nobility of the time, but of the laboring men and the soldiery. Then tennis of a sort was the knightly game and racquets the sport of the common people; now tennis is within the reach of all, while only the college man and a few of his intimates play in the racquet and the squash ball courts.

The history of the game in Omaha is not a large volume. N. P. Dodge, Jr., some time will have the beautiful memorial statue erected to his memory and placed in a niche at the first landing of the grand stairway in the beautiful Bedford stone club house of the future, for he laid the cornerstone. This was in the year 1922. The trouble with Mr. Dodge was that he felt in his person a desire for active exercise and amusement about the hour of 5 o'clock in the evening, which could not be gained on the snow-drifted golf links of winter, and was not appeased by a run of seventeen on the Omaha club billiard green. Mr. Dodge told his troubles to other eligible and able-bodied young men. The line of talk made quite a hit. Every one of them discovered at that time he had been in need of some sort of exercise and a place to go for an hour, before dinner.

So a club was formed. The original members were Joe Barker, Ezra Millard, N. P. Dodge, Jr., Luther and Charlie Kountze, Sam Caldwell, Ben Cotton, Ed Morrison, E. H. Sprague, Jack Hatin, George Palmer, Hal Yates, Frank Haskell, C. H. Brown, Sam Burns, J. T. Stewart, Clark Powell, Fred Rustin, Herbert Rogers and Cop Young.

### First Home of the Club.

Two rooms were rented on the third floor at 108 South Fourteenth street. Two courts were built into a large room, which was fitted by nature as the receptacle for nice cubicular balconies of merchandise. A little place was thrown together in one corner for a shower bath and the members of the new club, having acquired a debt for the furnishing of this athletic club, turned to with considerable interest and a few old tennis racquets to learn the game, not all, however. Mr. Dodge brought the idea and a fair proficiency from Harvard, in which stretch of timber it has quite ingrained itself. Other men—the Kountzes, J. T. Stewart and several more—had learned the game in the eastern universities, and the other members of the club were, most of them, tennis players, so they already had the use of the racquet and soon began to develop form in the squash ball arena.

### Growth of the Idea.

The game as first played was not very fast. The courts were open at the back, which would be slightly like playing billiards with one of the end cushions off. But the twenty young men were out for the game and despite the fundamental character of the club house, which consisted of four walls, a ceiling and a few fairly comfortable chairs, it made a hit with them, and they were nearly all of them constant attendants at its shrine. Additions were made to the roster from time to time, so that when a set of talk was planted last September regarding a new club house there were thirty active members. When Mr. Dodge started something of which he became the first president, many of those who joined were dubious as to success for squash and thought the club would have to fall back on hand ball. But it fell on its feet. Hand ball requires too calloused a hand, and the sons of Omaha's best are not very calloused handed as a rule. It is hoped, so they liked the new game, which made a tennis racquet do the work. When the new club house was decided on, the players desired to advance from the rather scientific game of squash they were playing to the real thing—racquets. So the Omaha Racquet club.

The new club was incorporated, and dedicated January 1. At the time it had a building which had cost something like \$12,000. Its membership is now eighty, about ten of whom have come in since the opening of the new house. The membership has been limited to 100. The initiation fee is \$100 and the monthly dues \$2. But the men members are not all the machinery. There are the associate members. These are the wives of men members and may become associates, by paying certain fees and receiving the proper number of white balls. The associate membership has not been able to do any duty in the new club owing to the carpenters and masons, who would foot about and stick on tiles and do other things necessary to the finishing touches. The associates are to have the use of the courts in the morning hours when the men members are in the offices and the counting house. A few women were regular players at 113 old Fourteenth street club.

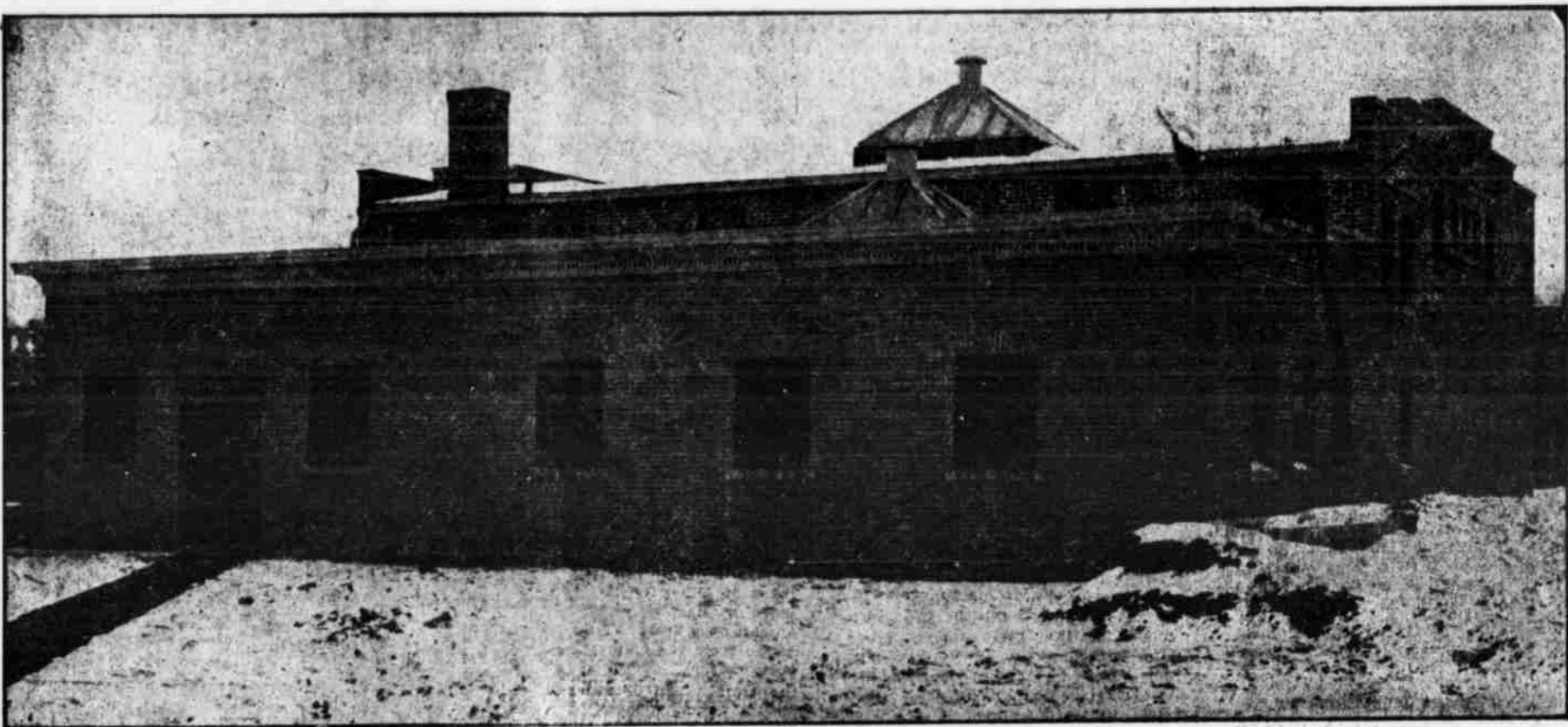
### Bound to Expand.

The Omaha Racquet club is the beginning of what will undoubtedly grow in time to be one of the two most prominent clubs in Omaha. It will in the first place be an athletic club with many other branches of the exercising art than squash ball and racquets. The building which has now been put up was placed far back on the club with the idea that future additions to

the membership and broadening of the sport curriculum would make necessary additional room. The expense of frozen floods which is to become a lawn with flowers next spring will in time be covered by a building, 80x125, with beautiful permanent architecture and all the adjuncts, beautiful and practicable, of a prosperous club. But that will not be tomorrow. Probably the first addition to the present equipment will be a cafe. With the construction of this will follow the lunching members, who will acquire a mild form of physical exhilaration by climbing the stairs to watch their companions beating the little red balls about the courts.

**What the Pipe Contains.**  
When the club house was dedicated with a very enjoyable reception New Year's, certain parts of it were incomplete. Now by February 1 this work will be ended. Chief among the things being done is the tiling of the swimming bath. White enameled bricks, rather than tiles, are being laid in the bottom and on the sides of the plunge, so that when it is finished it will be a delightful place to float about of a summer day on a piece of board, smoking and reading a piece of light literature. The pool is 25x50 feet in surface with a shelf of shallow water at the south end, and holding altogether 50,000 gallons. A special furnace has been installed in the basement to keep this water between the temperature of 66 and 70 degrees. A filtering plant was one of the most costly adjuncts of the bath, but it is assured now that a coin can be seen at the bottom of

the pipe.



EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE NEW CLUB HOUSE OF THE OMAHA RACQUET CLUB.—Photo by a Staff Artist.

## Uncle Sam's Military Expert in Far Manchuria

(Copyright, 1925, by Frank C. Carpenter.)  
WASHINGTON, Jan. 28.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I give you today a chat with one of the live workmen of the United States Army, a young officer, who for the last year has been in the thickest of the fighting in Manchuria. As one of our military attaches, he was assigned by the War department to the Japanese army to report upon its operations in the field. He went to Japan, and from there joined General Kuroki. This was last February, and he has been with that branch of the Japanese forces until a little more than a month ago, when he started back home. The man I refer to is Captain Peyton Conway March, who graduated at West Point in 1888, who commanded the Astor battery during the Cuban war until it was mustered out, and who then went to Luzon and led the American forces in the famous "battle in the clouds." In that battle General Gregorio del Pilar was killed, and at about the same time General Concepcion Aguinaldo's chief of staff, and Aguinaldo's wife were captured, another engagement Captain March was commended by the president for his gallantry, and for other services he was made colonel of the United States volunteers. At the beginning of the Japanese war he was one of four officers chosen to report upon the fighting to the War department in its shrine.

My talk with Captain March relates to the little things rather than the big ones of the campaign. The stories of the battles have been told in the papers as far as the censorship would permit. This matter comes fresh to the mind and is, it seems to me, full of flesh and blood interest.

**Six Hundred Thousand Fighting Men.**  
I asked Captain March as to the number of men now actually fighting in Manchuria. He replied:  
"There are at least 600,000 soldiers in the two armies. The Japanese have 225,000 and the Russians almost as many. The forces are lined up almost facing each other. They are on the two sides of a little river known as the Sha, or as it is more commonly called the Sha-ho, the word having no meaning. The soldiers are stretched along both sides of that river for a distance of about thirty miles. In some places they are not more than two hundred yards apart, and in others as much as 2,000 yards. Each army has dug entrenchments and put up fortifications, and is waiting for the other to charge. Now and then there is a salty at different places along the line, but when I left there October 15 they were still waiting to fight. They were waiting December 16, and are waiting still."

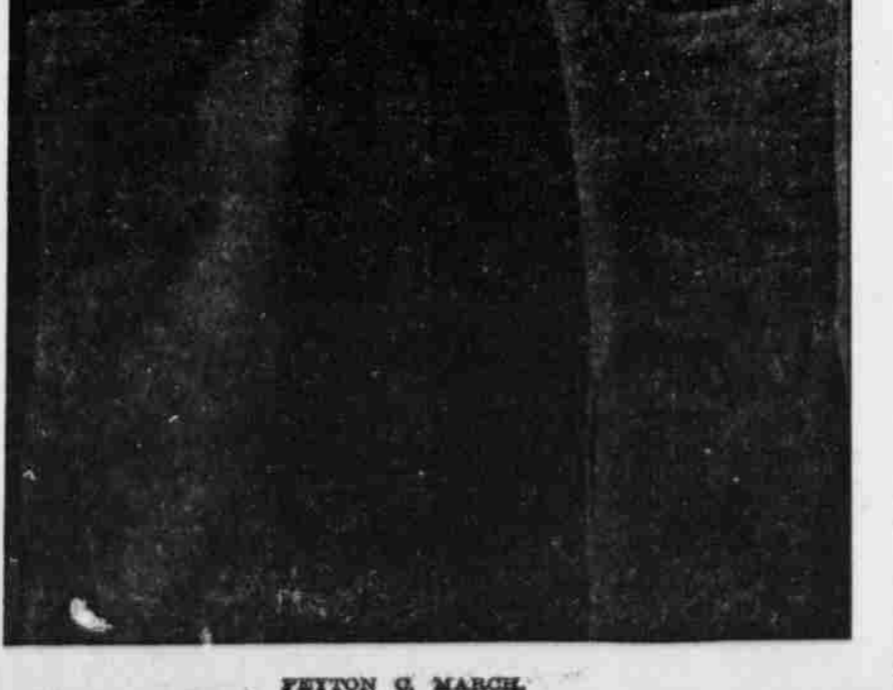
**Mukden and the Japanese.**  
"Are they near Mukden?"  
"One end of the line, I should say, is not more than fifteen miles from Mukden. The other is perhaps fifty miles away. They are, you know, pretty far up in Manchuria. They are so near Mukden that we could take our glasses and examine the towers over the gates leading through the walls. They are about as far away from Mukden as Rockville is distant from Washington. Fifteen or sixteen miles is not much."

"Mukden is a very important place, is it not?"  
"Politically yes, strategically no," replied Captain March. "It is important as the capital of Manchuria, and in that it falls into the hands of the Japanese it will impress the Chinese and the Manchurians, and they may think that the

Japanese are the more likely to be victorious. As to its advantages as a war base, they are comparatively little. The most important point is Harbin, at the junction of the Chinese Eastern railway and the Transsiberian railway, where one branch runs off to Vladivostok. Harbin has a rich country surrounding it, which raises enormous quantities of grain.  
"There are flouring mills there which are supplying the Russian army, and also the great warehouses of the Russians. Not far away is a rich cattle and horse country, so that altogether the place is exceedingly valuable. It is toward that point that the Japanese are working. If they could capture Harbin and disconnect the two lines of railway shutting off eastern Siberia from the west, and at the same time, get possession of these enormous mills and supplies, they would perhaps be much nearer peace than they are now."  
"But is there any possibility that they can do that?"  
"In war everything is possible," said Captain March. "I am not a prophet and I do not care to predict. You must remember, however, that the campaign of the Japanese, as their armies move toward the north, becomes more difficult, while the campaign of the Russians is to a great extent less so. The Japanese are moving away from their base. They have to carry all their provisions, ammunition and other supplies farther on, whereas the Russians are falling back to where their supplies are."  
"It is something of an undertaking to carry the food and supplies of 200,000 men, to say nothing of their arms and munitions of war," continued Captain March. "You must remember that the Japanese have as many men now stationed along the Sha-ho as there are men, women and children in Washington. Every one of them has to have his three meals a day, and good ones to withstand the cold. Every one has to have warm clothing, and if possible a place to sleep at night. In the winter the thermometer gets down to or below zero in Manchuria, so you see that a war like this has other problems than those of mere fighting. The same problems confront the Russians."

**Armed Furs.**  
"How do the men keep warm there in midwinter? They cannot have fires when under arms."  
"No, the most of them rely upon their clothing for warmth. Both armies wear more or less furs. The common soldiers of Japan have long thick overcoats of khaki, with high fur collars, which they can turn up about their faces, and the officers wear fur-lined coats. As to the Russians, some of them are clad in furs and some in sheepskins. The Cossack uniform is almost all fur, including an enormous fur cap."  
"As to the fire, one of the most serious questions is that of fuel. The march of Kuroki's army, with which I was, has been largely through a wooded country, and we have cut down the trees for wood. At times charcoal has been sent in from Japan for the use of the soldiers and just now they are doing all they can to pump out the Yantai coal mines. These mines are not very far from Mukden. They were used by the Russians, but they flooded them before they left, and they are still full of water. The Japanese are doing all they can to get pumps and empty the mines."

**Railroads and the War.**  
"These mines are reached by the railroads, are they not?"  
"Yes. The Japanese now have the southern end of the Chinese Eastern railroad. They have changed it to a narrow gauge, in order that they may be able to use Japanese engines and rolling stock. You may remember that the Russians have a broad gauge. For this reason the Japanese could not use the road until it was changed."  
"Is the Transsiberian road working well?"  
"Very well, indeed, I understand," said Captain March. "The government has taken charge of it and they are pouring soldiers into Manchuria over it. There is a steady stream of fighting men moving across Siberia day and night, and as fast as the soldiers die or become disabled they are replenished by others. It is wonderful how little the Russians seem to regard the loss of men. You would have thought that the 50,000 soldiers who were killed in the last great battle would have disorganized the army and disarranged its plans. It did not seem to affect the Russian policy one iota. The officers took it as a matter of course and also the men. This fact, it seemed to me, made a serious impression upon the Japanese. Before that battle they had no doubt of their ultimate success. Since then



PEYTON C. MARCH.

they have begun to wonder whether after all they can wear out or conquer a foe like this."

**The Russians as Soldiers.**  
"What kind of soldiers are the Russians?"  
"They are brave and will fight until they drop. They know nothing else. We captured many of them and there were thousands dead on the battlefield. Many of the privates are fine-looking. They are big-boned, stout fellows with fair complexions and light hair. This surprised me, as I had heard many stories of the viciousness and savagery of the Russian peasant. The faces I saw had no such characteristics, and the papers found upon the men conveyed a opposite impression. Every soldier had a pocket testament or at least the Four Gospels, and upon many of the dead we found letters written and ready for mailing to their families at home. The letters were simple, affectionate and loving, giving the little details of camp life and carrying messages to dear ones, large and small, in Russia. It seemed to me that men who could write such letters must be more than ordinarily decent. Speaking about the Testaments, it was a curious fact that the names of the company and regiments of the men were scratched out. This was to keep the Japanese from estimating the character of the Russian army."  
"From what you say, captain, the Russians must be religious?"  
"They have all forms of religion, and I do not see why we give them credit for honesty," said Captain March. "Every set of troops has its priest with it, a high-capped man in a long black gown. The soldiers sing hymns as they go into battle, and even during their night attacks, they charge, singing."

**The Japanese Soldier.**  
"How about the Japanese?"  
"They are just the opposite of the Russians. They make no noise whatever. They sing no military songs and in fact you never hear them singing. They are quiet in camp and on the march and in battle, but they go steadily ahead and fight to the death. There are no braver soldiers known than the Japanese, and none, I think, more efficient."  
"Are they well trained?"  
"Thoroughly so," said Captain March. "The work they are doing in Manchuria is no easy work for them. They have been doing this same thing in their maneuvers at home year after year for fifteen years. They have been moved by water from one part of Japan to another and have had to fight upon landing. Almost every problem that has come up in the war has been solved by them in these maneuvers again and again. They are organized after the German system. Each man knows just what he has to do and the army works like a great machine."  
"The Japanese army is composed of picked men," continued the military expert. "Every year all the able-bodied youths of Japan of a certain age have to appear before the authorities and the best are taken for soldiers. This lot is weeded out again and again until something like 40,000 or more men of equal height and good physique remain. These are trained for the army. As a result the Japanese troops are about as evenly matched a body of men as you will find in any army. They are intensely patriotic and almost every man esteems it an honor to die for his emperor."  
"What do you think of the officers of the two armies?"  
"They are able men and men of expe-

rience. The new courts, which are three in number, have been found to work admirably for squash ball, but the racquet court is a little short. The three courts are 20x35 feet and resemble a tennis court sawed in two at the net and backed up against the barn. The busy hours about the club are from 4:30 to 6:30 o'clock. The tournament committee, which consists of W. T. Burns, Jr., George Pritchett and Harry Wilkins, has commanded that a time limit of one-half hour be placed on the squashes during the rush period. In this way two men playing in each court at a time, twenty-four can have a game each evening. An intending player is supposed to register for time on the blackboard. Tournaments are to be played monthly. Twenty-eight men, who have been playing since the opening of skill and the end was reached Saturday night. L. L. Kountze and Sam Burns, who were picked for winners, are out of the running, and the scratch men generally have been surprised at the showing made by some of those who have been picked. For some of the members this was the first tournament.

**Place For the Players.**  
The first tournament was for a cup given by Ward Burgess and a consolation cup by Miss Preston. No tournaments with out-of-town clubs have been arranged, but there is a hope something may be pulled off with some Chicago players. H. N. Harriman is the best player of the Omaha club. He has but lately come from the east and joined too late to take part in the first tournament. W. T. Burns, Sam Burns, E. T. Kennedy, L. L. Kountze, E. W. Cotton, F. J. Haskell and N. P. Dodge, Jr., are among the heavy men of the club and would figure in any contest.

**What the Game is Like.**  
The game itself is a little like hand ball, only in that there is no racquet and no side and back walls. It is a little like tennis and it is a little like billiards. For squash, an ordinary tennis racquet is used with a red tennis ball. Racquets demand a leather ball and long-handled, small-bodied racquets. It is about the best winter game now played. A knowledge of tennis is some help, but not as much as would be supposed. The game consists of fifteen points and only the server scores. The wall serves as a net, as in tennis, and the player makes canons on the four sides of the court.  
The inside games of this family may have originated in the ark between the lines of feeding and watering the stock, and the Noah boys may have led a mastodon or a yak out of its box stall and had a round or two. The Henry story of kings in England and old Louis XI were about the first players to get in the sporting columns with their game. Court tennis—at the best court of the time, too—was the leader among these games. Tennis was brought into England by William the Conqueror and he made it about 40-love in a little set-to. The British-made racquets out of tennis and squash came from racquets. The first regular racquet court was built in London in 1532. The Brits were now the principal exponents of the game and have brought it to a very high degree of science. In the time of Henry VIII the game was confined to the working people, while that monarch's head to slip out occasionally between marriage and divorce proceedings and have a game of tennis by way of a brace. Not long afterward the haute monde saw what there was in the game and the House of Commons about the same time passing a law against the populace wasting its time at such useless diversions, the gentlemen of the court were left in possession of the racquet court, which they have since retained.

(Continued on Page Seven.)