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CHAMPION SHOT-PUTTER.

A MAN WHO IS POSSESSED OF EXTRAORDINARY STRENGTH.

A Very Popular Athlete—The First Contest and What Came of It—The International Events in Which He Has Participated—A Great Lawn Tennis Player.

Among the well known and popular athletes of the present time, the subject of this sketch is justly entitled to a prominent position and to the distinction of being an acknowledged champion of the world at his specialty. George R. Gray, the champion shot putter of the world, was born at Coldwater, in the province of Ontario, in 1866. When but a boy he showed great aptitude and skill in the different branches of athletic sports; he was the acknowledged champion of his neighborhood. In the spring of 1885 the Toronto Athletic club announced a handicap shot putting contest. Here was the chance for which Gray had long been waiting. He spent all his leisure time with the sixteen pound shot in his hand, endeavoring to improve his work. When the eventful day arrived few people outside of his friends knew of his ability, and he went up to Toronto confident of a big handicap. On arriving what was his surprise to learn that somehow or another his proficiency had become known, and as a result he was rated up among some of the finest performers in the province.

This being his first contest, he was naturally somewhat disheartened, but pluckily started in to do his best, and when the competition had been finished had the proud honor of receiving the congratulations of his friends upon scoring his maiden victory. After winning a few handicap events, he became ambitious to acquire the championship honors, but he little thought that the time would come when American, English and even Irish championship honors would be within his grasp. In 1885, at the Canadian championship meeting, he defeated Lambrecht, Queckberner and Condon. But Gray was not yet satisfied; he aspired to acquire fame as a record breaker, and with that end in view, devoted all his available time to practice. Some of his efforts then were considered marvelous. In 1887 the New York Athletic club gave a scratch shot putting contest, and Gray was invited to compete against his old time rivals, Lambrecht, Queckberner and Condon.

In this contest he again captured first honors, although he did not break any records. But he was determined to leave a record behind him, and remained in New York for a week or more devoting his time to practice and getting in fine form for the effort.



G. R. GRAY.

When he felt that conditions favored him a select coterie of experts were invited to the Mott Haven grounds to witness his performances. Success attended his efforts this time, and when he eventually started for Canada he left two or three records to his credit. In 1888, at the spring games of the New York Athletic club, Gray, who was then a member, won the 16 pound shot putting contest with 43 feet 7 inches, and also won second place in a handicap event with 42 feet 1/2 inch. At Philadelphia a few days previous he was third in a handicap with 42 feet 9 inches. When the New York Athletic club's championship team went to England Gray went with the chosen few. At the first meeting at Widner he distinguished himself by winning first prize and also placed an English record to his credit—49 feet 9 inches. Gray also appeared at the international championship meeting, held at Dublin Island, competing in the shot, hammer and 56 pound weight events, but only succeeded in winning the shot. On this occasion, however, he made amends for his deficiency in other respects by scoring a best world's record of 44 feet 9 inches. At Dunshaughlin he defeated Mitchell, the Irish Hercules, in the 28 pound shot, placing another world's record of 34 feet 2 inches to his credit. At the great championship meeting in Detroit last fall Gray had little difficulty in winning, although opposed by all of the crack athletes.

It would require too much space to give an account of his entire work during his athletic career, but it will be interesting perhaps to know that his record for the year of 1888 includes five championships, five records and two world's records.

Joseph S. Clark.

Mr. Joseph S. Clark, who was recently elected president of the National Lawn Tennis association to succeed Mr. R. D. Sears, is a graduate of Harvard college, and is one of the two lawn tennis players who have beaten ex-champion Sears. He won from the famous Boston player the college championship at Cambridge five or six years ago, and also defeated him in a match between representative players of the Longwood and Young America clubs. Mr. Clark is a prominent member of the Young America Cricket and Tennis club of Philadelphia, and has been a participant in nearly all the principal tennis tournaments of late years. He is very popular among tennis players and will make an excellent presiding officer.



JOSEPH S. CLARK.

TURF TALK.

The Boston horse show will take place in April.

Jim Gray is 6 years old. He is now in training at New Orleans.

Mr. France values the next foal of Rose Chief, the dam of Prince Wilkes (2:14 1/2), at \$5,000.

The pacing mare Ellwood, sister to Arrow, 2:18 1/2, reduced her record to 2:17 1/2 at Los Angeles, Cal., recently.

The report that Dwyer Brothers are to have second call on the services of Jockey Barnes is confirmed.

Sixty-four horses have been declared out of the American Derby, leaving eighty-three still eligible.

At the coming assizes in Perth there will be a breach of promise and two libel suits.

POPULAR DENMAN THOMPSON.

Something About the Man Who Made "The Old Homestead."

There is perhaps no actor in this country who has more good will of the theatre-going public and patrons of drama than Old Uncle Josh, Denman Thompson, who has secured such a strong hold upon the New York public in the new version of "Joshua Whitecomb," "The Old Homestead." Uncle Josh first saw the light of day at Girard, Erie county, Pa., on the 15th day of October, 1833. When he was 14 years old he was sent to New Hampshire to be educated at the Mount Cesar seminary. The year of 1850 found him in Boston engaged in the capacity of "super" at the Howard Athenaeum. This, however, was a little too slow for his taste and he soon joined the stock company of Brown and Bidde, playing as sort of general utility man, dancing the sailor's hornpipe between the acts.

In the course of time he drifted west and was several years at a Toronto theatre playing second comedy parts, Irish characters, such as Lucius O'Trigger in the "Rivals" and Paddy Miles' Boy in the "Limerick Boy." He was fairly successful in these parts, but the people wanted rant and fire and brimstone, which was not exactly to his liking. So in 1867 he went to Rochester, played low comedy parts and also bucked the tiger with varied success. He remained there two years, and made such a pronounced success as Salem Scudder in "The Octoroon" and as Jonathan Hook in "Moll Pitcher," both Yankee characters, that he determined to make a Yankee character part to suit himself. The winter of 1874-5 found him in Pittsburg, the idea of a Yankee character was still haunting him, and he decided to write one, which he did, and called it "Joshua Whitecomb, or, The Female Bathers."

It may be interesting to know where he got the idea of Joshua Whitecomb. It was a character taken from two men, who lived at Swansea, N. H. The serious side of the role was modeled from Joshua Holbrook, a sturdy farmer, who had rather singular ideas about regulating the world to make it conform to his views. The humorous portion of the character was taken from Capt. Otis Whitcomb, a quaint, humorous old Swansea farmer. Thompson played it at the Pittsburg variety theatre in February, 1875. From there he went to Rochester. It was here that J. M. Hill heard of him, and, after witnessing the performance, made the actor's acquaintance, and, after a few words, offered to place him and his sketch upon a regular stage. The piece was not a very clean one; it was one that few ladies would care to witness, dealing as it did with female bathers, seen through a fence.

The play was produced with varied success at Hooley's in Chicago (1876), for a week; it then made the tour of the country with indifferent success. At last Hill took his protégé to San Francisco, where Josh met with instantaneous success, running for eight consecutive weeks. From that time on it proved a bonanza for six years, and drew over \$400,000 for its enterprising manager and clever actor. Hill then dissolved his connection with Thompson, and Den has been going it alone ever since.

Mr. Thompson's new play, "The Old Homestead" deals with Joshua Whitecomb at home, and its success has been marvelous. It draws bigger crowds today than when it was first presented. Uncle Joshua's profits in "The Old Homestead" are said to be over \$150,000; he has earned a number of fortunes, but has dropped some of them in speculation. His domestic life is happy, and he spends every summer at his child's home in Swansea, where he renews his intimacy with the life that is now nightly depicted in "The Old Homestead."

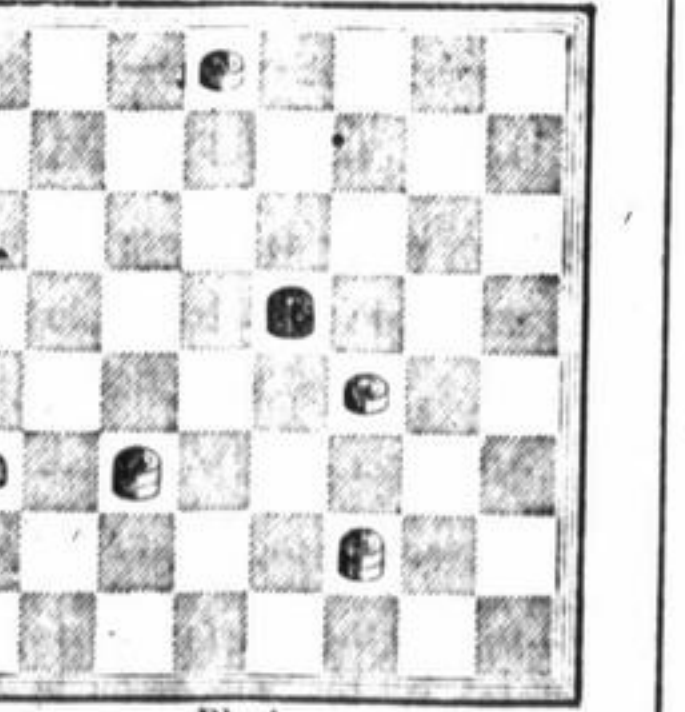
CHESS AND CHECKERS.

Problems Which Will Puzzle the Experts to Solve.



White to play and mate in two moves.

CHESS.
Black.



White to play and win.

CHECKERS.
White.

SOLUTIONS.

Last week's chess problem:

White. Black.
1. R to K R's 4th. 1. B x Kt (Bl K's 6th.)
2. Kt to K Kt's 5th. 2. P to K's 3d.
3. R takes P (ch.) 3. K to K's 4th.
4. R x B (disc. checkmate.)

Last week's checker problem:

13 to 17 27 to 34 26 to 23 11 to 8
15 to 10 26 to 31 16 to 11 6 to 10
17 to 22 24 to 19 23 to 19 8 to 3
22 to 27 31 to 26 10 to 7 19 to 15
22 to 20 19 to 16 2 to 6 B. wins.

There is no likelihood of the Athletic-Philadelphia series being declared off. The clubs will play three games on April 6, 8 and 13.

The fifteen cents per capita assessment made by the National assembly will place the Wheelmen's league entirely out of debt.

It has been rumored in Chicago that Referee McDonald had \$3,000 bet on McAuliffe in the recent mill.

Philadelphia is talked of as the place for the next Wheelmen's league meet.

It is said that Ed Hanlan, the oarsman, made money in Australia.

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J. ABERNETHY.

The reason that check reins are not used on Philadelphia street car horses is to give the animals a chance while the car is in motion to nibble at the grass.—Puck.

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