

CROQUET.

The Origin of the Game—Its Moral Features as a Pastime—Its Great Popularity and its Social Attractions. The Croquet Resorts of Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Convention Rules. The Prospect Park Croquet Parties.

Captain Mayne Reid, in his elaborate treatise on the game of croquet—the most complete work of the kind published—opens his book with the following lines :

“ You may talk about skating, and sleighing, and dancing,
Proclaim the delights of the rod and the gun;
Of the ride through the Park upon steed gaily prancing;
The row on the lake until daylight is done,
Praise the sports of the land and the water, each one—
The bath by the beach, or the yacht on the sea;
But of all out door pleasures known under the sun,
A good game of croquet's the sweetest to me.”

There is an old saying that “ the bow ever bent loses its elasticity.” So spake a renowned sage; and the idea thus figuratively expressed by Æsop, over his ancient game of marbles, is equally true at the present hour conveyed in the more homely modern formula, “ All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” It is the business of all who have an interest in the physical and moral well being of the race, to look with approbation upon all healthful and harmless games, and there is no game now in vogue which so fully carries out the idea of a healthy and harmless pastime as does the game of croquet. Unlike chess, billiards, and whist, it is a sport of the open air, and for that reason conducive to health; while it also has the advantage of most out door pastimes, in affording easy exercise to the body, without requiring that violent muscular exertion which renders cricket, base ball, and many similar games objectionable to individuals of delicate frame or weak constitution. But the best argument in favor of croquet is

ITS MORALITY.

It has no taint attached to it, and never will have. It is too refined, too intellectual ever to become a gambler's game, and in this respect it finds chess its only equal in comparison. Another attraction is its social influence; also its adaptation to all classes of society, to both sexes and all ages, from the child of ten to the grandfather of sixty. In fact, on the croquet field assemble "the seven ages of man," all with like certainty of success.

THE GAME IN ENGLAND,

says: "In nearly every square in London, where it is permitted, croquet parties are going on daily, to the intense delight of the outsiders, who watch the game with the greatest interest. The London Arabs climb the railings to get a better view of the proceedings; the tradesmen's boys and the like meanwhile allow the purchases, which they ought to be taking to their destination, to remain baking in the sun, while they enjoy their share of the fun. And, indeed, the scene is a pretty one, and the dresses adopted by the fairer portion of the community altogether charming. Short dresses are most prevalent: short white muslins, looped over colored silk skirts, caught up here and there with colored ribbons, with these Marie Antoinette fichus and jaunty little hats—not the stiff straw hats, with drooping feathers, we were accustomed to of yore, but mere morsels of blonde, covered with rosebuds, as coquettish and pretty as any worn by the dainty shepherdesses to be seen on pieces of Chelsea china, or on the pretty cups and saucers of old days. Not only in the squares, but in almost all the suburban gardens, croquet parties are the rage, and most of the fine old places in the neighborhood of the metropolis, and within an easy distance of it, have croquet parties also; but then these entertainments are on a grander scale."

There is no denying the fact that the introduction of croquet has almost revolutionized our outdoor social life. It is the only game of the kind in existence in which both sexes can participate with equal zest, pleasure and skill. Then, too, another advantage the game possesses, is that it can be played on any piece of grass land at command. The City Park lawn, the grass plat of the mansion, the open field, the vacant lot, or the village green, all afford facilities for a game of croquet to a more or less satisfactory extent, according as the field is well rolled, level or otherwise.

The only drawback to the full success of the pastime is the difficulty attendant upon providing the game with a fully established code of rules. When the game was first introduced the rules were simple and they were then very generally observed; but since the science of croquet has been developed, new points of play have so multiplied that it has become almost a rule for each croquet ground to have its own code of rules.

THE PROSPECT PARK RULES.

For the information of the general croquet public of this city we give the Code below, the Convention, by the way, having copyrighted them. They are to be had only of the members of the Prospect Park Croquet Association, at their Secretary's residence, 66 Elliott place, not being for sale:

I.—THE FIELD.

The stakes may be set 70 feet apart and the first bridge placed 7 feet from the first stake; the second bridge 7 feet from the first; the third (or first wing bridge) 14 feet to the left and $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet in advance of the second bridge; the fourth (or central) bridge on a line with the first and second bridges and 21 feet in advance of the latter. The remaining five bridges shall be placed at the same relative distances to complete the game. Thus there will be five bridges in a line between the stakes and four outside or wing bridges.

II.—LIMITS.

The area of play should be limited to ten feet beyond a line drawn around the game, bearing on the stakes and wing bridges, and any ball driven to field shall be brought back (in a direction toward the centre bridge), to a point twelve inches inside of this limit before play proceed, otherwise this privilege is lost,

III.—BALLS.

The best balls are made of composition or rubber, and should be $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and painted a solid color, black, white, blue and red.

IV.—MALLETS.

The mallets may be of boxwood, and are in good proportion, having the following measurements: Head $2\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ inches, handle 25 inches in the clear.

V.—BRIDGES.

Bridges should be $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width and 12 inches in depth. They should be made of stout wire and painted white.

VI.—PARTNERS.

When the partners have not been mutually agreed upon, they may be determined by all placing their balls on a line, three paces from the stake and all striking simultaneously; the two lodging nearest the stakes being partners and also winning the choice of balls, and the right to order the lead.

VII.—TOUR OF PLAY.

The tour of play should be to the left.

VIII.—LEADING.

The leading ball shall be placed at a point, on a line with the stakes, and midway between the stake and first bridge, "the spot," and shall proceed to run the bridges.

IX.—THE BLOW.

The blow shall in all cases, be a fair, square blow, made with the head of the mallet only.

X.—PUSH SHOT.

It shall not be lawful for the mallet to remain in contact with the ball after the delivery of the blow.

XI.—SCORING OR MAKING A POINT.

A point is made by running (or making) a bridge or tolling a stake.

XII.—BOOBY.

Should a ball fail to make the first bridge, it becomes a booby, and as such must play from its resting place. Playing upon a booby gives no right to further play unless by the same stroke a point is scored. A booby cannot exercise any of the rights of a bridged ball.

XIII.—TWO STROKES.

If a player, with one blow, succeed in running more than one bridge, or in running a bridge and tolling the stake, he shall be entitled to two strokes.

XIV.—SUCCESSION OF PLAY.

When a player fails to score, the next color follows.

XV.—BRIDGE ONCE MADE.

A bridge once passed, whether by accident or design, is made.

XVI.—TOLLING THE STAKE.

A ball tolls the stake when it comes in contact therewith.

XVII.—POSITION.

A ball is not in position when by placing the handle of the mallet against the bridge on the far side thereof, the ball touches, except the ball be properly running the bridge and has partially made the same.

XVIII.—ROQUET.

A player is said to roquet a ball when his own comes in contact therewith.

XIX.—FROZEN.

Frozen balls shall be considered as already roqueted. Balls are "frozen" when they are in contact.

XX.—CROQUET.

A ball that has been roqueted, may be croqueted. This may be accomplished by the player placing his own ball in contact with the roqueted ball, holding his foot firmly on his own ball and striking it a blow with the mallet thereby driving the ball in contact a greater or less distance at his pleasure.

XXI.—CROQUET DECLINED.

Croquet may in any case be declined and play proceed from the resting place of the ball.

XXII.—CROQUET ONLY ONCE.

The privilege of croquet can be exercised only once on each ball in an inning, unless a point is scored.

XXIII.—FLINCH.

In making the croquet, if the player's ball slip from under his foot it is "a flinch" and his play ceases.

XXIV.—ROQUET AND A POINT.

If by the same blow a ball roquet another and make a point, the player shall have the right of croquet or roquet.

XXV.—A POINT AND ROQUET.

If by the same blow a ball make a point and roquet, it gives no privilege beyond the right to croquet and continue its tour.

XXVI.—ROQUETING SEVERAL BALLS.

When by one blow several balls are roqueted they may be croqueted in any order at the option of the player, but if this privilege be exercised on one, it must be exercised on all of the roqueted balls.

XXVIII.—MISPLACED BALLS.

When in croquetting a player strikes or misplaces any other ball with his foot or mallet, it shall be treated as a "finch."

XXIX.—MISPLACED BRIDGES OR STAKES.

Any misplaced bridge or stake may be corrected on discovery.

XXX.—ROVER.

When a ball passes the last bridge homeward, it becomes a rover, and unless at the same time it make roquet it must take position on and play from the "spot." If a ball passes this bridge by any other means than its own play it shall not "spot."

XXXI.—ROQUET—CROQUET.

A rover may use the croquet without holding himself fast, and this distinguished privilege of roquet—croquet is the only enlargement of his powers. When he uses roquet—croquet, the croqueted ball must be permanently displaced, failing in this his play ceases.

XXXII.—ROVER DEAD.

When a rover touches the home stake the ball is dead and must be removed from the ground.

ACCIDENTS.

XXXIII.—DISPLACED BY AN ADVERSARY.

Any ball displaced from its position by an adver-

sary, whether by accident or intent, may be allowed to so remain or be replaced at its owner's option.

XXXIV.—DISPLACED BY A FRIEND.

Any ball displaced from position by a friend, whether by accident or intent, may be allowed to so remain or be replaced at the option of the adversary.

XXXV.—INTERRUPTED BY AN ADVERSARY.

Any ball interrupted in transitu by an adversary may be placed at any point on its general course at its owner's option.

XXXVI.—INTERRUPTED BY A FRIEND.

Any ball interrupted in transitu by a friend may remain where it rests or be placed at any point on its general course at the option of the adversary.

XXXVII.—OTHER INTERFERENCES.

Any still ball interfered with by some other than the players must be replaced on discovery and an interrupted ball may be struck over again.

MISPLAY.

XXXVIII.—OUT OF TURN DISCOVERED BY AN ADVERSARY.

If a ball is played out of turn and is discovered by an adversary, the adversary shall decide the play to rest at the point of discovery or replace the balls at his option and the player lose his turn in due place and time.

XXXIX.—OUT OF TURN DISCOVERED BY A FRIEND.

But if the discovery is made by a friend, the above rule shall still apply, except he shall not lose his proper turn in play.

*** XL.—USING WRONG BALLS DISCOVERED BY AN ADVERSARY.**

If a player is discovered by an adversary using the wrong ball, the adversary can decide the play to rest then or there or replace the balls, at his option, and the player shall lose its next turn.

XLII.—WRONG BALL DISCOVERED BY A FRIEND.

If a player is discovered by a friend using the wrong ball, the player may replace the ball and then proceed with his proper play—provided—if the original position cannot be remembered to the satisfaction of the adversary, his play must cease then and there.

XLIII.—BRIDGE MADE IN ERROR.

A bridge made in error cannot be challenged after a successor has had play.

XLIV.—OUT OF TURN AND NOT CHALLENGED.

If a ball play out of turn and the discovery is not made until another player has succeeded, then the progress made shall hold good.

XLV.—SUCCEEDED BY PLAYER WRONG.

XLV.—BALL STRUCK TWICE.

A ball cannot be twice croqueted during an inning without a point has been scored, but a player may drive his against another the second time as a final act.

XLVI.—CHALLENGE STOPS PLAY.

Any act of misplay, challenged by an adversary, stops the inning.

XLVII.—POSITION MUST BE TOLD.

Any player must tell his position when asked; courtesy requires this. Every player may not be able to carry in mind the whole play, but each can easily remember his own status.

XLVIII.—MOOT POINTS SETTLED.

All moot points may be settled without endless harangue, by a simple statement of the facts to all engaged and a majority vote shall be final. In case of a tie, the affirmative and negative shall be put and the toss of a coin shall decide.

XLIX.—MODERATION AND JUDGMENT.

Players should bear in mind that balls and mallets are perishable and not use undue force in their blows, as no distance beyond the limits, to which an adversary may be driven can be of the slightest damage to him.

It will be seen by the above code that the Prospect Park Association play what is known as "tight" croquet which they claim requires far more skill than the rules of "loose" croquet do. In the materials of the game, too, they have taken a step in advance, as they use only the Albany Tenax balls—a composition ball, tough, hard and elastic—a ball made of paper instead of wood. These balls admit of more success in the making of carom shots than do the non elastic wooden balls. Loose croquet is being generally abandoned among the best players of the game in England, and it is rapidly being adopted here as the only game for experts.

A movement is on foot to hold a regular croquet convention in this city, next Spring, at which a revised code of the Park Association rules could be adopted, as there is room for improvement in the wording and order of the above rules.

MATCHES THIS SUMMER

will be played at the Park by the members of the Park Association, which will present the beauties of tight croquet very fully, and the members now stand ready to accept challenges from any croquet clubs of New York or Brooklyn to be played under their code of rules, and with the Tenax balls.