

to most players, for, generally speaking, we are tasters of chess rather than students, preferring to take our instruction, if have it we must, with a maximum of pleasure and a minimum of effort. It is not for our own good, but for the other fellow's undoing, that we tolerate instruction at all. We need it because he may have it, and we want no whit more of it than is necessary to beat him every time. Most of us have an inner conviction we only require to be lightly armoured with it. If any stranger of the Dreadnought type, laden to the scuttles with the "Handbuch" and other foreign death-dealing contraptions, sail into our waters—well, we are not devoid of ingenuity; there are more combinations in the board than were ever played upon it. Even the "Handbuch" is not final. Anyway, it is a costly and top-heavy equipment. Fine as the game is, it isn't worth the scandal.

It is the third aspect of the book that will appeal most to the average chess player, for in sketching the development of his powers, Dr. Tarrasch presents us with some excellent vignettes of himself at various stages of his career. One does not need to be a devotee of chess to appreciate the human interest in the following excerpts, which we have taken the liberty of shortening here and there:—

I came into the world no ordinary being. To the horror of my parents I was afflicted with a club foot, which, however, proved no hindrance to my rapid progress. At the age of four I could read and write, and at six I read every book in my father's library that I could lay hands on, and not unintelligently, either. Even today I recall with pleasure how my teacher in the preparatory class raised his hands in astonishment when, on being told to read aloud, I did so easily and flowingly like an adult, instead of toilsomely spelling out each word like my school companions. I had less taste and talent for arithmetic, and even later, after I had grown up, I remember my mother used often to say in reproach that I could not count. In other branches, especially in ancient languages, I was nearly always first at school. Indeed, I became so accustomed to the position that it was accounted a reproach to me at home if I took a second place.

Chess first came within his purview at the age of sixteen, when he was "Obersekundaner"—an Upper Second boy. Here is the manner of it:

It is true that under the guidance of a friend I had made fantastic excursions on the chess board at an earlier age. But the real beginning of my chess career dates from the moment when a school comrade gave me the surprising information that chess, too, was a subject on which books had been written, and lent me "The Practical Chess Primer of Alphonse von Breda." This book opened a new world to me. The amazing beauty of our splendid game took hold of me irresistibly, and I immersed myself in its study with enthusiasm. "His progress was rapid." My enthusiasm spread to my school-fellows, and soon half the Upper Second was playing chess, and not badly, either. When, by practice, we had acquired some little skill, one fine day we made an excursion, five deep—singly we should not have dared to invade this sanctuary—into the confectioner's shop of Fischer and Busch, in the Königsplatz, at Breslau, where every afternoon chess was in strong evidence. We were looking on quietly and respectfully at some play in progress, when a gentleman in the circle of spectators invited me to a game. The excitement that stirred our young minds can readily be imagined. How could I come out of the ordeal—I, who was looked upon as the strongest player in the school? The excitement grew in intensity when my opponent opened the game with 1. Kt-QB3. We were all well acquainted with the amusing game in the "Chess Catechism of Portius," where the band conductor leads the Baron on to slippery ground by such disconcerting moves as 1. Kt-QB3; 2. Kt-KB3. Did my unknown opponent really think he could dispose of me in this off-hand manner? The presumption gained in probability when upon my reply of 1., P-K4, he developed his King's Knight. But his next few moves dissipated the illusion, and I saw that his opening proceeded from simplicity and not from cunning. I beat him easily several times in succession. The exultation in our circle was intense, and we became frequent visitors at the confectionery establishment. We soon found that in

chess, maturity is not a question of years; we were more than a match for the best player there.

But space prevents us from giving further extracts from the interesting narrative of his chess experiences at Breslau. He tells that at 1 p.m. the school was discharged, and "at two o'clock prompt I was at Fischer and Busch's deep in a game," where he remained till the evening, proceeding home to study chess books. Naturally, this devotion to a pastime alarmed his mother, who extracted a promise from him to forego chess till he had undergone his "Abiturienten" examination. He kept his word faithfully, and in 1880 passed his examination "more brilliantly than any pupil at the Gynasium for some decades." The illness of a girl friend, under whose fascination he had fallen, determined him to take up the profession of medicine, and in 1880, when eighteen years of age, he left Breslau to study at the University of Berlin.

(To be Continued.)

The English Champion.

Playing for Birmingham against Manchester, Mr. Atkins at top board lost to Mr. V. L. Wahlteuch—his first loss in club matches for 20 years.

Wellington Chess Club.

The Club is removed from Manners-street, and the members now meet at 9, King's Chambers, Willis-street.

South Wellington Chess Club.

The annual general meeting was held on Friday, the 11th inst., at the Club's room in the Newtown Public Library. Mr. B. B. Allen presided over a well-attended meeting. The retiring honorary secretary, Mr. G. H. Loney, submitted the fifth annual report and balance-sheet, which showed that the year (which ended on 31st December last) had been a very successful one.

The annual handicap tourney had been well contested, the first prize being ultimately won by Mr. B. B. Allen, Messrs. E. Hicks, and D. Purchas, finishing up a tie for second place. Mr. Hicks had represented the Club with credit at the Congress for the championship of New Zealand held in Auckland recently. Mr. W. H. P. Barber was elected president, and Rev. J. Walker, Rev. Jenkins, Dr. Kemp, J. P. Luke, M.P., and W. Armstrong, were elected vice-presidents; Mr. D. Purchas, hon. secretary.

The Club's 1910 programme is an attractive one; several new features are proposed, one of these being a match with Karaka Bay, which is able to muster about a dozen players at this time of the year.

Solution to Position No. 29.

- 1. R-R3, ch K-Kt2
- 2. R-Kt3, ch K-R3
- 3. R-Q3 B-B3, ch
- 4. K-R2 P-Q8-Q
- 5. R-xP, ch QxR, state mate

Other variations will also repay careful study.

BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIP.

Messrs. H. E. Atkins, of Huddersfield, and J. H. Blake, of London, met at the Bradford Chess Club on the 3rd of January to play off the tie they had made at Scarborough for the championship. The match was the best of four games. Atkins won the first two and drew the third. There was no necessity to play the fourth.

In N.Z. Championships, one won game only, decides a tie. Would it not be a wiser plan to have it the best of four games, as above?—Chess Ed.

Add Our Illustrations

BILLIARDS.

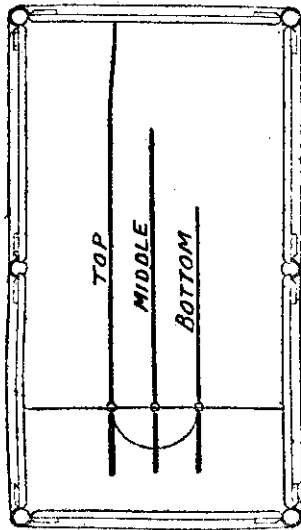
SPEEDING THE CUE-BALL.

(By H. W. Stevenson.)

There are other means of varying the pace of the cue-ball than by striking it at different strengths of stroke. It is no secret process, but just a changing of the common middle of the ball contact (or as near to that elusive little point

as the average player is able to get his cut-tip on to), above or below that mark. The one shot is known as "topping" the ball and increasing its pace, the other, "backing" or "dragging," and decreasing the pace. Both motions play a most prominent part in good billiards. They have their special ranges and uses. The better the player, the more he is able to dispense with these alterations of stroke and depend, by his nicety of touch, upon the central ball contacts to alter the force and run of his ball. But he, too, is bound to use the accelerating and retarding effects, especially if he is out of practice or out of form. The ball does for him what he cannot with any certainty do for himself.

If you and I were able—which, let me say at once, we are not—to strike a ball at one given strength, first, in the centre, next, nicely above this, and, again, at an equal distance below the centre-point, a marked difference would be noticed in its length of travel. Say you played a central or plain ball from the "D" up to the pyramid-spot (that midway mark between the centre-spot and the top cushion), with just space enough to reach there. A stroke above the centre, if you could strike the ball with exactly the same force, would carry it as far as the top cushion. But struck at its lowest strikable limit, that is, below the centre, provided the identical degree of power was put into the stroke as sent the ball to the pyramid spot and the top cushion respectively, by "plain ball" and "top" motions, it would stop as far short of the pyramid spot as the "topped" ball had exceeded that mark. This, I think, should be pretty clear. It applies to every sort of ball movement all over the table, the high striking increasing, the low striking decreasing, and the middle or plain ball striking acting as the happy medium between the two effects.



SPEEDING THE CUE-BALL.

It is in the "run-through" and every description of stroke where the cue-ball has to get up speed quickly, that the "topping" shot has its best uses. A ball struck above the centre will run further and faster than from any other contact of the cue-tip. It commences to revolve at the very moment it feels the tip against it. For this reason, there is nothing to be compared with the "topped" ball for following on after, and, as it were, "through" an object ball. Making more revolutions than if it were struck centrally, it gains the maximum of speed at the minimum expenditure of force. The "topped" ball is a headstrong, impulsive thing. It will cling to a cushion, or keep leaving and returning there in a wriggling, serpentine movement which has its especial province in the play. The curly masse arises from the same cause. But that stroke belongs to the higher flights of billiards, which we are not yet touching. There is really no limit to the eccentric revolutions that a "topped" ball may perform. (Just of all, however, to the average billiardist, is the fact of its increasing the pace and run of a ball in the more delicately played shots.

From the middle of the ball one expects power, true running, and general simplicity of detail. It is, indeed, the "plain ball"—the term which is given to

it in expert circles. And it is as good to know and appreciate as it is, theoretically, simple. In practice the average player will mostly do everything else but plant the cue-tip fully (as he should) upon the shimmering centre point of his ball. It is really not an easy thing to do, simple as the action would appear to be. The professionals vary in their styles of taking aim, some aiming direct, where they wish the cue tip to strike, and others aim at the very base of the ball, where it rests upon the cloth. These last hold to an old-fashioned theory that with the circle of ivory tapering away, as it does, to almost the pin's point that it rests upon, the centre is more easily found that aiming at the broad face of the ball. There is some truth in the contention, but what is gained in a central aim is lost in accuracy of stroke, for the cue head has to be brought upwards with the swing of the arm, an action that cannot, in the long run, compare in effectiveness with the direct aim and piston-rod swing of the cue.

A "topped" ball gathers speed instantaneously, or "gets into its running straight away" (as sprinters say), because it commences to revolve with the blow from the cue. It is just like a bicycle wheel: the nearer the driving power is to the top, the quicker and longer the turn over. A ball struck at the centre does not immediately start to revolve. It skids or slides a certain distance along the cloth, according to the force of the stroke. This sliding movement lasts only for a bare fraction of a second, but this makes all the difference to its after run. Not only that, for should the ball come in contact at all fully with an object ball during the sliding process, it can make no headway. Try a close run-through with a middle of the ball stroke, and notice how dead the cue-ball falls up against the object-ball. Then place the two balls the same distance apart, and strike the playing ball nicely and crisply above the centre. Mark the different effect now produced. Its quick revolutions carry it onwards and after the object-ball. The turning over and over reminds one almost of a screw boring its way in.

Striking the cue-ball below the centre produces a motion known as "drag." It imparts an under current that the ball does not easily shake off. Sent forward by the force of the cue, it is, nevertheless, trying to turn backwards by the reverse revolutions the under stroke intends to provide it with. Confused between the forward run it is making and the backward inclination given by the stroke, the ball does neither of these things in the first few feet of its career. It makes a comparatively extended skidding or sliding movement, which can, unlike the plain ball's preliminary skid, be seen with the eye. A slow ball with "drag" will skid or slide anything from a foot to two feet. But a fast "dragged" ball—say it is played from the "D"—will not begin to roll until it has passed the middle pocket line. All "screw," "stun," and simple "drag" shots have this same peculiarity. The three classes come within the general scope of below-the-centre striking, and each has its own particular uses, and demands upon the player. The plain "drag" shot, however, has the virtue of so decreasing the speed of a fairly strongly played ball, that it excels as a medium for long-range positions where the balls have to be moved as little as possible. It further enables the player, in some degree, to correct the deviations of an untrue ball, which only goes astray when it rolls at all slowly. Running fast, or skidding along, while the "drag" has got hold of it, the "crooked" ball must move in a fairly straight line from the cue. This is a hint which should not be overlooked.

As the alteration of the speed in strokes forms the essence of billiard-playing, these "topping," "middle ball," and "bottom" (the general term applied to "drag") striking will help the amateur a good deal if he experiments with them and gets the idea of the theory fairly planted in his head.

H.W. Stevenson

Joyes: "I tell you, Singleton, you don't know the joys and felicities of a contented married life, the happy flight of years, the long, restful calm of—"
 Singleton: "How long have you been married?"
 Joyes: "Just a month."