



Drawn by
H. M. Eaton.

WHIST, in America, has become within the past few years not only wonderfully popular, but a thoroughly scientific game. To thousands it is undoubtedly popular, and always will remain so, without being exactly scientific. Time and study are required for the latter, two necessities which the hustling American has not always been willing or able to give. But a decided change has recently taken place, and to a large number the game has come to mean something more than mere temporary amusement. Five or six years ago the really expert players could be counted almost on the fingers of two hands; now they are numbered by the hundred. In fact, Americans have become recognized the world over, wherever whist has a high standing, as authorities on the game, and the reputation of many of our lead-

BY FRANK W. CRANE.

ing players extends far beyond the limits of their own country.

Cavendish, who is acknowledged as the authority of first rank, was surprised when he visited this country two years ago, both at the remarkable progress of the game and the number of first-class players. It was a revelation to him, and he admitted, what may not generally be known, that the standard of whist was higher in the United States than in England, and that our clubs had a larger percentage of scientific players than the English clubs. If Cavendish might be called the king of whist, America has the whist queen, a title bestowed by Cavendish himself upon Miss Kate Irwin Wheelock, a lady whose abilities he recognized and admired, and one of the few women who has studied the game from a purely scientific standpoint.



HENRY JONES. "CAVENDISH."

The present enthusiasm can hardly be called a whist revival, as never before has there been anything like it in the United States. It is more in the nature of a whist boom, and it has extended all over the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. Although barely of five years' growth, the interest has been continually

progressive, and no evidences have yet appeared to show that a definite limit has been reached. The present season has been characterized by as much renewed activity as was the case in each of the years since 1891 over its predecessor. Nor have the whist devotees been drawn from any particular locality. Scattered here and there from New York to San Francisco are a number of unmistakable whist centers, whose influence has been strongly felt in their respective vicinities.

In the east, Brooklyn and Philadelphia are the most conspicuous. In Brooklyn, the game has had a wonderful growth, so much so, that in nearly all of the social clubs it has become one of the prominent features, while the smaller clubs which have been organized, not so much for pleasure as for the scientific study of the game, are very numerous. Bankers, ministers, lawyers, doctors, merchants, the old and the young, women as well as men, have all attested, not only to their love for the game, but to a desire to learn more of its hidden possibilities. Brooklyn claims the

honor of having the largest number of whist clubs of any city in America, if not in the world, not even London excepted. About two years ago, when the enthusiasm was not nearly so great as it is now, several of the more prominent clubs banded together and formed the Inter-Club Whist league, for the purpose of holding annual championship tournaments. From the start the league was a pronounced success, and during the past winter twelve clubs have been battling for supremacy, their respective teams being composed of the very finest players in Brooklyn. This example set by Brooklyn undoubtedly had considerable effect in prompting the admirers of the game in New Jersey to

form the New Jersey Whist league, which was organized last fall with six clubs, and has just finished its first championship State tournament. These clubs are: The Park club, of Plainfield; Montclair, Fanwood, Elizabeth, Newark, and New Jersey Athletic clubs. A New Jersey Whist association has since been organized, which includes the above-mentioned clubs, with the addition of the Orange Whist club, the Elizabeth Athletic, and the Elizabeth Chess and Checker clubs.

In New York, Boston, and Albany, as well as in many smaller cities in this section of the country, whist has obtained a strong hold, but in New York the game has not yet come to be so important a feature of club life as in the city across the bridge. Philadelphia, next to Brooklyn, has the largest number of representative clubs in the United States. The fame of the Hamilton club is known far and wide, and it has no difficulty in bringing out fully a hundred experts when a particularly big match is to be played with a rival city or club.

Chicago, Minneapolis, and Milwaukee are all prominent whist centers, Chi-

cago having a perfect host of able players and a number of flourishing clubs. San Francisco, also, has not been one whit behind any of the other cities in whist activity, and she is particularly fortunate in possessing an unusually large number of proficient players among the fair sex. In some of the San Francisco clubs, the women play in the club-rooms as regularly as the men, and in this respect the west is undoubtedly in advance of the east.

The American Whist league, which was organized in 1891, has really done more for the game in this country than had been accomplished in all the preceding years. The league gave a tone and



EUGENE S. ELLIOTT, THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN WHIST LEAGUE.

solidity to whist, which it had never before possessed. While the cardinal principles of the game are practically the same as they were a century or more ago, there was a wide difference in the general rules and various systems of play. In the absence of a definite organization, the few whist clubs in existence prior to 1891, pursued such methods as they deemed proper, irrespective, in great measure, of what was done by other clubs or players. The game lacked system. The leading players recognized this, but it remained with the Milwaukee Whist club to pave the way for a more perfect union.

Eugene S. Elliott, president of the Milwaukee club, and who for a long time had been a careful student of the game, broached the idea of holding a tournament of all the whist players in the United States, for the purpose "of becoming better acquainted." This was in 1890, and his club was quick to act upon it. The possibilities of such a meeting were at once recognized, and the subject having assumed something of the nature of a national discussion, it was found that the whist players

of the United States thought it would be wiser, instead of holding merely a tournament, to call a convention of all the clubs in America. The Milwaukee club did so, stating in its invitation that the objects of such convention were "for the purpose of organizing an association of American whist clubs; of formulating and adopting a code of rules and regulations suitable to the American game; of discussing, and, if practicable, of adopting and promulgating a declaration of principles on methods of play, and of instituting a match, or series of matches, to be played under such rules as the congress may prescribe."

The congress met in Milwaukee, April

14, 1891, and acted upon all these subjects. Thirty-six clubs were represented by eighty-three delegates. Among the prominent clubs present at this first whist meeting, beside the Milwaukee club, were the Albany Whist club, the Capital Bicycle club, of Washington, D. C.; the Englewood club, of Chicago; the Hamilton club, of Philadelphia; the Minneapolis Chess, Checker, and Whist club; the Narragansett Whist club, of Providence, R. I.; and the Pomfret club, of Easton, Pa. Brooklyn was not represented, and her leading whist men have regretted it ever since. From this congress sprang the American Whist league, which has

since been universally recognized as the authority on the game in this country.

The code of laws as it then existed was vigorously attacked and amended. This was known as the club code. It had been framed more than thirty years previous by the London clubs, and no change had been made since its adoption. If not exactly bad, it was, nevertheless, very defective. Even the English players growled at it, but, nevertheless, did

not assume to make corrections. Moreover, it was not adapted to the game as played in America. The counting of honors, then generally adhered to in England, had practically been discarded in this country, while the number of tricks to a game had been increased from five to seven. The five-point game, or short whist, was more particularly adapted to the game when a stake was a prominent feature. This had never been favorably regarded by American whist players, and the organizers of the league made such laws governing the game as would make it interesting for its own sake alone. The league in a very decided manner discouraged the playing for



ROBERT H. WEEMS.

stakes, and in many of our whist clubs to-day there is a stringent rule against even the most innocent species of gambling. The club code, which consisted of ninety-one laws, was improved and simplified. It was cut down to sixty-one articles, and this has since been further reduced to thirty-nine.

The congress closed with a tournament, in which the Milwaukee players were pitted against all others. There were one hundred and four contestants, all told,—the largest whist tournament ever held in America up to that time. The home club won easily by over two hundred and fifty points.

The delegates at that convention worthily accomplished their mission, and the success of the league has been greater than the most sanguine could have believed. The second congress was held in New York city, at the Manhattan Athletic club, July 19, 1892, and forty-eight clubs were represented. In 1893, Chicago had the congress, and delegates from sixty-nine clubs were present. Last year the annual meeting was held in Philadelphia, and was the most successful of all, over one hundred clubs being represented.

These whist club congresses are conducted on a system practically similar to that of more lively sports. The championship of America is awarded to the club whose team makes the best record against all others, and there are also numerous special prizes for individual and club scores. So the silent game is raised to a point of the utmost excitement and enthusiasm, which only a sincere lover of the game can fully appreciate. It takes a very skilful and level-headed player, when he realizes that the eyes of the entire whist community are upon him, to go through the ordeal without committing one or more unpardonable errors. And it may

seem a trifle odd to learn that the members of some of these whist teams are put through a regular course of training, just as thorough for their purpose as that of a college football team or boating crew: mental, as well as physical training, being necessary for the would-be whist champion. The congress generally remains in session a full week, for besides the various tournaments, new officers are elected, and a great deal of business transacted. The Whist congress this year will meet in Minneapolis.

The league has two distinct prizes; the first and most valuable being known as the Hamilton club trophy. It is a magnificent silver cup, and was presented to the league by Dr. M. H. Forrest, of the Hamilton club, Philadelphia. This is the championship prize, and the club winning it holds it one year. It was first played for in New York at the second congress, and the result was a tie between the Milwaukee Whist club and the Capital City Bicycle club, of Washington.

In many respects this was one of the most remarkable whist contests that has ever been seen. It was, indeed, a royal battle in a royal game. Sixteen clubs had entered the lists for the Forrest trophy, and when the two final contestants, the Capital Bicycle and the Milwaukee Whist clubs, sat down to their last match, interest among the delegates was at fever heat. Mr. Robert H. Weems,

of Brooklyn, now the corresponding secretary of the league, has given a very graphic description of this memorable tournament. He says:

“The whist championship of America was being battled for by giants, and the possession of the emblem representing it, of solid silver, costing \$1500, was eagerly coveted. The Milwaukee club was known to be one of the strongest in the world. In over



KATE IRWIN WHEELOCK.

forty contests they had been defeated but once, and that in a match against the Chicago Whist club, with forty players on each side. At the beginning of the tournament the general impression was that the match lay between the Milwaukeees and the equally famous Hamilton club, of Philadelphia. But a surprise was in store. The Capital Bicycle was not greatly feared, and lost the first game it played to the University club, of Chicago. Thereafter it was a continuous winner to the end, and finally sat down with the unbeaten Milwaukeees. Milwaukee had only to win one game against the Capital Bicycle club, while the Capitals had to beat the Milwaukeees twice to secure the coveted prize. Twenty-four hands were played, and the score was a tie. Sixteen additional hands were played, resulting in another tie. Eight hands were then played, and the Capitals won by one trick. Eight men playing continuously for nearly seven hours had each played forty-eight hands of thirteen cards, or six hundred and twenty-four cards by each player. Nearly five thousand cards had been played (4992 to be exact), and at the end, out of 1248 tricks, one side had taken just one trick more than its adversary. The Milwaukee men were exhausted and physically unable to resume play in the evening. It was Saturday—the congress wanted to adjourn—and nothing remained to be done except to award the trophy. By mutual agreement the custody of the trophy was awarded to the Capital Bicycle club for the ensuing six months, and to the Milwaukee club for six months following."

At the congress held the following year in Chicago, the tie was played off, and the Capital Bicycle club won, thus becoming the acknowledged champion for the year 1892. The Minneapolis Whist

club won the championship trophy in 1893, and last year, at Philadelphia, the University club, of Chicago, won the coveted honor.

The congress at Chicago, in 1893, during the World's Fair, is memorable from the fact that Cavendish attended the meeting, and several special matches were arranged for him and the American experts. Miss Kate Irwin Wheelock, better known as the "Whist Queen," at that time the only lady who was a member of the league, there being now two, played in the regular tournaments. After a hot fight for championship honors, the Minneapolis Whist club won by a total score of 1014 points, only five points ahead of the Milwaukee and Chicago Whist clubs, which tied for second place at 1009. The Minneapolis club team is regarded by many as the strongest in the United States. The four players composing it are J. H. Briggs, O. H. Briggs, J. F. Whallon, and George L. Bunn.

The Chicago congress closed with a grand tournament of one hundred and sixty players, the Chicago clubs playing against all the others. The Chicago Whist club, by the way, is the largest in point of membership in the country. In this contest Cavendish played for Chicago, and Miss Wheelock for the rest of America, and Chicago won by thirty-eight points.

The prize next in value and honor to the Hamilton trophy is a silver cup, known as the American Whist league trophy. It was first played for last year, and Minneapolis had the honor of winning it. It is a silver cup, but the requirements governing its possession are somewhat different from those of the Hamilton trophy. The club winning it must hold itself open to challenge at certain intervals during the year, and if



N. B. TRIST.

beaten forfeits its right to the cup. The Minneapolis club, after successfully defending this trophy against all comers in its vicinity, surrendered it, in the interests of the game, to be played for by the next two clubs in line of challenge, these being the Hamilton club, of Philadelphia, and the Chicago club. The former club won the cup, and since then it has been won by the Park club, of Plainfield, N. J., the Albany Whist club, and the Continental club, of New York.

At the Philadelphia congress the whist clubs of that city offered a special trophy known as the Record prize, to become the absolute property of the club winning it. The members of the Albany club whist team, consisting of E. Leroy Smith, Barrington Lodge, George H. Snow, and George Chute, had the supreme satisfaction of carrying this handsome silver cup home with them.

Duplicate whist is the game played at these annual league contests, as well as by all the prominent clubs in their various tournaments. In its present high state of perfection, it is practically an American form of the game.

First brought prominently into notice at the Milwaukee convention, in 1891, it is now universally recognized as the ablest and most scientific system of whist ever adopted. Its excellence lies in the fact that it places a premium on individual ability, eliminating so far as possible, in a game where chance necessarily enters, every element of luck. One of the chief advantages of the game is that correct statistics can be obtained to show the best course of play under all circumstances, and the games can be published for future study.

The American Whist league has now a membership of nearly one hundred and fifty clubs, representing all the leading states of the Union. The individual membership of these clubs mounts up

into the thousands. One-fifth of all the clubs in the league are from the state of New York, so in whist, as well as in some other things, she well upholds her title of Empire State. Brooklyn, however, as previously has been mentioned, is the star whist city. She has fourteen clubs in the league, including such well known ones as the Carleton, Lincoln, Montauk, Union League, Excelsior, Midwood, Algonquin, Hamilton, Hanover, Aurora Grata, Marine and Field, Columbian, Oxford, and Brooklyn whist clubs.

The wonderful success of whist in Brooklyn is due very largely to the efforts of Mr. Robert H. Weems, one of the most indefatigable workers and best known

whist men in the country. He has been president of the Brooklyn Inter-Club Whist league since its organization two years ago, and as a player has a high reputation, being one of the Carleton club's strong team of four, which won the championship last year. The Brooklyn clubs have a trophy of which they are justly proud, as it is decidedly unique among whist prizes. It is a large silver plaque, fourteen inches in diameter,

handsomely ornamented with appropriate devices and enameled cards. The Excelsior club won the emblem and championship honors this year, after a hot contest with the Lincoln club.

While Cavendish (Henry Jones) was in this country, he was for a portion of the time the guest of Mr. Weems and of the Carleton club, and there met some of the ablest whist players in America. In connection with Cavendish it may be interesting to state that Mr. Weems has the only known copy in America of the first edition of Cavendish's "Principles of Whist," printed in London in 1862. Only two hundred and fifty copies were printed, and the author styled himself



JOHN M. WALTON, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN WHIST LEAGUE.



THEODORE SCHWARTZ, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN WHIST LEAGUE.

"Cavendish," as that was the name of a little whist club of which he was a member.

The name of Nicholas Browse Trist will always be an honored one in American whist annals. He is to this country what Cavendish is to England. A member of the New Orleans Chess, Checker, and Whist club, Mr. Trist has been a careful student of the game for years, and to him are due many of the improvements and accepted modes of play. Cavendish has adopted many of his suggestions and embodied them in his book.

The mania for large tournaments has kept pace with the growth of whist enthusiasm. Mention has been made of two large ones, but they now appear small in comparison with what was accomplished last year. Brooklyn and Philadelphia started the ball rolling by meeting each other with one hundred men on a

side. Philadelphia was represented by the Hamilton club, while the members of the Brooklyn Whist club, consisting of the ablest players from all the other clubs, battled for the honor of their city. One match was held in each city, the second one bringing out two hundred and eight contestants, all told, and the victories were equally divided. The fame of these eastern tournaments having gone abroad, Chicago arranged one on a truly gigantic scale. The whist men of that city met other players from the state of Illinois, and four hundred and forty-eight players came together to fight for the mastery in the silent game. The contest took place in the Masonic Temple, and Chicago came out triumphant. This is the largest whist tournament that has ever been held in the world.

The success of the American Whist league was assured long ago beyond a doubt. That its organization was well-timed has been clearly demonstrated by the rapid growth of whist during the past four years. The sobriquet of "Father of the American Whist League" has been fondly bestowed upon Eugene S. Elliott, its original founder, and who for three successive years was unanimously chosen as its president. Last year, however, Mr. Elliott declined a reelection, and Capt. John M. Walton, a retired United States army officer, and a leading member of the Hamilton club, of Philadelphia, was chosen and is the present chief executive officer.

The fifth annual congress, which will be held from June 18th to 22d, at Minneapolis, will bring together a host of energetic, brainy men, eager to battle for coveted whist laurels, and next year, in all probability, the whist magnates will meet in Brooklyn, that city of churches, and also of multitudinous whist clubs.



Drawn by H. M. Eaton.