

Guest Editorial

CHESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

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HAVING received a very flattering invitation from the President of U. S. C. F., Mr. Elbert A. Wagner, Jr., of Chicago, to write a guest editorial for *Chess Life*, I think it is in order to say something about chess activities in San Francisco.

For over a half century the Mechanics' Institute Chess Club has played a leading role in chess on the Pacific Coast. Several world champions and many grand masters and masters have visited us, including Zukertort, Harry Pillsbury, Dr. E. Lasker, Capablanca, and Dr. Alekhine. We have at our club a veteran amateur, Dr. W. R. Lovegrove, who in his day (he is still a very fine player) may have been the strongest amateur in the world, having beaten both Pillsbury and Dr. E. Lasker in individual encounters when those players were in their prime. Dr. Alekhine visited us in 1929, and we managed in a simultaneous exhibition to win eight and draw eight games out of a total of forty-three. Somewhat later, Dr. Alekhine, when asked what club in the United States had given him the

most trouble, replied: "a place in San Francisco called the Mechanics' Institute."

Mr. E. J. Clarke, an old friend of the revered Hermann Helms, for many years has been one of our most enthusiastic players. His role in San Francisco is comparable to that of Helms in the nation. Mr. A. J. Fink also has been a leading player in San Francisco and California for a long time. We sent Fink to the last Championship Tournament. He didn't do anything startling in that tournament, but there were strong extenuating circumstances. Those of us who know Fink intimately have the greatest respect for his chess ability. Fink, by the way, is an internationally known problem composer.

We have a number of younger men of high chess ability. I might mention Charles Bagby, Carol Capps, V. Pafnutieff, H. Simon, W. J. McClain, William Barlow, and Neil Falconer. All of these men would be very tough customers indeed if they were to get a few hard tournaments under their belts. We also have several youngsters coming up who show plenty of talent. We were very unfortunate this past summer in losing through death a young player, Charles Howland, who was always good for a point in local matches.

We have extensive plans for the future. A major, minor, and open tournaments will be played each year, plus rapid transits at frequent intervals. We have great hopes that a San Francisco player will break into national prominence within the not too distant future.

¶ The views expressed in a Guest Editorial are not necessarily those of CHESS LIFE.