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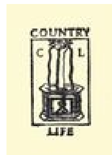
[Pg 1]

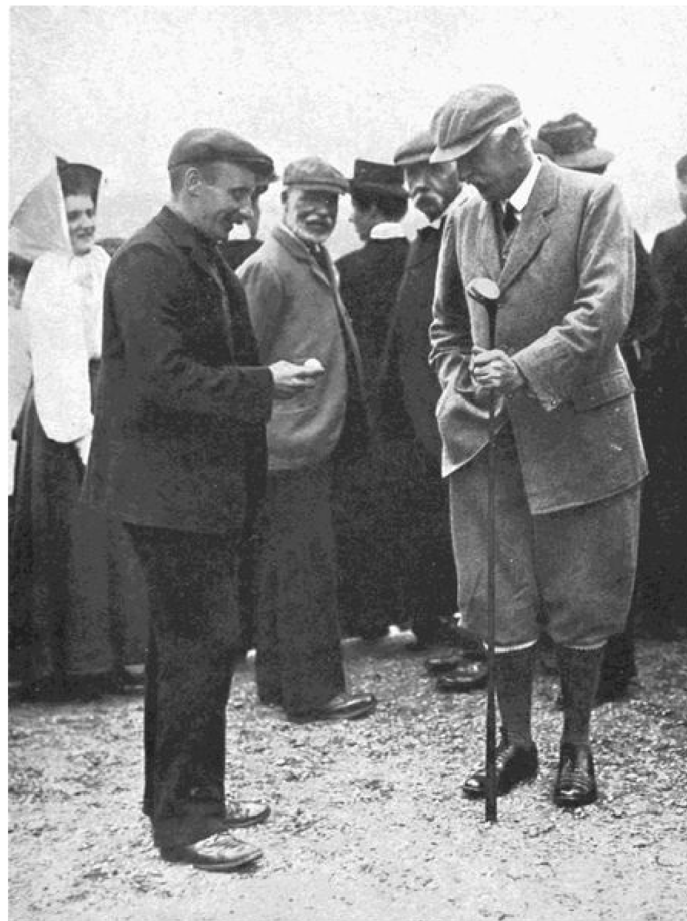
FIFTY YEARS OF GOLF

[Pg 2]



First Published in 1919

[Pg 3]



The writer, the first English Captain of the Royal and Ancient, buying back, according to custom, the ball struck off to win the Captaincy.

[Pg 4]

FIFTY YEARS OF GOLF

By

HORACE G. HUTCHINSON

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[Pg 5]

PREFACE

(*Written in 1914*)

I agreed to the suggestion that I should write these reminiscences, mainly because it seems to me that circumstances have thrown my life along such lines that I really have been more than any other man at the centre of the growth of golf—a growth out of nothingness in England, and of relative littleness in Scotland, fifty years ago, to its present condition of a fact of real national importance. I saw all the beginnings, at Westward Ho! of the new life of English golf. I followed its movement at Hoylake and later at Sandwich. I was on the Committee initiating the Amateur Championship, the International Match, the Rules of Golf Committee and so on. I have been Captain in succession of the Royal North Devon, Royal Liverpool, Royal St. George's and Royal and Ancient Clubs, as well as many others, and in these offices have been not only able but even obliged to follow closely every step in the popular advancement of the game. I do not mention these honours vaingloriously, but only by way of showing that no one else perhaps has had quite the same opportunities.

Possibly I should explain, too, the apparent magniloquence of the phrase describing golf as a "fact of real national importance." [Pg 6] I do not think it is an over-statement. I use it irrespective of the intrinsic merits of the game, as such. When we consider the amount of healthy exercise that it gives to all ages and sexes, the amount of money annually expended on it, the area of land (in many places otherwise valueless) that is devoted to it, the accession in house and land values for which it is responsible, the miles of railway and motor travel of which it is the reason, the extent of house building of which it has been the cause, and the amount of employment which it affords —when these and other incidental features are totalled up, it will be found, I think, that there is no extravagance at all in speaking of the golf of the present day as an item of national importance. At least, if golf be not so, it is difficult to know what is.

It is because I have in my head the material for the telling of the history of this rise of golf to its present status that I have ventured to write these personal reminiscences, and underlying them all has been the sense that I was telling the story of the coming of golf, as well as narrating tales of the great matches and the humorous incidents that I have seen and taken part in by the way. [Pg 7]

POSTSCRIPT TO PREFACE

(*Written in 1919*)

Reading the above "foreword," and also the pages which follow it, after the immense chasm cleft in our lives and habits by the War, I find little to modify as a result of the delay in publication. What does strike me with something very like a thrill of terror is the appalling egotism of the whole. I can truly say that I feel guiltily aware and ashamed of it. I cannot, however, say that I see my way clear to amend it. If one is rash enough to engage in the gentle pastime of personal reminiscence at all, it is difficult to play it without using the capital "I" for almost every tee shot. I will ask pardon for my presumption in plucking a passage from one of the world's great classics, to adorn so slight a theme as this, and will conclude in the words of Michael, Lord of Montaigne: —"Thus, gentle Reader, myselfe am the groundworke of my booke: it is then no reason thou shouldst employe thy time about so frivolous and vaine a subject."[1]

FOOTNOTES:

[1] *Montaigne's Essays*, Florio's translation.

[Pg 8]

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I	The Beginning of All Things	11
II	How Golf in England Grew	17
III	Of Young Tommy Morris and other Great Men	23
IV	The Spread of Golfing in England	29
V	The Weapons of Golf in the Seventies	35
VI	How Men of Westward Ho! went Adventuring in the North	41
VII	Golf at Oxford	47
VIII	The Start of the Oxford and Cambridge Golf Matches	53
IX	Golfing Pilgrimages	59
X	Westward Ho! Hoylake and St. Andrews in the Early Eighties	65
XI	First Days at St. Andrews	71
XII	The Beginnings of the Amateur Championship	77
XIII	On Golf Books and Golf Balls	84
XIV	The First Amateur Championship	90
XV	Mr. Arthur Balfour and his Influence in Golf	96
XVI	The Second Amateur Championship	102
XVII	The First Golf in America	108
XVIII	How I Lost the Championship and Played the Most Wonderful Shot in the World	114
XIX	Johnny Ball and Johnny Laidlay	120
XX	A Chapter of Odds and Ends	126
XXI	A More Liberal Policy at St. Andrews	132
XXII	The First Amateur Win of the Open Championship	138
XXIII	Golf on the Continent and in the Channel Islands	144
XXIV	About Harold Hilton, Freddy Tait and Others	150
XXV	The Coming of the Three Great Men	156
XXVI	The Revolt of the Amazons	162
XXVII	The Making of Inland Courses	168
XXVIII	Various Championships and the Wandering Societies	174
XXIX	The Comic Coming of the Haskell Ball	180
XXX	An Historic Match and an Historic Type	186
XXXI	The International Match	192
XXXII	How Mr. Justice Buckley kept his Eye on the Haskell Ball	198
XXXIII	The Amateur Championship of 1903	204
XXXIV	Travis's Year	210
XXXV	How Golf has Gripped America	216
XXXVI	The End of the Round	223

ILLUSTRATIONS

The writer, the first English Captain of the Royal and Ancient, buying back, according to custom, the ball struck off to win the Captaincy
Borough House, Northam
Mr. Peter Steel driving the gravel pit at Blackheath
At Pau: the oldest of non-Scottish Golf Clubs
Captain's Medal of the Royal North Devon Golf Club
The Ladies' Course at Pau, in the Days of the Crinoline
Miss Cecil Leitch
Westward Ho!
An Old Hoylake Group
An Old Westward Ho! Group
Thomas Owen Potter
"Old Tom"
Douglas Rolland and Archie Simpson
John Ball
A.F. Macfie
A.J. Balfour
Crawford
John Ball, as a Yeoman
J.E. Laidlay
The Chasm on the Old Biarritz Course

Arnaud Massy
J.E. Laidlay, John Ball, junr., Horace G. Hutchinson, and P.C. Anderson
H.H. Hilton
Freddy Tait
J.H. Taylor
Harry Vardon
James Braid
Horace Hutchinson and Leslie Balfour Melville
Amateur Championship, St. Andrews, 1901
Amateur Championship, St. Andrews, 1895
Old Leather Ball, etc.
Gutty *v.* Rubber Core
The Amateur and Professional Sides at Sandwich in 1894
"Fiery"
Walter Travis
Charles B. Macdonald

FIFTY YEARS OF GOLF

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS

I believe it is a little more than fifty years really. I do not mean to imply that I have been for that length of time actively engaged in the serious pursuit of the golf ball, but I expect that I began to take interest in what I understood as golf about the age of four. At that time my father was at Government House in Devonport, as General in Command of the Western District, and my Uncle Fred, Colonel Hutchinson, used to come there and tell us of some game, the most wonderful in the world, that he had lately learned to play when he was in Scotland, as Adjutant of the Fife Militia. He lived at Wemyss Hall, in Fife, and used to ride over to St. Andrews, breakfasting *en route* with Mr. Bethune of Blebo, and taking him on along with him, for a round or two rounds.

I used to hear a great deal of talk about this wonderful game, between my father and my uncle, the former having scarcely a more clear-cut idea of what it was like than I myself; but I can well remember his attempting to give some description of it, in my uncle's absence, to a friend, and hearing this remark: "A man knows his own weapon, that he uses in the game, and it is as important to him to have the weapon that he knows as it is to a billiard player to have his own cue. And they use several different kinds of weapon at the game, for strokes of different strength."

All that seems quite credible now; but it hardly seemed possible of belief in the South of England in the early sixties. I even knew what the weapon was called—"a club"—for I often asked my uncle about it, and he tried, with poor success, to make me understand its character; for I tried, in turn, to describe it to one of the orderlies, who was a particular friend of myself (or of my nurse), and he made me what he thought fitted the description. It fitted the name of "club"—for it was much like what the cannibals, in our boys' books, were depicted as using on the heads of their victims; but when I showed it to my uncle he shook his head sadly. It did not appeal to him as having any likeness to the delicate works of Hugh Philp, that master club-maker, with which he was familiar. Still, I did beat a ball about with it, and thus began golf.

When I arrived at the age of five, we went to live at a house called Wellesbourne, in North Devon, about halfway between Bideford and Northam. Westward Ho! in those days did not exist. There was one farmhouse where all the houses of the watering-place now are. The very name belonged only to Charles Kingsley's fine book, and was only taken for the name of the place a year or so later than this. Captain Molesworth, to whom English golf was to owe a big debt, lived at a house called North Down, just at the entry into Bideford, and it was in this house that Charles Kingsley was living while writing *Westward Ho!* That is the story of how the name came to be given to the place, and Borough House, by Northam, was about half a mile from our Wellesbourne. This Borough House, since restored, is where Mrs. Leigh, with her sons Frank and Amyas, were placed by the novelist.

Borough House, Northam, in 1855, where Mrs. Leigh and her sons Frank and Amyas, the heroes of Kingsley's Westward Ho! lived. (It has since been entirely reconstructed.)

Mr. Peter Steel driving the Gravel Pit at Blackheath, with forecaddie in distance.

[Pg 11]

The Reverend I.H. Gossett was Vicar of Northam, and related to the large family of Moncrieffes, of whom there were several resident then at St. Andrews. About that time one of its members, General Moncrieffe, came on a visit to his relative, the vicar of Northam, and from that chance visit great events grew. For Mr. Gossett, as it was likely he should, led out General Moncrieffe for a walk across that stretch of low-lying common ground known as the Northam, or Appledore, Burrows, to the famous Pebble Ridge and the shores of Bideford Bay; and as they went along and reached the vicinity of those noble sandhills later to be known to golfing fame and to be execrated by golfing tongues as "the Alps," the General observed: "Providence obviously designed this for a golf links."

To a man coming from St. Andrews it was a fact that jumped to the eyes. It was not for a clergyman to stand in the way of a design so providential. Mr. Gossett was a very capable, effective man: he had a family including some athletic sons for whom a game such as described by General Moncrieffe seemed likely to provide just the outlet which their holiday energies would need. He threw himself heartily into the work of getting a few to join together to make the nucleus of a club; but that first of English Golf Clubs, next after—very long after—the fearful antiquity of Blackheath, and absolutely first to play on a seaside links, did not involve all the outlay on green and club-house without which no golf club can respect itself to-day.

[Pg 12]

Clubs and balls—"gutty" balls, for the feather-cored leather-cased ones had already been superseded—would be sent, as needed, on General Moncrieffe's order, from Tom Morris' shop at St. Andrews, and when that was done all was done that was needed for these little beginnings of the seaside golf of England. The turf grew naturally short, and the commoners' sheep helped to check any exuberance. The course, as designed by those primitive constructors, acting under the advice of General Moncrieffe, started out near the Pebble Ridge, by what is now the tee to the third hole. Those pioneers of the game did not even go to the expense, in the first instance, of a hole cutter. They excised the holes with pocket knives. The putting greens were entirely *au naturel*, as Nature and the sheep made them. Assuredly there was no need for the making of artificial bunkers. Nature had provided them, and of the best. Besides, were there not always the

great sea rushes? It may be remembered that the old golf rules have the significant regulation that the ball shall not be teed "nearer than four club-lengths" to the hole. That indicates both a less sanctity ascribed to putting greens of old and also a less degree of care lavished on teeing grounds. There were no flags, to mark the holes; but the mode was for the first party that went out on any day to indicate, if they could discover it, the position of the hole, for those coming after them, by sticking in a feather of gull or rook picked up by the way. If, as might happen, the hole was not to be discovered, being stamped out or damaged by sheep beyond all recognition as a respectable golf hole, this first party would dig another hole with a knife, and set up the signal feather beside that. In this period of the simple golfing life it goes without the saying that no apology, or substitute even, for a club-house gave shelter to these hardy primitive golfers. The way was to throw down coat, umbrella, or other superfluity beside the last hole. They were safe, for two good reasons—that they were not worth stealing and that there was no one to steal them. And it is to be supposed that in those good old days there was none of the modern "congestion," of which we hear so much. Golfers and their needs, in England at all events, were alike few and simple.

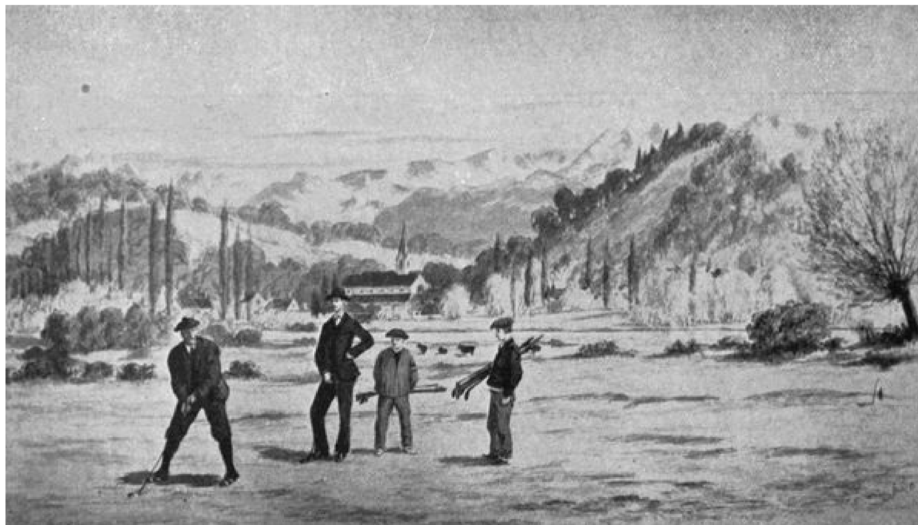
The Club was instituted in 1864; therefore it has now passed its jubilee; but I, unhappily, have to look back upon many of those early years as so many periods of wasted opportunity. That same Uncle Fred who had condemned the club of the cannibal, gave me my first true golf club. Years afterwards an anxious mother asked him, "At what age do you think my little boy should begin golf: I want him to be a very good player?"

"How old is the boy now?" my uncle asked.

"Seven," the mother replied.

"Seven!" he repeated sadly. "Oh, then he has lost three years already!"

I was given a club long before I was seven, but our house was two long miles from the course, and miles are very long for the short legs of seven. There were the fields, but though it is reported of Queen Mary Stuart that she found agreeable solace in playing at golf in "the fields around Seaton house," I did not find golf exhilarating in the fields around Wellesbourne House. But the atmosphere of golf was about the house. The Golf Club prospered, as golfing prosperity was rated in that day of small things. The extraordinary news went abroad that it was now possible to play the game of Scotland on real links turf in this corner of Devon. Men of renown, such as Mr. George Glennie, Mr. Buskin, and many besides came from the ancient club at Blackheath, and stayed for golf at the hotel recently built at that place which had now received its name from Kingsley's book. Sir Robert Hay and Sir Hope Grant, the former one of the finest amateurs of a past day and the latter more distinguished as a soldier than a golfer, came as guests, for golfing purposes, to my father's house. My two brothers, both in the Army and from twelve to nineteen years older than myself, played a few games when home on leave. I was too young to take any part in a match, but not too young to listen to much talk about the game and to look with profound veneration on its great players.



At Pau: the oldest of non-Scottish Golf Clubs.
Sir Victor Brooke (driving). Colonel Hegan Kennard.

Captain's Medal of the Royal North Devon Golf Club, showing the old approved way of driving with the right elbow up.

CHAPTER II

HOW GOLF IN ENGLAND GREW

There are two outstanding events in golfing history—the bringing of golf to Westward Ho! by General Moncrieffe in 1863, and the bringing of golf to Blackheath by James VI. of Scotland and I. of England some three centuries earlier. When golf was started at Westward Ho! it was the worthies of the Blackheath Club that gave it a reputation which went growing like a snowball. The North Devon Club began to wax fat and so exceeding proud that at meeting times—for challenge medals were presented and meetings in spring and autumn were held to compete for them, after the model of St. Andrews—a bathing machine was dragged out by coastguards to the tee to the first hole, and therein sandwiches and liquid refreshment were kept during the morning round and actually consumed if the weather were wet. In fine weather the entertainment was *al fresco*. Then the Club acquired a tent; and an ancient mariner, Brian Andrews, of Northam village, father of the Philip Andrews who is now steward of the Golf Club, used to hoist this and care for it, and at length, as of natural process of evolution, came the crowning glory of a permanent structure of corrugated iron, built beside and even among the grey boulders of the Pebble Ridge.

This permanent object of care entailed the permanency of Brian Andrews as caretaker. Enormous was the career of extravagance on which the Club now embarked, engaging a resident professional all the way from St. Andrews—John Allan. He was the first Scot ever to come to England as a resident golf professional, and there never came a kinder-hearted or better fellow. He established himself in a lodging, with his shop and bench on the ground floor, in Northam village, which stands high on a hill above the level of the links, and was best part of a mile and a half from the present third, and then first, tee. A few years before, in the earliest days of the Club's history, old Tom Morris had been down to advise about the green, and when I came to my teens and therewith to some interest in golf, and to a friendship, very quickly formed, with poor Johnnie Allan, he told me that when he had asked old Tom for information about this new course in the new country that he was going to, he found that the old man (though he was not of any great age then) could tell him little enough about the course, but that all he seemed to remember was that there was a terrible steep hill to climb, after the day's work was done, on the way home.

So there is—Bone Hill, on which the village stands, so called from the bones of Danes killed in a

great battle there, and of which bones, as we piously believed, the hill, save for a thin coat of soil over their graves, was wholly made—but it is quaint and characteristic of the old man that this steep place should have stuck in his mind and that all the salient features of the new course should have slipped out. It seems as if not even any of the points of the big rushes could have stuck and gone back to Scotland with him.

Soon after there came South from Scotland to the Wimbledon Club another most perfect of Nature's gentlemen, in Tom Dunn, of a great golfing family and father of several fine professional players.

And now, with a club-house, though it was but an iron hut, a resident professional and appointed times of meeting, the Club was a live thing, and the complete and final act of its lavish expenditure was to engage a permanent green man—only one, but he had what seemed the essential qualification of an education as a miner in the Western States of America—an excellent and entertaining fellow, Sowden by name, a North Devonian by birth, with a considerable gift of narrative and just about as much inclination to work on the course and knowledge of his duties as these antecedents would be likely to inspire in him.

While the Club was thus growing, my small body was growing too; but the way of my growth, all through life, has been rather that of an erratic powerful player, falling continually into very bad bunkers of ill-health, but making brilliant recoveries in the interims. My father tried two schools for me, but I was invalided home from both, and I expect it would have ended in my escape from all education whatever if it had not been that the United Services College was started at Westward Ho! only two miles from our house. But that was not till I reached the august age of fifteen or thereabouts, by which time English golf had developed largely. The first really fine English golfer that we produced in the West of England was George Gossett, son of the vicar of Northam. When the big men came down from Scotland and from Blackheath, to the meetings, they found a local golfer able to make a match with the best of them. And hard after him came Arthur Molesworth, a very fine player even as a boy. I remember that while he was still a Radley schoolboy, his father, the Captain, begged a holiday for him to enable him to come and play for the medal—I think he would have been about sixteen at the time—and he came and won it, in a field which included Sir Robert Hay and other well-known players. There were three brothers of the Molesworths, good golfers all, but Arthur, the youngest, the best of the three. The two elder have been dead for many years, but the father[2] and the youngest son still live at Westward Ho!

At this time I had an elder brother at home, invalided from his regiment in India. I was also assigned an almost more valuable possession, in the shape of an Exmoor pony which could jump like a grasshopper and climb like a cat any of the big Devonshire banks that it was unable to jump. So, in company with this big brother and this small pony, I used to follow the hounds over a country that seems specially designed for the riding of a small boy on a pony; and in company with the brother, the pony being left behind, I used to go badger digging—my brother had a kennel of terriers for the purpose—all over the countryside.

Of course it was a misspent youth. Of course I was neglecting great opportunities, for to tell the truth I greatly preferred the chase of the fox and the badger at that period of life to the chase of the golf ball. This sad fact should have been brought home to me by a severe comment of my Uncle Fred on the occasion of our playing for some prizes kindly given for the juveniles by some of the elder golfers. As I hit off from the first tee—all along the ground, if I remember right—he observed sadly, "There's too much fox and badger about his golf."

The Ladies' Course at Pau, in the Days of the Crinoline.

Miss Cecil Leitch.

And so there was, but, for all that, I won a prize in that competition. I think it was in the under twelve class, for which I was just eligible by age, whereas my only rival in the same class was a child of nine. Therefore I returned in triumph with a brand-new driver as a reward of merit—my first prize—and I think it made me regard golf as a better game than I had supposed it to be, for, after all, a driver is of more practical use than a fox's brush, and this was the highest award that the most daring riding could gain for you. A boy's property is usually so limited that any addition to it is of very large importance.

About a year later I began to take my golf with gravity. The ball began to consent to allow itself to be hit cleanly. A very great day came for me when I beat my big brother on level terms. You see, he had only played occasionally, at intervals in soldiering, nor had he begun as a boy, whereas I had played, even then, more than he, and had begun, in spite of the wasted years, fairly early. I know I felt I had done rather an appalling thing when I beat him; I could not feel that it was right. But doubtless it increased my self-respect as a golfer and my interest in the game. The Blackheath visitors were very kind to me, and used to take me into their games. Of course I could not expect to be in such high company as that of the George Glennies and the Buskins, but Mr. Frank Gilbert, brother of Sir Frederick, the artist, Mr. Peter Steel and many others invited me now and then to play with them. I began to think myself something of a player. The most dreadful event, most evil, no doubt, in its effect on my self-conceit, happened when Mr. Dingwall Fordyce, who was a player of the class that we might to-day describe as "an indifferent scratch," asked me to play with him. He offered—I had made no demand for odds—to give me four strokes, and asked at what holes I would have them. At that date, be it remembered, there were no handicaps fixed by the card, nor were the holes determined at which strokes were to be taken. It was always at the option of the receiver of strokes to name, before starting, the holes at which he would take his strokes. I told Mr. Fordyce I would take the four he offered at the four last holes. He said nothing, though likely enough he thought a good deal. What he ought to have done was to thrash me, for an impertinent puppy, with his niblick; but what he did, far too good-naturedly, was to come out and play me at those strange terms, with the result that I beat him by five up and four to play without using any of the strokes at all! It was precisely what had been in my mind to do when I took the strokes at those last four holes, but I expect the reason I won was that he was a little thrown off his balance by my cheek.

FOOTNOTES:

[2] While writing the later pages of these reminiscences I heard, to my great sorrow, that Captain Molesworth had died, at Westward Ho! of pneumonia, at nearly ninety years of age.—H.G.H.

CHAPTER III

OF YOUNG TOMMY MORRIS AND OTHER GREAT MEN

My way down to the links, from our house, led right through the village of Northam, wherein Johnnie Allan, the professional, had set up his shop. Now if there is anyone who, being a golfer, has not appreciated the delight of the compound smell of the club-maker's shop—the pitch, the shavings, the glue, the leather and all the rest of the ingredients—if anywhere there lives a golfer with nose so dead, then I am very far indeed from thinking that words of mine can excite him to a right appreciation of this savour. But if not, if the reader has the truly appreciative nose, then he will realize what a delight it was to me to look in each morning on the way down to golf to enjoy this, to exchange a word with Johnnie Allan, to get something quite superfluous done to a club, and if possible get my friend to come down to the links with me. Often I would find him sitting on his bench with a golf ball moulded, but not yet nicked, turning it about with his fingers in the cup designed for its holding, and hammering it with the broad chisel end of his hammer made for the purpose. This was in the days of hand-hammered balls, before the mode had been invented of having the marking engraved on the mould so as to turn them out what we then called "machine hammered." [Pg 24]

In course of the walk down to the links, if I could persuade him to be my companion, he used to tell me tales of the great men in the North, of Old Tom and Young Tommy, of Davie Strath and the rest of them. He was a Prestwick man, and had come from there to work in Old Tom's shop at St. Andrews before he journeyed South. He had never done as well as he would have liked in the championship, but had twice won the first prize given by way of consolation for those to play for who had not gained a place in the prize-list in the championship proper. That will indicate his class as a golfer as more than respectably high. It was about this time that arrangements were made for bringing down Young Tommy and Bob Kirk to Westward Ho! (the place was now thoroughly baptised with its new name), and they played, with Johnnie Allan, a kind of triangular duel.

I well remember the immense excitement with which I followed those matches. They did not play a three ball match for the prizes offered, but a species of American tournament in singles, and my delight was huge when our local friend defeated the renowned Tommy Morris. Then Tommy defeated Bob Kirk. Now if our Johnnie could only beat Bob Kirk (as he certainly would, we said, seeing that he had beaten Morris who had beaten Kirk), why then he would prove himself beyond denial best man of the three. Unhappily the propositions of golf do not work themselves out as logically as those of Euclid, though often arriving at his conclusion "which is absurd," and Bob Kirk had the better of our local hero most of the way round. He was dormy one. Then, at the last [Pg 25] hole, came a great incident of golf which made on me so deep an impression that in my mind's eye I can see the whole scene even now. Coming to that last hole—mark this, that our favourite hero was one down, so that feeling ran high—Bob Kirk got his ball on one of the high plateaux, with steep sand cliffs, which at that date jutted out into the big bunker. His ball lay just at the edge of the plateau, and on its left verge, as we looked towards the hole, so that to play it in the direction that he wanted to go it seemed that he would have to stand eight feet below it, in the bunker. And, he being a little round man, we chuckled in glee and said to one another, "He's done now." But what do you suppose that pernicious little Scot did then? He went to his bag and selected a club—a left-handed spoon! He had a couple of practice swings with it. Then he, a right-handed man, addressed himself to that ball left-handedly, and drove it, if not any immense distance, at all events as far as he needed in order to make morally sure of his half of the hole, which was all that he, being dormy, required. It was a great *tour de force*. It exacted our grudging applause. We admired, but at the same time we admired with suspicion. It was scarcely, as we thought in the circumstances, a fair golf stroke. It savoured of the conjuring trick if not of sheer black magic.

Really, considered after this lapse of years which allows cool reflection, it was a good piece of golf. There are not many right-handed men who trouble themselves to carry a left-handed club, even if they have the ambidexterity to use it. In fact it is the only stroke of its kind, played with a full swing in the crisis of a match, that I have ever seen. [Pg 26]

Young Tommy paid us another visit in the West not long after, and this time in company with his own dearest foe at St. Andrews, Davie Strath.

So, even in the far West we were not without our great examples, and Johnnie Allan himself was a golfer well worth following. As the course then started, out by the Pebble Ridge and at the present third tee, we, coming from Northam, had to walk out over the flatter part of the Burrows which the first and second, and, again, the seventeenth and eighteenth holes occupy now. That meant, of course, that we would take a club with us and practise shots as we went along; and since I so often had Johnnie Allan as my companion on those walks, it would be very hard for me to say how much of golfing skill and wisdom I did not unconsciously pick up as we went along and he watched me play the shots and criticised them. I have never in my life been through the solemn process of a set lesson with a professional, but have no doubt that I assimilated wisdom in the best, because the unconscious and the imitative, way, in those walks and talks, varied by occasional precept and example, with Johnnie Allan.

And by the same route came Captain Molesworth and his three sons, but they, having further to go, used to drive, the Captain generally manipulating the reins in strictly professional style—as a

sailor clutches the rudder lines—and their carriage, going at full speed of the horse, making very heavy weather of it over the ruts and bumps, and only the sailor's special providence ever bringing them safe to port before the Iron Hut. There the Captain would tie his horse, by a halter, to the wheel of the cart and leave all to get itself into a tangle that only a nautical hand could unravel, while all the world played golf. Sometimes we too would ride or drive, and I have in mind a great occasion on which my brother, home from India, and I were driving down in my sister's donkey-cart. The cart broke down in Northam village, so we left it there, in charge of the blacksmith, to repair, while we proceeded on, both mounted on the donkey. Now my brother was very much of what at that time was called a "dandy"—since "masher," and at the present moment "nut." He was arrayed in Solomon-like glory of white flannel trousers and red coat—for men did play golf in red coats in those days. Now the donkey was a good donkey and strong, but he knew how to kick, and he thought no occasion could be better than when he had two on his back and the central and fashionable high street of Northam village for the arena. Therefore he set to and quickly kicked us both off, I being involved in my brother's débacle, and he, though a very good man on a horse, not being accustomed to a saddleless donkey. The glory of Solomon disposed on the village streets was a splendid spectacle. But we rose, nothing daunted, though with the glory a little sullied, and, my brother then excogitating the great thought that if we put his, the greater, weight behind, with mine in front—it had been the other way at our first essay—the donkey would then find it the harder to lift its hindquarters for the act of kicking, we disposed ourselves in that manner, and the donkey, whether for mechanical reasons or because he perceived that we were not going to let him off the double burden, proceeded with the proverbial patience of his kind and we reached the links without further accident.

[Pg 27]

Westward Ho!
The Molesworths, father and three sons, returning from the Iron Hut, with Major Hopkins, the golfing artist, in the forefront.

An Old Hoylake Group.
The names, reading from left to right are: Milligan (Captain, 1875), Alex. Brown (Captain, 1880), Major Hopkins, James Rodger, James Tweedle (Secretary, 1873-81), F.P. Crowther, Jack Morris, —— , Robert Wilson (the "Chieftain"), Rev. T.P. Williamson, Dr. Argyll Robertson, Colonel E.H. Kennard (Captain, 1871-73), John Ball, sen., —— , J.F. Raimes, H. Grierson (Captain, 1876), John Dunn (Captain, 1873-75), J.B. Amey, Theophilus Turpin, —— , T.O. Potter (Secretary, 1882-94), A. Sinclair (Captain, 1887), Mat Langlands, Robert ("Pendulum") Brown, A.F. Macfie. The Royal Hotel at that time had the Club rooms adjoining it.

[Pg 28]

Mr. Gossett and his sons would be coming from the other direction, from Westward Ho! for he gave up the cure of Northam about this time and went to live at Westward Ho! and with others coming on the same line there would be a great re-union at the Iron Hut before starting out on

matches—a great match-making too, for in those days we did not make our matches very long beforehand, and such things as handicap competitions were not known among us. They were soon evolved, but the idea of any fixed handicap, by which each man should know his value, was not so much as thought of. Matches were made by a process of stiff bargaining between the parties concerned. "How much will you give me?" "A third." "Oh, my dear fellow, I couldn't possibly play you at less than a half!" The humility that was displayed was most edifying. We had twice the fun over our matches then, just because of this bargaining and all the talents of Uriah Heap that it brought into sharp prominence. One of the best of the match makers, and one of the bravest, though very far from the best of the golfers, was Captain Molesworth, familiarly known to all and sundry as "the old Mole." [Pg 29]

CHAPTER IV

THE SPREAD OF GOLFING IN ENGLAND

It seems to me that the establishment of the Club at Westward Ho! and the discovery that it was possible to play golf, and the very best of golf, in England, even as in Scotland, sent a new thrill of life into all the dormant golfing energies of the country. It stirred up the Blackheathens; then it led to the institution of the Golf Club associated with the London Scottish Volunteers, which was later to develop a schism, of which one division became the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club. The great man of the volunteers was the still present Lord Wemyss,[3] then Lord Elcho, and he was as keen a golfer as rifle shot. To us at Westward Ho! the Wimbledon Club sent down Henry Lamb, Dr. Purves and many more; but these two were perhaps their strongest. Of the Blackheathens I have spoken, but I want to give a special word to Mr. Frank Gilbert, both because he was especially kind, of all the others, to me as a boy and also because his gift of nomenclature survives in the popular name still often ascribed to one of the Westward Ho! holes. At times of excitement his aspirates used to fly. He was perfectly aware of it and did not in the least mind gentle chaff on the subject. I even think he often sent them flying purposely, for sake of effect. [Pg 30] After all, he used just as many aspirates as anyone else, only that he used them in rather different places: that was all. The hole that his genius named was that which is now the ninth, and its naming was on this wise: after hacking his ball out of first one bunker, thence into another, and from that into a third, he exclaimed in accents of inspiration and despair, "I call this 'ole the halligator 'ole, because it's full of gaping jaws waiting to devour you." Therefore the "halligator 'ole" it remained for many a year afterwards and is so known to some even to this day. I remember another exclamation of his that gave us purest joy at the time, when, having made what he believed to be a lovely shot over a brow to a "blind" hole in a hollow he ran up to the top of the brae in exultation, only to turn back with tragic dismay on his face and on his lips the eloquent expostulation, "Oh, 'ell, they've haltered the 'ole." I used to play him for a ball—a shilling gutta-percha ball—on the match, and for a long while, when I was a boy, we were fairly equal, and how often, towards the end of the match, he would miss a short putt in order that he might pay me the shilling, and not I him, I should be sorry to say. I know it was pretty frequently.

And then this thrill of new golfing life started at Westward Ho! communicated itself to the many Scots established in Liverpool, so that in 1869 they so far organised themselves as to institute that which is now the Royal Liverpool Golf Club, playing at Hoylake. What that meant for us at Westward Ho! was that men of Hoylake came down to play matches with our local heroes and to take part in our medal competitions. There were Mr. John Dunn and Mr. John Ball, the father of [Pg 31] our many times champion. Colonel Hegan Kennard was another who was associated with the Hoylake club, though his association with Blackheath was closer—of that venerable Club he was Field Marshal for very many years. But some of the first of the big matches, matches with sums of money depending on their result which seemed to me fabulous in days when a sixpence in the pocket was a rare coin, were those which were planned by the enterprise of Captain Molesworth —himself and Johnnie Allan in partnership against Mr. John Dunn and Jack Morris, who had come as professional to Hoylake. Now John Dunn made very much more show as a player than the old Mole. "The mole—an animal that keeps to the ground" was a definition which we used to be fond of quoting as we grew out of the years of veneration to those of impertinence. He had an absolute inability to drive the ball any height in the air. No other man ever played golf so cheaply as the old Mole: he had but three clubs, sometimes profanely stigmatized as Faith, Hope and Charity, a driving weapon of sorts, an iron and a putter, which he carried himself, never taking a caddie, and his ball was generally of the colour of a coal from long and ill usage. But he would bet you £50 on a match if you cared about it, and would play you with fine pluck to the very finish. He was in fact a miserable driver; nor was there any "class" or science at all about his iron play. But he would shovel the ball along, and up to the green somehow or other with his iron: he had a knack of getting there; and when once on the green there was not nor ever has been a better putter.

[Pg 32] Now the man who has his wits about him, to perceive what this description implies, will see that it is the description of an uncommon good partner in a foursome. And he was all the better partner on account of the way in which the chances of any match in prospect were likely to be reckoned; for John Dunn might argue it out, "I can give Molesworth a third," which he probably could, "and John Allan cannot give Jack Morris a third," which he surely could not, "therefore we have the best of it." That looks logical, but it leaves out the important fact that the Molesworth

qualities were just those of most value to a strong driver like Johnnie Allan, while his short game and his pluck were clear assets to the good. In fact he and Johnnie Allan used to get round the course in scores that Allan himself would not think amiss, and they had all the better of these matches against the men of Hoylake.

The Hoylake men came to Westward Ho! and Captain Molesworth took himself and his sons to Hoylake. Arthur Molesworth won the medal there when he was only a boy at school, and I remember with awe and admiration hearing his father describe how the boy had to sit beside the Mayor of Liverpool at the Club dinner and of all the mighty honour done him. And the present-day golfer should make no mistake about it nor doubt that this Arthur Molesworth was a very fine golfer. George Gossett beat him, in a set match that they played, but I think that Molesworth, who was several years younger, was really the finer golfer. Certainly he had greater power. He played in an ugly style, with a short swing, but his driving was long and he could play all his clubs. There were several years during which he was certainly the best amateur golfer that England had then produced, and I think he was better than any in Scotland. A few years later he went far towards proving it; but I will come to that story in its place.

An Old Westward Ho! Group.
From left to right: Mr. P. Wilmot, Mr. T. Oliphant (of Rossie), Major Hopkins, Hon C. Carnegie, J. Allan, Admiral Thrupp, General Maclean, Sir R. Hay, General Sir Hope Grant, Mr. T. MacCandlish (putting), Rev. T. Gosset, Colonel Hutchinson, Mr. J. Brand, Mr. Peter Steel, Mr. R. Molesworth, Mr. Lindsay Bennett, General Wilson, Mr. Eaton Young. Sitting: Mr. Baldwin, Colonel Hegan Kennard, Mr. George Gosset.
Mr. John Dunn (driving), Captain Molesworth, R.N.

Thomas Owen Potter (Hon. Sec. from 1882 to 1894 Royal Liverpool Golf Club).

What I am trying to show for the moment is not only a gallery of great players in the past, but also the way in which the game was brought home to us at Westward Ho! how golf gradually spread in England and gathered in players, more Clubs being started, and for how much the influence of Westward Ho! and its golfers—of that most enterprising of all of them, in particular, the old Mole—counted in the diffusion of knowledge of the game. We were still, of course, far from the era when a man could go about travelling in England without causing quite a sensation among those who saw his clubs. The Englishman, as a rule, believed golf, if he had heard of it at all, to be a game that was played on horseback. And about that time, I being then sixteen years of age, so that the year would be 1875, there happened what made a bigger impression upon me than any event that has ever occurred since—I won the bronze scratch medal annually given by the club for competition by boys under eighteen years of age. Having a year to spare, of the age

limit, I possibly might have won it again the next year also, but by that time I had done even greater things. I thought comparatively little of that second medal; but, as for that first, I gazed at it as if it were the Koh-i-noor, and certainly should not have valued it as highly if it had been. I can get some of that glamour back by gazing at it now, but it is only a rather faint reflection. Still, it gives far more comfort than the view of any other trophy that I ever won in later years, and I am grateful to the burglar who took all my gold medals some years back that he regarded this thing of bronze as beneath his notice. Arthur Molesworth must just have crossed the age limit which put him out of the play for this boys' medal; but there were a number of boys there at that date, in the holidays—Brownes, Burns, Roddy and Hugh Owen—there was quite a big competition. It is very sad to think how many of them are dead—Herbert Burn, the best player of the lot, among them. But Charlie (now Colonel and M.P.—he went into the Royals) was quite of the scratch class at his best. But still the leaders of the golf were older men: Henry Lamb, Dr. Purves, George Glennie, Mr. Buskin, Mr. Adamson, Colonel Kennard, Sir Robert Hay, Tom Oliphant. And I am sure there are a great number of good men whom I have forgotten. My Uncle Fred was only a little behind the best of them, but he had by this time given up his house at Westward Ho! and was living abroad, so he only came down occasionally. There was a small local contingent of very zealous golfers, men who never missed their two rounds every week-day—we had no Sunday golf.

Thus we bring down the story to a point at which golf is really launched in England with a full sail, and myself having a taste of just so much success as to make me firmly believe henceforth, for some years, that success in golf was the one thing worth living and working for. I might still have a hankering after the occasional fox and badger, to say nothing of the rabbits, partridges and wild fowl; but these began to seem only the relaxations, and golf the true business of a well-spent life.

FOOTNOTES:

[3] He died during the War.

CHAPTER V

THE WEAPONS OF GOLF IN THE SEVENTIES

You could not travel about with golf clubs in the seventies without exciting the wonder and almost the suspicions of all who saw such strange things. I am not quite sure that you would not excite almost equal wonder if you were to travel now with a set of clubs such as we used then. In the seventies, and in my own teens, I was laboriously, and with rigid economy, working my way to the possession of a variety of wooden clubs such as it would puzzle the modern golfer even to name. There was the driver or play-club—that is understood. Then there were the long spoon, the mid-spoon and the short spoon: they may be understood also. But then, besides, between the driver and the long spoon, making such a nice gradation that it was really hardly to be distinguished, came what was called the "grass" or "grassed" club. I hardly know which was the right name. The idea, I think, was that, being almost of the driver's length and suppleness, but with the face not quite so vertical, it could be better used when the ball was lying on the grass—not teed. At the same time we used to talk of a club being "grassed" with the technical meaning of having its face set back a little. So I hardly know what the right nomenclature was, nor does it matter. This "grassed" or "grass" club was rather a refinement: it was only the golfer who was very determined to have no gap in his armour that would carry it; but the three spoons were almost *de rigueur*. No self-respecting golfer could well be without them. It may surprise the student of history not to find the "baffy" put down in the list; but as a matter of fact the baffy had passed out of common use by this date. A few men of the old school, as Sir Robert Hay, continued to play it to admiration, but the genius of young Tommy Morris had already initiated a whole school of disciples into the mode of approaching with iron clubs, so that the baffy was out of vogue. The professionals that came from the north to visit us at Westward Ho! as well as our resident Johnnie Allan himself, were all followers and exponents of the relatively new mode of jabbing the ball up to the hole with the iron clubs and with a great divot of turf sent hurtling into the air after the ball. Thus the green was approached; and up to just about the date of which I am writing the subsequent operations of holing out were always performed with a wooden putter. There was also a weapon known as the driving putter, which was just like the ordinary putter save that its shaft was longer and more supple. It became, in fact, very nearly a short shafted driver, and its special purpose was to drive a low ball against the wind when there was no bunker to carry. Of iron clubs there were the cleek, the iron and the niblick. It was even then possible to go into the niceties of driving-iron and lofting-iron, but many a golfer thought his set perfect and complete with a single iron, for all purposes.

 Now you will see, from this list, both what superfluities of wooden clubs it held, according to modern notions, and also what essential instruments, to our present thinking, were lacking. There was no such club as a mashie. Young Tommy, ever an innovating genius, is credited with being the first to use the niblick for lofting approaches, but the niblick of those days was peculiarly ill adapted to such delicate uses. It was very small and very cup-shaped in its head.

The head was only a very little larger in diameter than the ball. Therefore it required extreme accuracy to hit the ball rightly with it and avoid that disastrous error of "piping"—hitting the ball with the hose—of which many of us have been many a time guilty with clubs whose relative breadth and length of blade make such error far less pardonable. The recognized club for the approach stroke was the iron, the ordinary "maid-of-all-work" iron, unless you were one of those extra particular people who had two grades of the iron. And another conspicuous absentee from the list is the brassey. Such a club was not known, but I can remember that about this day I became the proud owner of a club just then coming into vogue under the name of the wooden niblick. Its head, made of wood, was very short, like that of the iron niblick, for the purpose of fitting into ruts. It was the original of the "brassey," for the idea of a rut suggested the idea of a road. There were more roads then than now, in proportion to the rest of the golfing hazards in the world—as at Blackheath, Wimbledon, and Musselburgh. And the purpose of the brass on the club's sole was to protect it from the stones, etc., of the road when used for play off such unfriendly surface. The brassey was just the wooden niblick with a sole of brass, and as all wooden niblicks began to be brazen upon the sole their very name passed into oblivion and that of brassey superseded it. [Pg 38]

I have written here of all putters being of wood; and so they were. But somewhere, at some time, some inspired craftsman of the mystery of Tubal Cain must have bethought him, even before this, of making a putter of iron, for the following reason. In the old Iron Hut at Westward Ho! on days when the rain kept us in and the time hung heavy, we used to solace its tedium by bringing out our clubs from their lockers and trying to do a deal with each other, whether by exchange or by sale and purchase, and during one of these barterings an utterly unknown weapon was brought out with the rest of his bundle, by a young Scot of the name of Lamont, brother of that Major Lamont as he now is, who until quite lately lived at Westward Ho! and to whom I owe a great deal of the golf that I picked up as a boy. He was the Lamont of Ardlamont, the estate in the Mull of Cantyre, which came into fame in consequence of a certain notorious criminal prosecution in the Scottish courts. The strange weapon which this younger brother of his unearthed, on that day of rain, was, though we hardly knew then how to name it, an iron putter. It was inches deep in rust. Nevertheless, as I handled it, I liked the feel of it. I gave for it, in exchange, an old and much mended spoon, and it was that iron putter which I have used for forty years since, which has been copied countless times, of which the replicas are in many hands and many lands, and one copy of which, adorned and glorified, used to lie, and may so lie still, for all I know, on the table on the occasion of the dinners of the Match Dining Club. At that first date of its resurrection (Mr. [Pg 39] Lamont could give no account of how it came to his possession) it was greeted with unhallowed laughter, and so too whenever I brought it out to putt with it. But I used to be rather a good putter as a boy, and that club is still the best balanced (though its old shaft has been broken and the new one is less good) that ever came out of a club-maker's shop, and I soon changed those sounds of derision at its appearance into a more respectful form of greeting. That was the first iron putter ever seen in the West, and I believe it to have been the virtual parent of every iron putter that ever has been seen since.

It was the wooden age of golf clubs, as of battleships, and I hope the wood of our ships was better seasoned than that of our clubs. Shafts, as a rule, were of hickory then, as now, though we made strange experiments of ash, of lance-wood, of green-heart and divers species. For the hard balls of those days you had to have a certain softness in the heads of the wooden clubs which is not wanted with the resilient rubber-cored balls. Beech was the wood for the heads, though apple and other kinds were tried; but beech, and of a soft quality at that, drove the most kindly. And if a man were at all a hard hitter, and had a fit of heeling or toeing, the head of the club was sure very soon to show a crack across it, which would spread wider at each successive mishit. And even if you kept hitting the ball "dead centre" every time, a hole in the club-face would gradually be worn out by that repeated hitting, especially if the ground were wet and the grass long. Then we used to go to Johnnie Allan to have him put in a leather face, that is to say a patch of leather where the face was worn; and this would drive just as well, except it got sodden with wet, as the [Pg 40] original wood. So, with so many of the clubs made of wood, and not always like the butter used by the Mad Hatter for watch greasing, the best wood, and the balls so hard and stony of impact, it is no wonder that golf was rather an expensive game for a boy whose shillings were not many. Though the ball only cost a shilling, while the modern ball costs half a crown, the club-smashing abilities of the shilling's worth made it a much dearer ball, to say nothing of the longer life of the half-crowner. And just about this date they introduced a novelty in the balls also—the "hammering," as we used to call it, that is to say the nicking or marking of the ball's surface, being done by indentations engraved in the metal moulds in which the balls were cast. This obviated all that labour of "hammering" the nicks in by hand, which was the ancient fashion. Yet it was some while before these "machine-hammered" balls, as we called them, found general favour with the golfing public, certain Conservatives asserting that the "hammering" was essential to the right tempering of the stuff of the ball, while others, like that great little man Jamie Anderson, then at the top of his game and fame, confessed, with a perfect knowledge that the reason was only subjective, that "he could na' strike" a machine-hammered ball. He soon learned to strike it, however, as the further course of golfing story sufficiently testified. [Pg 41]

CHAPTER VI

In the year 1875, I having then arrived at the advanced age of sixteen, and being admitted as a member of the Royal North Devon Golf Club, in the autumn committed the blazing indiscretion of winning the scratch medal which carried with it the Captaincy of the club. How glaring the indiscretion was may be gathered from the fact that this Captaincy, thus conferred, entailed the obligation of taking the chair at the general meetings. I do not know that I made a much bigger hash of it than any other boy forced into the same unnatural position would have done. It had not been contemplated, apparently, that a schoolboy was likely to beat all the reverend seniors, and one good effect was that the regulation was altered, and winning this medal did not much longer confer on a person who might be the least fitted for it the function of presiding at the meetings. But it had given to me a dignity which could not be changed by legislation. At the spring meeting of that very same year I had received no less a handicap than twelve strokes, so I must have been very much of that nuisance to the handicapper, the "improving player." I became a "scratch player," however, from the autumn of that year. In those days, before handicaps were fixed, [Pg 42] golfing society was divided into two classes—those who were scratch, and those who were not—and there was no idea of such a thing as a penalty or *plus* handicap. Some of the so-called "scratch" players of the day were exceedingly scratchy ones, and only supported their dignity at a considerable expense: there was one in particular of whom it was said that it cost him three hundred a year to be a scratch player or, that is to say, to play all and sundry amateurs on level terms.

Beside this event of my winning this medal, which was no doubt an affair of more importance in my eyes than in those of anyone else, the autumn of 1875 was big with great issues, under the management of the enterprising "old Mole," who went up to Scotland with his three sons in search of adventure and with a great programme before them. Captain Molesworth had been playing a good deal with Mr. (later Sir) W.H. Houldsworth, and gave the challenge that he would bring up his three sons and play Mr. Houldsworth and any three Scots amateurs that Mr. Houldsworth should choose in single matches, the side that won the largest aggregate of holes to be the winner of the stakes. Now the Mole had the better of Mr. Houldsworth: that was really, though no doubt tacitly, acknowledged on both sides. Arthur Molesworth was likely to win his matches, no matter who was brought against him. But George, the second brother, though a brilliant player at times, was very uncertain, and Reggie, the eldest, and slightly lame, was the weakest vessel of the three. Say that the Captain and Arthur should gain some holes, it was the hope of Scotland that an equivalent number, at least, might be hammered out of the other two [Pg 43] brothers. Unfortunately for Scotland it was the former part of the calculation which was realized more fully than the latter. The matches were played at St. Andrews and Prestwick. I think there is little doubt that at that time, as indeed for many years, Leslie Balfour (later Balfour-Melville) was the strongest amateur player in Scotland; and at St. Andrews Mr. Houldsworth's team was himself, Leslie Balfour, Dr. Argyll Robertson and J. Ogilvie Fairlie. Arthur Molesworth won two holes only (they were thirty-six hole matches) off Leslie Balfour, and Argyll Robertson took seven holes from George. But then Reggie rather upset calculations by beating Ogilvie Fairlie by two holes. Lastly came in the father of the flock with nine holes to the good, and that settled it. At Prestwick, Mr. Syme, a minister of the Kirk, and Andy Stuart took the places of Dr. Robertson and Leslie Balfour, and here Ogilvie Fairlie got back his own with interest from Reggie Molesworth, winning by seven holes, and Mr. Syme beat George by two, but Arthur knocked six holes to the family credit out of Andy Stuart and the Captain came in again with his big balance—ten up on Mr. Houldsworth.

So they carried through that adventure with credit and renown, and, I suppose, some profit, and then later in the same year, Arthur Molesworth, with his father as backer and henchman, went up to St. Andrews again to do battle on his own account.

This adventure came about owing to an idea very prevalent, though I hardly know whether it had existence in fact, that Young Tommy had a standing challenge open to back himself at odds of a third against any amateur. Captain Molesworth took it up on behalf of Arthur, and to St. Andrews [Pg 44] they went again, in the dreary month of November, to bring the matter to an issue. Altogether they played for six whole days, two rounds a day, and all through the piece Young Tommy had the better of it. I cannot believe that in this match Arthur Molesworth did himself full justice. It is true that during the latter days snow lay on the ground, so that the greens had to be swept and the game really was not golf at all, but then it is no less true that Tommy held the advantage just as consistently in the days when real golf was to be played as on those when the snow spoilt it. An onlooker did indeed tell me that Young Tommy showed his skill wonderfully in lofting off the snowy ground to the small circles that had been swept round the holes. "Molesworth could loft there just as well," he said, "but Tommy, using his niblick, made the ball stay there as if it had a string tied to it, whereas Molesworth's ball was always running off on to the snow on the other side." But, be that how it may, and crediting Young Tommy Morris with a full measure of that genius for the game which all who have seen him reported, I am not going to believe that the golfer ever was born, be his name Morris or that of any Triumvir, who could give a third and a sound beating (for it was no less than this that Young Tommy accomplished) to Arthur Molesworth when he was playing his true game—and this, with all due allowance made for Tommy's knowledge of his home green. There was a peculiar pathos attaching to that match and Young Tommy's triumph, for it was his last. His wife had lately died, and interest in life, even in golf, had gone out for him. It was in November that he was thus beating Arthur Molesworth, and [Pg 45] on Christmas Day of the same year he followed his young and loved wife. His memorial,

recording a few of his greater victories—he was four times in succession open champion—is in the St. Andrews' graveyard. Indisputable was his genius for the game; impossible to calculate is the comparison between his skill and power and that of Harry Vardon, let us say, to-day. Doubtless he was a far better putter, for while he was so good at all points of the game he was at his strongest of all on the green. I do not think we shall get a better account than that which Leslie Balfour gave when an Englishman asked him how he thought Young Tommy would compare with the heroes of to-day. Leslie thought a moment, and then he said, "Well, I can't imagine anyone playing better than Tommy"—and at that I think we had best leave it.

After that year Arthur Molesworth was not so much at Westward Ho! He went to London, to an architect's office, and at once begun to win medals at Wimbledon, where Henry Lamb and Dr. Purves were perhaps the best of the older men. The next year some of them made a match for me to play him at Westward Ho! and this was a great affair for me, being the first "big match," as we called these set encounters, for a money stake, that I ever had a hand in. We started in a bad fright of each other, if I remember right, and neither played his game, but I had the fortune to get really going first and won rather easily. About the same time Johnny Allan, finding his work growing, had down his two young brothers, Jamie and Mat, to join him in the club-making and the playing. They brought in a new element of interest, for even as a mere lad Jamie Allan, in particular, was a wonderful golfer. He had been there but a short while when Captain Molesworth, always the enterprising spirit, issued a challenge on his behalf to play any man in the world on four greens, two rounds on each. Poor Young Tommy being no more, Bob Kirk was the great man, for the time being, at St. Andrews, and he was chosen as the Scottish champion. The first part of the match was played at Westward Ho! We hardly knew how young Jamie Allan would carry himself, in this his first match of importance, but he delighted us by showing that faculty of rising to a great occasion without which no golfer, however fine a player, can win fame. That first round of his remains in my mind still as an exhibition of just the most faultless golf I ever saw. They said hard things about poor Bob Kirk afterwards when he came up to Scotland, and especially to the last stage, at St. Andrews, a beaten man. I believe that in that last phase his play was contemptible. But the Scottish critics, who were not there to see, made a vast mistake when they said that he did not play anything like his game all through the match. What he did at Hoylake and at Prestwick, whither, necessarily, they journeyed and golfed, I do not know, but I do know that at Westward Ho! he played quite a sound game. But a sound game was not enough to give him a chance of standing up to the sample of golf that Jamie Allan produced against him. Hole after hole slipped away from him, just by a stroke each, as they will when the one man is playing with more than human accuracy. That was the story of that match—it was won by Jamie's extraordinary golf at the first encounter. But that is not the way in which the Scotsmen have heard the story told.

CHAPTER VII

GOLF AT OXFORD

When I went up to Oxford in the Christmas term of 1878 I found that Royal and ancient city sunk in an ignorance that is scarcely credible in regard to all connected with the royal and ancient game. I do not mean to say that golf was altogether unknown. There was already a University Golf Club in being, which I quickly joined, and we used to play on the cricket fields in Cowley Marsh. That, of course, implied that there was no golf in the summer term when the marsh was occupied by the cricket. But the golfers were very few. Mr. "Pat" Henderson (now Wright-Henderson) the Wadham don, was one of the most moving spirits. Then there was the Principal of Hertford, there was Jim Lockhart, a fellow of Hertford and a lecturer at my own college of Corpus, and Lodge, then history lecturer at Brasenose. These and a very few others of the dons used to play, and of undergraduates the ones I best remember were Cathcart of Christ Church, son of old Mr. "Bob" Cathcart the Fifeshire laird and for very many a year Convener of the Green Committee of the Royal and Ancient Club, Baynes of Oriel, now a bishop, Pearson of Balliol and several more. But their doings were a black mystery to most of the undergraduates, and either the game was not heard of by them or it was believed that the golfers practised some unholy rite in the not very cheerful surroundings of Cowley Marsh.

I had known Jim Lockhart before I went up, for he was one of the Westward Ho! lot and a cousin besides of Jack Lamont, to whom I owed very much of my golfing education; so he saw to my election to the Club as soon as I came to Oxford. Considering the nature of the ground on Cowley Marsh, how singularly well it was suited by its dreary name, and that the only hazards were the cricket pavilions and the occasional hedges, it is wonderful how much real interest might be got out of the golf there. Whatever else a cricket pavilion may be as a golfing hazard, it is an uncompromising one. You have to be beyond or to the side of it. If hard up against it, even the strongest driver cannot send the ball through it; and it gives occasion for pulling and slicing round it which are good fun and good practice. Jim Lockhart was a friend of my tutor at Corpus whom we irreverently called "Billy Little," and it was on the occasion of his taking his fellow don up to Cowley to be introduced to golf that Little delivered himself of the immortal definition of the game as "putting little balls into little holes with instruments very ill-adapted to the purpose." In later years I have heard this brilliant definition attributed to Jowett. It is thus that sayers of good things attract to themselves, magnet-like, and increase their credit, with many good things

said by others.

At that time of day all who were golfers reared on the seaside links had a very high and mighty contempt for all in the shape of inland golf. In spite of the antiquity of Blackheath, the art and labour by which an inland course can be brought up, when the weather is favourable, to a [Pg 49] condition almost rivalling that of the seaside links were quite unknown. One of the earliest founded of the inland type—of course long ages after such an ancient institution as Blackheath—was the course at Crookham, near Newbury; and thereby hangs a tale of tragedy and comedy commingled, associated with my golfing days at Oxford. There was a certain trophy, open to all amateur golfers, given by the Club, and called the Crookham Cup. The conditions were that it was to remain as a challenge prize to be played for annually unless and until any man should win it thrice: in which case it should become his property. Poor Herbert Burn, who met his death not so very long after in a steeplechase, had won this cup twice, and I was invited to go to Crookham to see if I could put a check on his victory and keep the cup for the Club. We were hospitably put up for the meeting by Mr. Stephens, the banker, at his place near Reading. I had the luck to win the cup, and again, going down the next year, won it again. If I should win it a third time it became my very own, and, strong in the zeal of pot-hunting, I went down the third year too. I remember that on this occasion, for some reason, Mr. Stephens did not act host for the meeting, but Captain Ashton and I stayed with Major Charley Welman at a little house he had near the course; and what fixed the visit very firmly in my mind is that Ashton and I returned to the house, after a round on the first day of our arrival, with "dubbed," not blacked, golfing boots. It appeared that there was no "dubbing" in the house, for the next morning our boots were sent up to us black-leaded—with the stuff that grates, I think, are done with. The effect was splendid. We [Pg 50] went forth quite argentine as to our understandings, like knights in armour clad, and, thus glistening, I contrived to win that cup for the third and final time, which made it my own. Now we come to the tragi-comedy of the story. On the way back to Oxford there was the inevitable change and wait at Didcot Junction, and there whom should I see, with golf clubs under arm, but George Gossett? He was then living at Abingdon. I greeted him and asked with interest where he was going.

"Well," said he, "there's a cup to be played for at Crookham, near Newbury, to-morrow. I've won it twice and I'm going down to see if I can win it again, because if I do I keep it."

"Oh dear," I had to reply, "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid you must have made a mistake in the day. It's to-day it was played for, and what's more I'd won it twice before, too, and I won it again to-day, so that it's mine now, I'm afraid," and I opened its case, which I had in my hand, and showed it to him. I was obliged to tell him; for it would have been worse still if he'd gone on all the way to Crookham to find he was a day behind the fair. As it was, it was comedy for me, but rather cruel tragedy for him. No man ever took a knock more pleasantly: he was the first to start a laugh against himself and to give me congratulations, and express gratitude for being saved the journey to Crookham. So he took train to Abingdon and I to Oxford, and shortly after, whether as the effect or no of this blow, he went out to New Zealand, where he won the championship of that country more than once.

[Pg 51] What used to astonish all my friends in College almost more than anything else, when I used vainly to try to describe to them what manner of game golf is, was the fact that I did not "dress" for it. "Undress" is rather what they meant. You see, they were accustomed to cricket, where you flannelled yourself, and to football, rowing and athletic sports wherein the mode of dress was to have as little of it as might decently be, and that one should go forth in the very clothes in which you might attend a lecture and play a game in them seemed hardly thinkable. They used to take up the clubs and regard them curiously. They began to think there must be something more than they had supposed in the game when I showed them the Crookham Cup. They wanted to see how it was done. The quad of a small College like Corpus makes rather a small golf course. The only way was to tee the ball well up and flog it out over the College buildings into Christchurch Meadows, or wherever else it might choose to fall. Occasionally we used to try to astonish Merton by a bombardment. But it meant a lavish expenditure of golf balls, for there was no prospect of getting any of them back again. The best possible tee to use, if you are driving, or ironing, off a hard surface like a quad, is a clothes brush. It hoists the ball well off the ground, so that you can do anything you like with it—that is, always supposing you have had the blessing of a sound golfing education. But there was not one of my friends of Corpus who had enjoyed this blessing. On the other hand, it appeared to them a very simple matter to hit a ball thus standing still: some of them were quite skilful at the job of hitting balls in quick movement at various games. So of course I must give them the club and they must have a hit at the ball too. They were [Pg 52] humiliated to find how possible it was to miss it altogether, but infinitely terrified at the result when they did happen to hit. The quadrangle was inadequate as a golf links. Nevertheless it was of more than ample size as a racquet court. Yet that golf ball, stoutly, if unscientifically, propelled, would fly round those old grey walls, rebounding from one to other with a terrific force and pace. Finally its career would generally terminate by a crash through somebody's window or a resounding knock on the President's door, after which the golf meeting broke up, like a dispersing covey, and disappeared till any suspicions aroused by the outrage were calmed down.

About the middle of my time at Oxford we had a mighty accession to our golfing strength in "Andy" Stuart. He came up to Christ Church, and took part with me, not very gloriously as I am able to remember, in the first Inter-University match against Cambridge. [Pg 53]

CHAPTER VIII

THE START OF THE OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE GOLF MATCHES

The institution of the Inter-University Golf Match was due to the genius (which we will define in this instance as the zeal and enterprise) of one of the very finest putters that ever put a ball into a hole, Mr. W.T. Linskill. Linskill was the inspiration of the golf at Cambridge, and he did a great deal more than any of us at Oxford to get the Oxford and Cambridge Golf Match going. We only followed. And it "went," in a very small fashion at first. I remember it all now—the start in an early dawn from Oxford, a long journey to London, then a long drive from Paddington to Waterloo, then train to Putney, then drive up to the London Scottish Iron Hut—some luncheon there, and then a round of golf. In that single round the golfing fortunes of Oxford v. Cambridge for the year were decided. It was not altogether satisfactory; especially as we had to do the journey all over again, the reverse way, and had to get back to Oxford the same night. It may well seem a question to-day whether it was worth going through so much for the sake of so little—as Mr. Weller said in respect of marrying a widow—but still it was, at all events, a start.

[Pg 54] It cannot be said that so far as some of us of Oxford were concerned it was a very good start. I think that "on paper," as is said, we had by far the better of it. I forget all the team, but I know we started with Andy Stuart and myself and I also think I know that neither of us had any idea we were going to be beaten by anything that Cambridge would bring against us. The others were all good fighting men, and should at least hold their own. In the event, as for myself, I was not only beaten—by Mr. Paterson, whom I regret that I have never met since—but beaten rather disgracefully, for I was several holes up—I think three—with only five to play and lost every one of the remaining five. Then as to Andy Stuart: he had to play Linskill, and I suppose that at St. Andrews, where both were practically at home, Andy would have given him a half—certainly a third would not have brought them together—for though Linskill was just about the best putter I ever saw, the rest of his game was not very formidable. They arrived at the last hole just before the Iron Hut—I can see the scene now in my mind—all even, and Linskill had the better of the hole. He was dead and Andy had quite a doubtful putt to halve the match, and I can remember a doubt arising in my own mind as to whether I wished him to hole it or not. Of course I did not want to see another match lost to Oxford, as well as my own; but still, if the news should have to go to St. Andrews that Andy had been beaten by Linskill, level, it would be such a fine joke that it was almost worth the lost match. However he holed that putt with the courage of a lion—he was always a good putter at the last putt of a match—and so the match was halved. The fortunes of the rest of the team were vastly better. [Pg 55] On the whole, as I see by the record, Oxford won by twenty-four holes on balance, on that first encounter, so our evil deeds did no great harm. This was in the autumn of 1878.

Next year the match was played again at Wimbledon. Indeed, it is not very evident where else it should have been played, unless perhaps at Blackheath. There was in existence that course at Crookham, near Newbury, which would have been convenient to us, from Oxford; but it would not at all so well have suited the Cambridge men. Besides there was little play on it except at the meeting times, and the course was not permanently kept in any order. It is worth mentioning that for one of the holes, a short hole, the play was over an avenue of tall trees. In the years since, while inland courses have been multiplying, so too have the tree hazards; but they are generally brought in as flanking hazards, at the sides. Here we had them in a line right across the course, and you had to be over. It was not a "blind" hole, for you could just get a glimpse of the flag between the stems. Some of our course constructors might make a note of this hole; and might do worse than copy it. At the same time, I should say that one of its kind, in a round, would be enough. I see that this Crookham is given rank in Nisbet's *Golf Year Book* as the "third oldest course" in England, but I do not know whether we can allow it such a venerable claim as that, remembering Blackheath, Westward Ho! Wimbledon and Hoylake, to say nothing of the old Manchester Golf Club which carries its history back to 1818. But I am not sure but what the history of this last has its breaks in continuity, its silent places. [Pg 56]

The Oxford and Cambridge match continued to be played at Wimbledon right up to 1896. I have some recollection of the second match of the series, in 1879. We started it, I think, from the Wimbledon end, not the Putney end of the common. For my own part I did better than in the first year, beating Mr. Welch, who afterwards was a mathematical don at Cambridge and used to keep the record and the medals at Macrihanish in his pocket for many years. I much regret that I never encountered him again, any more than my opponent of the first year of the match. On the whole transaction in 1879, Cambridge beat us by ten holes, and yet we had some good men. There was Archie Paterson, who was President of the Boat Club afterwards, A.O. Mackenzie, who was also in the 'Varsity boat, and, I think, Sir Ludovic Grant, now a professor at Edinburgh University and Captain in 1912 of the Royal and Ancient Club. Ernest Lehmann, who writes so well and pleasantly about the game, was a member of the Cambridge team that year.

I have no recollection whatever of the 1880 match, nor even whether I took part. I may have been ill or in the Schools or doing something equally foolish, but I see that Oxford won that year by eight holes. In 1881, for no reason that I can remember, no match was played—and that was the end of me as an Oxford undergraduate golfer. I had passed the last bunker and taken my degree before the next year's match.

All this while the only golfing playground at Oxford was still the cricket grounds on Cowley Marsh, and still there was no play at all in the summer term, when the cricketers occupied the

ground. But a few years later some of us were asked to go up and take part in an informal kind of Past *v.* Present match, more or less to celebrate the fact of the Club taking occupation of new ground in Mr. Murrell's park, on Headington Hill. Andy Stuart and I went up, among others. We found the course rather pleasant, in its inland way, with hedges for the chief hazards and undulating gradients that formed rather a blessed change from the sheer flatness of Cowley Marsh. And what the match was that we played, or its result, I do not in the least remember, but one remark of a distinguished lady in the gallery I very well recollect—for it was retailed with great joy to Andy and me by one who overheard it—"Those men," she said, indicating him and me, "are very nicely dressed—for professionals."

That is the kind of compliment one really does appreciate, because it is of the sort that is so rarely paid. I speak for myself, only, in this: Andy Stuart was always most careful in his attire, so as to merit such appreciation frequently, and doubtless may have received it often. Of course it would be impossible even for a lady of the kindest heart and most flattering tongue to pay such an encomium now. The professionals are by far the most smartly clad of all golfers. It was not so much so then.

I do not know whether I have given the impression that the golf was very good at Oxford. It is rather a mistaken impression, if I have conveyed it. On the other hand, Oxford University was not a bad place for the golfer. It had the large merit that its vacations were long. Then I would go home to Wellesbourne and play golf from there, at Westward Ho! all day and every day, and it was during my time at Oxford that there came to Wellesbourne as "odd boy"—that is to say, to do certain odd jobs in the morning—a little, singularly white-flaxen-haired boy from Northam village. It may seem surprising that the coming of such a little boy to Wellesbourne should be worthy of a place in this grave page of golfing history, and I do not know exactly what the duties of an "odd boy" are, but you may be very certain that he performed them very efficiently when I tell you that his name was John Henry Taylor. He used to do these odd jobs, whatever they were, like a champion, I am very sure, and then he used to go down to the links and carry my clubs for me whenever I was at home. The pay of a caddie at Westward Ho! in those days was not exorbitant—sixpence a round, and a hard walking and sandy round too, of eighteen holes; and they had to walk down a mile and a half from Northam village to begin to earn it. But all wages were low and all living was cheap in North Devon at that date and the boys were glad to earn it, particularly with a bottle of ginger beer generally thrown in of the royal bounty of the employer. On occasions, and for valid consideration, they would develop a spirit of independence which made money seem no object, as in the instance, which has become historic, of the small boy throwing down, in the middle of the round, the clubs of his master, a gallant general officer, and making his way without a word across the Burrows. "Where are you going, boy?" the irate man of war shouted after him. "I be goin' 'ome," came the firm reply. "There be goose for dinner."

CHAPTER IX

GOLFING PILGRIMAGES

It is a singular thing that not a seaside course was designed, or opened for play, in the decade from 1870 to 1880. I, at least, cannot remember nor can find record of any such institution. In 1880 the Felixstowe Club was started. I have a vivid recollection of my first visit to it, for I tried the wrong line of approach, going to Harwich, which left the whole of the river estuary to be crossed before Felixstowe could be reached. It was late in the evening, the ferry had stopped running, but I got myself and portmanteau and clubs put across in a row-boat. The mariner landed me on the far side in the gathering dusk, got into his boat and commenced to row away home again. "But," I said, as he moved off, "how far is it to the hotel?" "About two miles," he answered, resting on his oars. "But how am I to get there?" I asked. "I don't know," he said; and then rowed away. I sat in the fast increasing gloom on my portmanteau, and wondered. Then I saw the light of a providentially sent farm cart in the distance. I hailed it. The carter was a kindly man, and in due time I arrived at the Bath Hotel. Felixstowe course was of nine holes only, if memory is a true servant, at that date, and the club-house was that Martello tower which even now comes in as something of a hazard. So this was the third of the English seaside courses. In 1882 four more were added, Minehead, Hayling Island, Bembridge and Great Yarmouth. Therefore, by the time I left Oxford there was already that beginning of the chain of links around the island which has now been riveted so close. Coming South, down the West coast of England, there was Hoylake, a far cry from there brought you to Minehead, then Westward Ho! thence round the Land's End and the South Coast till you came to Hayling Island and Bembridge, then Felixstowe and up the East Coast to Great Yarmouth. The golfing plot is thickening.

Bembridge had always a charming little course, though crossing like a cat's cradle in places and more dangerous than most battles when there were many players. I gave dire offence there by writing that after my first tee shot, which was heavily pulled on to the seashore, the ball was at length found inside a dead and derelict dog—emphatically a bad lie! But there was not more than the licence almost permissible taken in this account: the ball actually was very near a dead dog; and why should there be offence in the suggestion? It was not implied that it was part of the duty of the Bembridge green committee to scavenge the seashore. However, the dog has been washed away now, and, I hope, the offence also.

But the chain of links did not stop, northward, at Great Yarmouth. As long ago as 1869 a nine-hole course had been made and a Club started at Alnmouth, only a little South of the Border. I believe it will surprise most people to know that there was this girdle of links thus early—in 1882—although the gaps were long and many.

An Oxford education is all very well, but it does considerably interfere with the whole-souled attention that a man ought to apply to golf. Nevertheless it has the aforesaid merit that the vacations give leisure for many a golfing pilgrimage, and it was in course of these pilgrimages that I made acquaintance with most of the English sea-links, as they came into being. It was in 1879 that I paid my first visit to Hoylake. Several of us went there from Westward Ho! to the autumn meeting. There was much going to and fro between golfers of Westward Ho! and Hoylake, and indeed of Scotland too, at this time. So much was this the case that in arranging the dates of the spring and autumn meetings we used always to have a care that they did not clash, and it was usually contrived that the Hoylake meetings should fall sandwich-wise between those of St. Andrews and of Westward Ho! so that Scottish golfers might work South and take Hoylake on their way to Westward Ho! The golfing population of the day was not a very large one, but it was very friendly. All, with few exceptions, knew each other. Moreover, partly because they were a small brotherhood, there was more *camaraderie* amongst them than there is now, and a term in common use then "the Freemasonry among golfers" had its meaning. At that time if you met a man in the train or waiting at a station with golf clubs, you would be sure to say to him, "I see you are a golfer," and he would respond with a glad pleasure, saying, "Yes—are you?" and you would begin comparing notes. To meet a fellow golfer was something analogous to the meeting between Stanley and Doctor Livingstone in the heart of Africa. It was a date at which such white men as golfers were rare.

Going to Hoylake, therefore, we were sure of finding ourselves among friends. I think there were at that time, at Hoylake, in pilgrimage from Westward Ho! besides myself, Captain Ashton, a sound golfer of the second class, Major Hopkins, the golfing artist, Captain Logan White, most amusing and caustic-tongued of companions. The native people showed us no little kindness. Only a short while before I had taken part in a match at Westward Ho! got up by the never-failing keenness of Captain Molesworth—he and I against John Dunn, a famous man at Hoylake (there is a hole named after him there to-day) and Jack Morris. We had won that match handsomely, but there was no scrap of ill-feeling. Then there was Kennard there—Colonel Hegan Kennard—ever most courteous, and arrayed with beautiful neatness; a player of great neatness besides, and winner of many scratch medals. There were also three generations of John Ball at the Royal Hotel, and already the youngest of the team was of great local repute and of such skill that his father would often issue the proud challenge to the company assembled in the bar-parlour of the hotel: "I and my son'll play any two." But those two were not very eager in coming forward. The rooms of the Royal Liverpool Club were in those days under the same roof as the Royal Hotel itself and the course started with what is now the eighteenth hole. Argyll Robertson was there, from Scotland, a first-class golfer, and surely the finest advertisement of his own profession, which was that of oculist, that ever was seen, for he was a singularly handsome man altogether, but the most striking feature of his fine looks was an eye more eagle-like than I ever saw in any other human face. There was also another little Scot of very different aspect, short, rather round- about with sloping shoulders like a champagne bottle, yet a terrible golfer and a thrice-champion—Jamie Anderson. Him I knew, he had been down to Westward Ho! taking part against Jamie Allan in a campaign of revenge for that defeat which the latter had put upon Scotland (for we looked on Jamie Allan's golf as wholly English) and on the man whom Scotland had previously pitted against him, Bob Kirk. Jamie Anderson, playing him on the same four greens of St. Andrews, Prestwick, Hoylake and Westward Ho! had defeated him—not heavily, but sufficiently. But Jamie Allan at that time was not playing as he had played against Bob Kirk. It was a fine game enough, but it had not the same force and sting. I had even enjoyed the honour of playing a foursome at Westward Ho! with Jamie Anderson, and had wrung from him a compliment which pleased me more than a little, for at one hole I had pitched up a long iron shot with some cut on it, and a happy chance decreed that the ball should stop about six inches from the hole. All Jamie said to me at the moment was "Ah—that's the sort that saves a lot of trouble;" but afterwards he had counselled me, "You should come up to St. Andrews: they shots of yours that pitch sae deid are just what's wanted there."

I quote that saying principally for the sake of my own greater glory, but secondarily because it is noteworthy as a comment on the St. Andrews of that day, for if there is a quality of St. Andrews now which is eminent above others it is that which puts value not on the pitched, but on the running up approach. It may be noted that this was all before the introduction of the mashie and while the use of the niblick for the approach was still looked on as a *tour de force*. We did all that work with a broad bladed iron.

Jamie Anderson walked round with Ashton and myself when we played for the Kennard medal at Hoylake on that occasion. I played fairly well and won it with a score which was then good—I am not sure it did not make a competition record—of 83. Jamie was very friendly, though he did not say much all the way round, but I was told that afterwards he had remarked to somebody about my play that "It's a fine game, but it's no gowf." I think I know what he meant by the dubious compliment. In those youthful days my great idea was to hit as hard as ever I was able: the result was numerous mistakes which were sometimes sufficiently redeemed, when fortune favoured, by recoveries. Jamie Anderson's theory of the game was very different. He never put anything like his full power into the shot, but he was so desperately accurate that Mr. Everard has it on the record that the little man (and he was anything rather than a boaster) once told him that he had

played ninety holes successively without a shot that was not played as he intended it to be played. Quite certainly, if that and that only was golf, it was not golf that I played. [Pg 65]

CHAPTER X

WESTWARD HO! HOYLAKE AND ST. ANDREWS IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES

In 1882 I left Oxford, with the intention of reading for the Bar, and actually did go so far as to eat a number of Inner Temple dinners at the extraordinary hour of six o'clock. I do not think they are quite digested yet. I had been suffering from a series of severe headaches all through my last year at Oxford and perhaps the dinners put a finishing touch on them. At all events the doctors advised me to give up all reading for a time—an instruction which I have observed rather faithfully up to the present. Their very wise counsel gave me all the more time for golf—the rules were not quite so many and headachy then and a man could play golf, or so it seems to me, with a lighter heart. Perhaps it is only because the heart had less weight of years to carry on it then, but it strikes me that the game and its players had more humour. I do not mean that they were more witty; but greatly because they were so immensely serious and solemn and earnest they were more amusing. Their tempers were more tempestuous, their language was infinitely more picturesque. At Westward Ho! I am inclined to think that there were some with special gifts of the kind. We had many old Indian officers, with livers a little touched, and manners acquired in a [Pg 66] course of years of dealing with the mild Hindoo, and because the golf ball would not obey their wishes with the same docility as the obedient Oriental, they addressed it with many strange British words which I delighted to hear and yet stranger words in Hindustani, which I much regretted not to understand. But a sight that has been seen at Westward Ho! is that of a gallant Colonel stripping himself to the state in which Nature gave him to an admiring world, picking his way daintily with unshod feet over the great boulders of the Pebble Ridge, and when he came to the sea, wading out as far as possible, and hurling forth, one after the other, beyond the line of the furthest breakers the whole set of his offending golf clubs. That the waves and the tide were sure to bring them in again, to the delight of the salvaging caddies, made no matter to him. From him they were gone for ever and his soul was at rest.

Of course he bought a new set on the morrow, so it was all good for trade and Johnny Allan. It also afforded a splendid spectacle to an admiring gallery. Really we have lost much at Westward Ho! even if we have gained much, by the bringing of the Clubhouse across the common. It was delightful, after golf or between the rounds, to bathe off that Ridge, or sit on it and watch the sea tumbling.

There were more "characters" in the golfing world in those days. Who is there now like the Chieftain at Hoylake or like Mr. Wolfe-Murray and many more at St. Andrews? But Hoylake, more than the others, had its humorists not so strictly of the unconscious type. There was great fun in the musical evenings in the Bar Parlour of the Royal Hotel—bar parlour sounds a little ominous, [Pg 67] but I never remember seeing a man in it who could not talk straight nor walk straight out of it—and some of the golfers had great voices. Tom Potter, well-known with the Free Foresters' Cricket Club, was honorary-secretary of the Club, then and for many a year, and he was a fine singer. There was "Pendulum" Brown, singing about "The Farmer's Boy," and ever so many more; and these evenings were the occasions for great match-making. Mr. Brown, nicknamed Pendulum, by reason of something clocklike about his swing, on one night, unlighted, so far as I remember, by a moon, but with some stars in the sky, backed himself to play the five holes round the field, then and there, in an average, I believe it was, of fives. Whatever the bet was, I know he won it easily, and also that he did those five holes in several strokes less than he took for them in the competition, played in broad daylight, the next day. The only stipulation he made with the gallery that turned out to see this nocturnal performance was that they should be silent for a moment after he drove off, so that he might hear the ball pitch. The night was very still and he seemed to get the place of the ball with wonderful precision by the sound of its fall. I know that his putting was extraordinarily good—far better than an averagely good putter's daylight putting.

There were many mirth-makers at Hoylake, besides the song-makers. Of this number were Alec Sinclair, with a fund of anecdote that never failed and was very seldom guilty of vain repetition; George Dunlop, bubbling over with wit and always ready to make a good after-dinner speech, and a crowd more. [Pg 68]

At St. Andrews the fun of the fair was less hilarious; there was less noise about it; but there were some witty and many amusing people. My first host there, Logan White, was the very best of company in himself; there were George Young and Mr. Hodges of a most sardonic humour, and very many with that sly and dry sense of fun which the Scot calls specifically "pawky."

Also, there was Old Tom Morris—"born in the purple of equable temper and courtesy," as Lord Moncrieffe, I think it is, well describes him. It would be a mistake to picture Old Tom as a witty man, or even as a clever man, unless a tact and temper that never fail be the very best kind of cleverness. But we do not find any very witty or pungent sayings attributed to Old Tom. It was his rich nature, with its perfect kindliness and charity, that made him so lovable, and such a valuable possession to St. Andrews in reconciling the golfing interests, which ran with counter currents, of the Town and of the Club. As a peacemaker he had no equal. I, deeming myself wronged by some

infringement of golfing rule or etiquette on part of another, might go to Tom—would go to him as a matter of natural course—and pour out my woes. He would listen with a charming smile in his old eyes under their bushily arching grey eye-brows, and when I had done he would take his pipe out of his mouth and say, "Ou aye." That was all, but it was enough to convince of his perfect sympathy. Then, from the big window of the club, or from Logan White's house on the links, I would see that wicked man, my late opponent, go up to the old man—for the scene was always that eighteenth green, just before Tom's house, where he would usually stand and smoke his old clay pipe after his two daily rounds were played—and there I would see exactly the same smile of sympathy for my opponent's recounting of his woes likewise, and at the end the pipe being withdrawn from the mouth; and I might know, though I might not hear, that precisely the same two words were being given for his sufficient consolation likewise—"Ou aye." So we both went away from him greatly comforted and in a disposition to make it all up again before the sun should go down on our wrath.

Old Tom was good enough to give me his friendship from the very first moment I came to St. Andrews, prompted thereto, as I think, largely by a comment that one or two of the old stagers made to him that my style was not unlike young Tommy's. I am sure that even at that time this must have been a comparison not quite just to that great young player of old, for although it is more than likely that I have cherished very many illusions in regard to my golf, I am quite sure that I have never been so deluded as to deem my style either good or graceful. But the criticism was endorsed by Tom and gave me a place in his heart. There was another point in which he gave me praise (he could give no higher) for a likeness to his talented lost son:—"Ye're like Tammie—ye'll tak' a' as much pains over a short putt as a long yin." Anything that had to do with a short putt touched the dear old man in a very sensitive place, for he was the worst short putter, for a great golfer, that ever was. It is known that Mr. Wolfe-Murray once addressed a letter to him, when on a visit to Prestwick, "The Misser of Short Putts, Prestwick," and the postman carried it straight to Tom. His own way was, in his sheer terror of missing the putt, to get done with it as quickly as possible, and often he would just go up to the ball and hit it in a nervous hurry, without looking at the line at all, so that he hardly gave himself a ghost of a chance of holing. He had a way, too, of dragging back the ball, with a quick movement of his putter, the moment it had missed the hole, to try the putt over again, and this habit had such possession of him, that I am quite certain I have often seen him snatch the ball back long before it came to the hole at all, and even, sometimes, when it would have gone in had he not done so. Once, but once only, I saw him beat his putter on the ground so hard after a missed putt that the shaft broke. I think it must have been sprung before, for he did not really give it such a very severe strain, but of course that was quite overlooked, and the joke served for many a day to tease the old man with—as "Tom, what is this I hear? Getting in such a rage that you're breaking all your clubs! Awful!" The poor old man would smile despairingly and generally solace himself with some quotation from his dearly loved poet Burns. "Scotland wi' a' thy faults I lo'e thee still" was his most favourite text for consolation.

"Old Tom."

Douglas Rolland and Archie Simpson (driving.)
(Archie was younger brother of the Jack Simpson mentioned in this chapter.)

[Pg 71]

CHAPTER XI

FIRST DAYS AT ST. ANDREWS

I have always had, and always shall retain, a very lively and grateful recollection of the kindness with which all the local members of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club and others at St. Andrews received me when I first went up there, a Sassenach among the Scots. I was very fortunate in my host, Logan White, and found there also others that I had known in the South, Harry Everard, most keen of golfers and best of all judges of the game, Victor Brooke, most eager, most charming and most Irish of Irishmen, and many others who had been old friends of my boyhood at Westward Ho! Besides, there were many who retained a memory and an affection for my Uncle Fred, whose locker, with his name upon it, was still in the big room. I took possession of it as a heritage, though he still had many good years of life left in him at that date. I well remember, too, that at one of the first dinner parties I went to at St. Andrews, at the most hospitable house of Captain "Dan" Stewart, Mr. Wolfe-Murray greeted me warmly, saying that he had known my grandfather who, as he affirmed, was in the habit of declaring that he had "the best left leg in Bond Street, and," added Mr. Wolfe-Murray, "I think my left leg is better than my right." He was gloriously arrayed in the dining dress of the Queen's Archers, which permitted a display of legs; [Pg 72] but this story of a day when legs were so draped as to be critically admired in Bond Street took the mind's eye back a long way. The point of my grandfather's claim, however, as to the beauty of his left leg, was that the symmetry of the right had been somewhat spoilt by a French musket ball.

And the kindliness that I met with, from many who had not any of these special links, was not to be forgotten—Mr. Gilbert Mitchell Innes, Mr. Balfour, the father of Leslie—now Balfour-Melville—Mr. Whyte-Melville, to whose surname the former succeeded, and very many more. Gilbert Innes was still, I think, the best golfer of all those named, and David Lamb and Jim Blackwell were about the best of the actual residents. Leslie Balfour came over from Edinburgh and I had many good matches with him. But on my first arrival there I found that a match had already been made for me by Victor Brooke, that I should play Tom Kidd, at that moment thought to be playing the best game of all the professionals at St. Andrews, receiving the odds of a third from him. Tom Kidd had been champion some ten years before, but, champion or no, I had no idea at that time of day of being beaten by anybody, professional or otherwise, at odds of a third. Besides, I had come rather fresh from a small triumph at Westward Ho! Somebody had made up a little purse for the three Allan brothers to play for, and in order to make an even number I had been asked to play with one of them. The prize was for the lowest score, and I was a proud man when I came in with the best score of the four. We had no formal definition of an amateur in those days, but in any [Pg 73] case I should not have wished to take the prize, which, indeed, I do not suppose would have been given me. But this small victory put me into fairly good conceit with myself in respect of this match against poor Tom Kidd, who was certainly not as good a golfer as Jamie Allan; but the truth is that the Scots were rather sceptical in those days about the golfing ability of any Southerner. It was not very long before that young Tommy had given Arthur Molesworth a third and a beating, as recorded in a previous chapter. How that could have come about I could not, nor can now, conceive; but at any rate Tom Kidd was not Tommy Morris. I remember that I went out the first nine holes in 42. It does not sound very grand nowadays, but it was respectable then, and sufficiently good to work up Tom Kidd into elaborate explanations as to how impossible it was to give a third to a score of that kind. When a man gets into that explanatory mood it is generally all over with him; and of course it was not to be thought, if I could play anything of a game at all, that he could give such odds. I won an easy and inglorious victory, which would not be worth mentioning except to show the estimate likely to be made at St. Andrews at that time of the probable form of an English amateur in comparison with that of one of the native

professionals.

Just about that time, that is to say 1883, Old Tom, who had been playing for him very poorly, began to enjoy a delightful Indian summer of his golf, which gave the old man and all the many who were fond of him immense delight. I do not mean to say that I suppose him to have played anything like the game of his best days. I could generally beat him, but he would always play me level and liked to gamble heavily. Generally there was a dozen of balls on the match, and a dozen on the score, for we used to keep the scores too, and often a dozen that I didn't, and another dozen that he didn't, go round in some set figure—say 87. A dozen balls meant only a dozen shillings, in those days, but the number he was owing me soon arrived at huge figures. However, I used to knock the debt off his playing fee, and he was perfectly happy, and so was I, in the arrangement. He was very methodical, invariably half-filling the bowl of a short-stemmed and ancient clay pipe as he hit off to the Short Hole Going Out, and knocking out its ashes as we came to the Short Hole Coming In: and that was all the smoke he ever took till the match was over.

On the occasion of this, my first visit to St. Andrews, I was not a member of the Club, but they did me the honour to elect me by next spring, and three of us tied for the first medal at the not very clever score of 91. Mr. Willie Wilson was one, I forget the other; and Wilson won on the play off. I remember that all went well with me till the sixth hole in the tie, where I got into a small bunker from the tee, took two to get out and left some of my temper behind in it. I had to take second honour then, but I won the first medal in the autumn, though I think it was rather that the rest played worse than that I played very well.

And then, immediately after the medal, came a message from Elie and Earlsferry—"Would any pair at St. Andrews give a match in a foursome to a couple of stonemasons from Elie?" Leslie Balfour asked me if I would play with him against them. I knew I was not in good form, and I do not think that he was, either, but still we said we would play them. They came over and seemed very nice young fellows indeed. The name of one was Douglas Rolland, and that of the other Jack Simpson. We had never heard of them before. We continued to think them very nice young fellows until the ninth hole, at which point we were two up. The truth is the masons had not got their hammers going at all. But we did not know that. On the way home we began to doubt whether they were as nice as we had thought. Rolland began hitting the ball to places where we had never seen it hit before, and Simpson so followed up that they were reaching with a drive and an iron holes that it was at that date scarcely decent to approach in this metallic way. They were "gutty" balls, mind, which did not fly away off the irons like the rubber-cores. They finished that round to the good of us, and in the afternoon made us look very foolish indeed. I do not think that Leslie or I ever got over that match till we read the result of the open championship, played very shortly afterwards at Prestwick. It went "Jack Simpson first, Douglas Rolland second." After that we could make a better reply when we had to listen to the very kind and pointed enquiries of friends as to "What sort of golfers are the stonemasons of Elie? Are they any good?"

I think, but am not sure, that it must have been in the interim between that match of ours and the championship, that there was a great home and home match, with something of a Scotch and English flavour about it, got up between Douglas Rolland and Johnny Ball. Captain Willy Burn wrote me an account of the first part of the match at Elie, which he went over from St. Andrews to see, and one of the phrases in it I remember now: "Both men drove like clockwork." It seems that Rolland, for all his great hitting, had nothing the better of Johnny—who was a very fine driver in his youth—in that respect, but hole after hole went from Johnny on the putting green. He came to Hoylake, for the second half of the match, no less than nine holes to the bad. The local people said that he would pick it all up on his own green. But he did not: on the contrary he lost more holes. Then, on the following day a second match was arranged—of thirty-six holes, all to be played on his own Hoylake. Of course he must have started with the moral effect of his previous hammering still deeply impressed upon him, but his friends still had all confidence in him. And he seemed to justify it grandly, playing such a fine game that he was five up and six to play and the match was virtually, as probably Rolland himself deemed, over, when suddenly he struck a very bad streak, lost hole after hole until all the lead was gone, and Rolland, winning the last hole too, actually won this extraordinary match. It was a very sad day for Hoylake, and that is the aspect of the match which seems to have impressed everybody. But, after all, there is another aspect—perhaps well realized at Elie—what a first-class fighting man that Rolland was! Johnny Ball had in fact to go through a very long baptism of fire before he was able to bring his wonderful powers and skill to their full use at the moment they were most needed.

CHAPTER XII

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

Golf had jogged along very comfortably up to this time with its one championship, open to amateurs as to professionals, but never as yet won by an amateur. Then, in the winter of 1884-5 it occurred to some original genius of the Club at Hoylake—"why not a championship to be restricted to the amateurs?" I do not know whose great brain first flashed out the idea, but they wrote and explained it to me, asked me to serve on a Committee for the purpose, and gradually the scheme was licked into something more or less like shape. It was decided to hold, under the

auspices of the Royal Liverpool Club, a tournament, under match play rules, open to all amateurs. The Club gave a handsome prize, or, rather, two prizes. I went up to Hoylake a little while before the affair came off, and there found the Committee in charge in something of a difficulty. Douglas Rolland had sent in his entry and they did not know how to deal with it. You see, at that date we had no definition of a professional, nor of an amateur, and had to decide on the analogy of other sports. I was all for accepting Rolland's entry then, and I am of the same opinion now—that it ought to have been received.

His offence was that, having come in second to Jack Simpson in the previous year for the open championship, he had accepted the second prize money, thereby violating the law common to several sports and pastimes forbidding an amateur to receive a money prize when in competition with professionals. That would have been all plain sailing but for the unfortunate fact that it was discovered that Johnny Ball, some years before, and while still quite a boy, had played himself into the prize list at an open championship and had been offered, and without a thought about the matter had accepted, a sum that I think amounted to no less than ten shillings. It was, of course, unthinkable that Johnny should be deprived of his birthright as an amateur for such a boyish error as this. There never was the faintest suspicion of professionalism about any act of Johnny Ball's extraordinary golfing life, but technically, at that date, his case and Rolland's were very much on all fours. I saw that the Committee, or a majority of them, were resolved to reject Rolland's entry. I did not care to be a member of a Committee which rejected, for a cause I could not quite approve, the entry of one who would certainly be a very formidable competitor for a tournament which I had a distant hope that I might possibly win. I therefore asked leave to resign from the Committee, before the vote was taken on the point, and did so, with perfectly amiable sentiments all round. I have been rather long-winded perhaps in this explanation, but I wanted to make clear to those who are not informed about it the reason why the present amateur definition is drafted just as it is, with a time limit beyond which—that is to say before sixteen years of age— a man shall be held guiltless of having done any action to spoil his amateur status in playing for a money prize in competition with professionals.

So that was settled, and Rolland's entry disallowed. It passed off with less trouble than I had expected, perhaps just because Rolland was such a thoroughly good fellow, whether he were professional or amateur, and not at all of that small spirit which is apt to take offence where none is meant.

We set to work to play our tournament. It was considered best not to entitle it a championship, seeing that it was the installation of a single club only, and had no official recognition. Funny things began to happen from the start. It gave much delight to the men of Hoylake that I should have drawn, as my first foe, my old enemy at Westward Ho! Arthur Molesworth. Him I managed to beat with tolerable ease. I think he had even then begun to lose the sting of his game. After that I rather forget my fortunes until the semi-final heat, when I came up against Johnny Ball. In a previous heat, by the way, he had committed the crime of parricide, knocking out his own father, who put up a stout fight against him, nevertheless. Johnny and I had a great contest, and I thought he was going to beat me, for he was two up at the turn; but I began to play rather well from there onwards and beat him by two upon the last green.

In that tournament we had not the arrangement which was made as soon as the amateur championship was put on an official footing—that is to say, in the very next year—of all byes being played off in the first round. The effect of that was that Alan Macfie, the other semi-finalist, had a bye in the morning. The final was decided in a single round to be played in the afternoon. I had been wound up to high concert pitch by that morning round with Johnny and could not play a bit in the afternoon. Macfie, on the other hand, putted like a demon and never made a mistake, so very likely the result would have been just the same if I too had been idle all the morning. He beat me, I think, by eight holes.

So that was the conclusion of it, and really it was most unfortunate for Macfie that he had not official right to place his name at the head of the list of amateur champions, for this was in all respects, except the title, equivalent to a championship. Leslie Balfour was not there, but Johnny Laidlay was. It was the first time that I made his acquaintance, though I did not have to play him. He was knocked out at an early period of the campaign. In fact I am pretty sure that he was not playing as fine a game then as he developed later. His putting, in particular, improved greatly, and so did the direction of his driving. His iron play was always, from the first, unsurpassed. I think that according to the arrangements of that tournament all ties must have gone on into the next round, for I well remember that Walter de Zoete tied twice with Macfie and was beaten by him on their third time of meeting, when Macfie, amongst other atrocities, did the short hole (the Rush Hole) in one. De Zoete went very strongly in the tournament. One of his victims was Mure Ferguson, whom he beat by eight and seven. There must, of course, have been something wrong here: I am not sure that gout would not come into the diagnosis.

And somewhere or other, among the crowd of lookers on at that tournament, with a heart very black with rage against me at my presumption in daring to beat the local hero, Johnny Ball, would have been a little boy of the name of Harold Hilton: a name to be heard of in later years.

John Ball.
(From a water-colour drawing by the late T. Hodge.)

A.F. Macfie.
(From a water colour drawing by the late T. Hodge.)

That was the beginning, the preface, the preliminary canter, of the amateur championship, and it is to the initiative and enterprise of the men of Hoylake in getting up that tournament and conducting it to success, that we owe all the fun and all the tears we have had out of that championship since. No doubt it, or something like it, would have come sooner or later, whether

or no, but it was due to the Hoylake Club that it came just as soon as it did. In the later course of that year it was taken properly in hand: the chief Clubs in the Kingdom gave it their sanction and subscribed to buy a challenge cup for it; rules were drawn up; the definition of an amateur was framed, and the first amateur championship meeting on these lines was put on the programme to be held at St. Andrews the following year.

Now, seeing that this veracious and highly egotistic record aims at being a serious contribution to the golfing history of modern times, as well as a sketch of my little personal share in it, it might be worth while just to note the names of the Clubs which subscribed for that amateur championship cup. For the subscribers were all the principal Clubs of Great Britain at that time, and anyone who has not looked over the list lately may very well feel something of the same surprise that the little boy experienced when he found himself in Heaven—surprise both at some of those who were there and also at some of those who were not there. All the more notable of the great inland golf Clubs, for instance, are conspicuous by their absence; and for the perfectly sound reason that they had not yet come into being, nor indeed had inland golf yet begun to be deemed at all worthy of consideration. There are, to be sure, the Royal Blackheath and the Royal Wimbledon. These are great in respect and veneration, but they no longer lead. St. George's at Sandwich was admitted to the sacred number of contributing Clubs many years later, when it came into existence and when its merits were proved well to warrant the inclusion of its course among the championship greens. And during all the first years of the amateur championship's existence it was my duty, acting on instructions from the Royal North Devon Club, to point out how very worthy was Westward Ho! to be the scene for that encounter, and also (but this was ever received with a bland smile in which, after a course of years, I began to join) how very central was its situation and how easy of approach from all directions. It has taken a lapse of many years and a more moving eloquence than mine to convince the management of the championship on these so obvious points; but now that they are convinced they accord the links of the West all their due recognition. The original subscribing Clubs then, who gave the weight of their authority to the new championship, were the following:—Royal and Ancient; Royal Liverpool; Royal Albert, Montrose; Royal North Devon; Royal Aberdeen; Royal Blackheath; Royal Wimbledon; Alnmouth; North Berwick, New Club; Panmure, Dundee; Prestwick Club; Bruntsfield Links, Edinburgh; Dalhousie Club; Edinburgh Burghers; Formby; Gullane; Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers; Innerleven; King James VIth, Perth; Kilspindie; Tantallon; Troon; West Lancashire. Is it not the case, that there are surprises in this list, both in the form of those who are in it and those who are not?

CHAPTER XIII

ON GOLF BOOKS AND GOLF BALLS

In the year 1886 I perpetrated a book on golf. The only excuse to be made for it is that which was offered in another famous instance, that "it was a very little one." It was a much more notorious thing in those days to write a book about golf than it is now, for who is there now who has not done so? But in that golden age the whole bibliography of the game was comprised, I think, in four volumes—*Golf, a Royal and Ancient Game*, by that gallant old warrior at the game, Mr. Robert Clark; Stewart's *Golfiana Miscellanea*; and two small didactic treatises, the one by Chambers and the other by Forgan. I had a great many compliments paid me on my little book, *Hints on Golf*, when it first came out. I sent the manuscript to Mr. "Bill" Blackwood, and he eagerly consented to publish it, "for," he wrote, "I am sure there must be something in that book. Ever since I read it I have been trying to play according to its advice, and the result is that I've entirely lost any little idea of the game I ever had." That was gratifying praise, and an edition or two was soon sold out. Then it occurred to me to illustrate its wisdom with figures in single lines. A little later I was dancing with a young lady I had just been introduced to in London and asked her whether she played golf and she replied, "Oh, yes, we all play, and we learn out of a most idiotic little book we've got." "Ah, yes," I said, "is it a little book with single line figures illustrating it?" "Yes, yes," she said eagerly. "That's it. Do you know it?" "A little," I replied.

One remark in the book took the popular fancy—that "Golf is not agriculture." It was made to point the moral that the golfer should replace his divots. But the only passage that seems to me at all worth quoting at length, although I did write the whole book myself, is one which illustrates the temporary and historical importance of a controversy which is entirely forgotten now. The passage is Number I. of "The Miseries of Golf," and runs thus:—

"Discovering, as you walk down to the tee, to start a foursome, that your partner has never in his life played a round with a 'putty' (eclipse) ball, while you yourself know that you cannot play within one half of your game with a 'gutty' (gutta-percha) ball."

All through the early eighties a good deal of experimenting had been going on with the view of discovering a substitute for gutta-percha for the golf ball. When I first went to St. Andrews, Commander Stewart was there, having just produced his "Stewart Patent" balls. They were of some composition, and were filled with steel filings. They had some merits, but were very heavy. All golf balls used to be numbered then: 27 and 28 were the usual sizes, supposed to signify the weight in drachms, and I remember Logan White telling Commander Stewart, "We tried weighing your balls yesterday. We put a 27 of yours in one side of the balance and we had to put a 28 gutty

and the coal-scuttle in the other, to make it level." Slight exaggeration, but pointing towards a truth!

It was the fault of these balls that they were too heavy. Then some firm in Edinburgh produced a ball called the Eclipse, and after several modifications they put out a ball that had distinct qualities of its own, in some points superior to gutta-percha balls. They would not carry so well—they were dead, and with wonderfully little resilience when dropped on a stone—soft, so that a finger and thumb squeeze could compress them sensibly, but the compression came out again. That was one of the merits of this ball, which inevitably—its qualities being such as they were—received the nickname of "putty," to rhyme pleasantly with "gutty": it would come out again, resuming its spherical shape without any disturbance of contour, even after the most desperate hammering on the head with an iron. It was indestructible. Then it was a wonderful ball for keeping its line on the putting green—far the best putting ball that ever has come into being during the half-century or so of golf that I have known. But the quality, which perhaps was its highest virtue, was that it did not go off the line nearly as much as the gutty when pulled or sliced. I used to play with a "putty," as a rule, when I played against Old Tom. The old man hated the ball, as indeed did most of the professionals. Trade reasons weighed heavily with many of them, but I do not think that the old man was commercial-minded enough for these to have the slightest effect with him. He might have made a large fortune had he possessed but a little more of this spirit, but it was in his utter freedom from it that much of his charm consisted. Still he [Pg 87] cordially hated "the potty," as he called it. Of course it was possible to pull or slice the putty, if you played badly enough, though it did not take the cut nearly as freely as the gutty, and whenever I pulled or sliced one of them to perdition the old man's delight knew no bounds. The fun would come twinkling out of his eyes under their shaggy brows and he would say, "Eh, they potties—I thocht they potties never gaed aff the line."

Willie Fernie was the only one of the professionals who ever condescended much to them, and I have been playing with him when he used a putty going out at St. Andrews, in the teeth of the wind, and then took a gutty coming home down wind. But he did not make much of it. The two balls required such a very different touch for the short game that it was very difficult to go from one to the other—it is in that that the point lies of the above quotation from my "idiotic little book." But Willie Fernie was a man of infinite ingenuity. The ball, evidently from what I have said of it, was a fine ball against the wind—it kept so low and so straight. On hard ground it would make up in its run for its loss in carry, and therefore it was a better ball on the flatter than on the more mountainous links. But in this account of its qualities, I have also indicated its defects. Running as it did when it pitched, it was an impossible ball to stop on the green off a lofted shot; and just as it would not take much cut, so as to go far to right or left when heeled or toed, so it would not take a cut when one purposely tried to put a cut on to stop it.

[Pg 88] On the whole I liked the ball. It was very economical, because it would last for ever and because its soft substance did not inflict such damage on the clubs as the hard "gutty." I won both the first two amateur championships with a putty ball. I do not mean that I used the same ball in each. But Andy Stuart had a putty ball with which—the same identical ball—he won three St. Andrews' medals. The great argument against them was the difficulty aforesaid of stopping them off the pitch. That, and their lack of carry, were their weak points: their straight travel, especially off the putter, was their strong point. And then, all at once, the manufacturers began to make them less good. Just what happened I never knew. I think that they changed the mixture in order to get them harder, and, so, more like the "gutties"; but whatever the reason, the effect was that they lost much of their merits and never overcame their defects. Result—exit the putty ball towards the end of the eighties, and the gutty holding the market until the Americans sent us what at first were called Haskells; which is another and more modern story.

I had written, at the commencement of my little book, that I had seen a recent advertisement of an outfitting firm, "The Game of Golf Complete, in a Box." It suggested a *multum in parvo*. I went on to say, "if anyone would only write us 'The Art of Golf, complete, in a Book'—why, what more could be left to wish for?" But I added, "I am afraid no one will ever be quite bold enough to attempt that." And hardly were those words published before out came Sir Walter Simpson, greatly daring, with a book actually called *The Art of Golf*. He did not add "complete, in a Book"; but no doubt that is how he meant it. And an admirably witty and humorous book it was, and is. [Pg 89] Its wit and humour abide with us. Just what value it ever had as an education in the art I hardly know. Walter Simpson, poor fellow (he died while comparatively a young man), never was a first-class golfer, though he was a first-class companion for a round. We who were pleased to rate ourselves the best of the amateurs could give him about a third, and there were many strokes in the game of which he had no idea, but his book, like himself, is excellent company. Quite a modern book, having the same title (which is rather a pity), has come out lately, by Joshua Taylor, the champion's brother. I will refrain from comparisons. But I suppose that at the date I am writing of, the world, for the time being, had enough of golf literature, for I cannot think of any work in book form on the great subject until the Badminton Golf Volume, in 1890; and I remember an article of Professor Tait's written in the late eighties in which he speaks of "the magnificent Clark, the voluminous Simpson and the sardonic Hutchinson," with the suggestion that these three virtually comprised the whole of the bibliography of golf as generally known to the public. How far pens have travelled over how many of the reams of the paper so appropriately termed foolscap in the quarter of a century or so since, we may consider with much amazement—and here am I still piling up the leagues!

[Pg 90]

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIRST AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

The first amateur championship, as by law established, was played at St. Andrews, and started for me, as I suppose did most things at that time of life, on the note of comedy. It must be understood that this institution meant a great gathering of clans and of clansmen not very well known to each other. I dare say some of us had our own ideas that no one was likely to be unearthed from the dark places able to upset reputations more or less established; but everything was possible. I had, carrying for me, one of the numerous family of Greig at St. Andrews; I presume some connection of the fine golfer of that name and of his brother, the lion-voiced starter. Of course, the prospects of the championship were the great subject of discussion, and during my first match of the tournament—I think things must have been going fairly easily, and that I had my opponent pretty well in hand—he said to me, "There's a mon Fogie, frae Earlsferry, and they say he's gaein' tae win the chompionship. He's a terrible fine player an' he daes na' mind the gallery a dom." This was terrific news to me. By "the mon Fogie" I understood him to mean a Mr. Foggo of Earlsferry, whose name I had noticed on the list of the draw, and had noticed further that this Mr. Foggo would be my own fate in the second round of the tournament. [Pg 91] That is, of course, always on the assumption that he and I both survived; and of his survival, after Greig's remarks, I had no doubt. When I came in I heard to my surprise, as well, I may say, as to my relief, that this terror of Earlsferry had actually been defeated and knocked out on the last green by Dr. McCuaig. Of Dr. McCuaig I did not know very much; and then, on the evening of that day, it was reported to me that he had said, "I shall beat Horace Hutchinson to-morrow. I believe he is a good player, but he is a young player. You'll see; I shall beat him." This was retailed to me, and whether it were a true saying of the doctor's or whether the retailer had merely invented it to see how I should take it, and to raise my ire, I do not know to this day; but I do know that it did raise my ire, and that I went out in the morning with a very grim determination to play my hardest. I had no idea of any amateur starting out with the expectation that he was going to beat me, unless, indeed, it were Johnny Ball. I played steadily; the doctor was not at all at his best, and I won—I think it was the first seven holes. At all events, it was such a number as made the match a very comfortable one. The doctor took his beating in the best of spirits, and bore no ill-feeling whatever.

Altogether that was a comfortable championship. After the first thrill of the terror inspired by the reputation of "the mon Fogie," it went on oiled wheels. Mure Ferguson, I remember, whom I met in a later heat, was a hole up going to the eleventh, and I was a little anxious, but he let me win in the end, though only by a hole, and then it looked very much as if I should have to play Johnny [Pg 92] Ball in the final—which was never to be regarded as a holiday. But the unexpected happened. In the semi-final he had to meet Henry Lamb. Henry Lamb was a beautiful golfer. It was he who invented the "bulger," that club with its convex face, off which the ball flew with a straightness that was a revelation. You see, before the bulger was invented, the faces of our wooden clubs, by the perpetual contact and hammering of the hard "gutty" balls, always got worn away, so that instead of being flat, they were very decidedly concave. And you may understand what the effect of that gradient of face would be—to emphasize and aggravate every sin of heeling or toeing to which golfing flesh is heir. Therefore, the good influence of the bulger was not really so much in introducing the first convexity, though that in itself helped the ball to go straight off it, but it also corrected that fatal concavity which all clubs soon assumed of which the faces were flat to start with. Instead of being concave, after much battering, the face of the bulger became merely flat.

So it was a blessed invention; and as to its inventor, he was not only a player of a very fine and graceful game of golf, but he was also the most delightful fellow to play with that could be imagined. He had a temper which in its perfect serenity was a most valuable golfing asset to himself, and also most valuable in the charm of the companionship which it brought into a round of golf with him. His mode of addressing the ball was remarkable, for he stood as if he were going to drive at an angle of at least forty-five degrees to the right of the hole. I remember, at some inland course in the South, where his strange method was not known, a caddie calling out [Pg 93] to him as he was on the point of driving from the first tee: "Stop, stop, you're playing to the wrong hole." Henry Lamb gave the boy one of his sweetest and most lamb-like smiles, and proceeded to drive the ball two hundred yards straight down the middle of the course—to square leg. He used to swing round so far as he came down that really it was to the cricketer's square leg that he drove; and yet his style was a singularly graceful one, which seems as if it could not be. It was a singularly effective one no less, and he was a medallist on most of the courses then known to the golfer. Still, he was not a Johnny Ball. On that day, however, he proved himself a greater than Johnny Ball, who was far from being at his best, and when I came in from my own semi-final effort I learned, with a breath of even deeper relief than I had given to the shade of the defunct "mon Fogie," that Henry Lamb and not Johnny was my man for the final. Neither of us started well in that final round—it was only of eighteen holes in those days; but I began to get going after the fourth hole, and Henry Lamb was, I think, a little done after his match with Johnny. At all events, he let the holes slip away very quickly, and I had an easy win, on which he was the first to offer his congratulations—a very courteous gentleman!

The intelligent student of golfing history up to this period might very well note, and with some surprise, that whenever reference is made to Johnny Ball it always seems to be as of one disappointing expectation. And that, in truth, was very much the case. Men of Hoylake used to come to me almost with tears in their eyes, because they knew that they had my full sympathy [Pg 94]

and understanding. They knew that I knew what a terror Johnny Ball really was on his own course and when playing his right game. But what afflicted them almost to hysterics was that he never seemed able to produce this wonderful best of his when he went away to play anywhere else than at home; and the consequence of that was that the other folk, the Scotsmen, laughed at them, saying: "This local idol of yours has feet of very poor clay"—or gibes to that effect. They took it very badly. It is hardly to be believed now, when we know what a brilliant lot of victories in all fields Johnny has to his credit, that he had to wait a very weary while, and to suffer a number of disappointments, before he began to come to his due. When he did come, he was not to hold nor to bind.

Johnny Laidlay did nothing effective in this first championship. He, too, had to "bide a wee" before he did all that was expected of him; but I made his much better acquaintance about this time and acquired the greatest respect for his game, especially for the accuracy and delicacy of his approaches with the mashie. It was a new club to me, and something of a revelation in its possibilities. For it would, of itself and without any special effort of the player, do all to the ball that might be done with our old irons only after a deal of cut had been carefully put on. I do not at all regret that labour; it was an excellent education; but there is no doubt that the mashie simplified the approaching problems. It made an easier game of it. I have been looking up the details of this championship, and find one of its "points" to have been the meeting of Johnny Ball and Johnny Laidlay, the first of very many encounters of its kind, resulting in the English Johnny's [Pg 95] win by three and two. So that was the fate of the Scot; he fell by no unworthy hand. There is always consolation in this reflection. Henry Lamb, as I read on the same record, had fought his way to the final over the corpses of some stout foes. The first round gave him a bye; but then he had to meet Mr. Charles Anderson, forgotten by golfers of to-day, but a stalwart in his time. Next, Harry Everard fell to him; and then he had a bigger man than either, especially at St. Andrews, in Leslie Balfour. He beat Leslie at the last hole. Then, in the semi-final, he beat Johnny Ball by no less than seven and six to play, and it was by the same sufficient margin that I defeated him. What Johnny can have been doing I hardly know. That he must have been playing some game widely different from his real one is very certain. [Pg 96]

CHAPTER XV

MR. ARTHUR BALFOUR AND HIS INFLUENCE IN GOLF

It is not on first sight very obvious how the appointment of a statesman to the Chief Secretaryship for Ireland can have an intimate bearing on the history of the game of golf. Nevertheless that appointment, in the year 1886, of Mr. Arthur Balfour had, in my humble judgment, an important influence and bearing on the game. It so happened that about this time an eminent weekly journal had propounded the statement that none but stupid people played golf, and even that the successful playing of golf demanded, as an essential condition, that the player should be stupid and destitute of all imagination and of all intellectual interests. It was rather an extravagant statement. At the same time also the office of the Irish Secretary was invested with a peculiar importance in the public eye. It was not long after the tragic affair in the Phoenix Park. Ireland was seething with murderous discontent. The man who accepted the secretaryship took his life in his hand with that acceptance, and this risk Mr. Balfour took with all his characteristic coolness and courage. He became at once, both on this account and because of his record as a still rather untried statesman, as a "philosophic doubter" and as a distinguished figure in a certain set of Society to which the name of "Souls" had been rather foolishly given, [Pg 97] perhaps the most popular figure in politics. The public eye was upon him and it was known that this man of so many and so varied gifts was an enthusiastic golfer. He went round the links as an object lesson to contradict the unfortunate pronouncement of the aforesaid respectable paper about the stupidity essential to the man who would confess himself a golfer.

He also went round the links accompanied at a decent interval by two detectives. I used to play a good deal with him at North Berwick at that time, and it was rather curious to know that we were being stalked every step of the way by these guardians skirmishing among the sandhills and the fringes of the course. It did not in the least interfere with Arthur Balfour's equanimity and concentration on the game. Of course he was not a great golfer, though he brought to the game that faculty which was so invaluable to him in politics of rising to an occasion. You were in good hands if he were your partner and you left him with a putt of just the doubtful distance to win the match at the last hole. But though he was not a great golfer, he was a very great figure in golf; and just because it is very human to be influenced by an example, the effect of his example was to make many a man play golf, on the principle that "there must be something in a game if a fellow like Arthur Balfour plays it." He had been a fine tennis player at Cambridge, and was an extraordinarily good shot at a stag. I used to stalk on the splendid forest of Strathconan which he sold to Mr. Combe, the father of Christian Combe, the present owner, and the stalkers there have spoken to me with bated breath of his deadliness of aim with those old-fashioned rifles which [Pg 98] tossed the bullet along in a high curve, and with black powder that made all nature invisible for a minute after the shot. Twenty-six stags without a miss, was his record, as reported to me by one of these stalkers, for one season, and it is a wonderful record in the conditions, especially as he was short-sighted. But then he had, by compensation, not only an accurate vision, but a coolness of nerve which made any idea of "stag-fever" an impossibility to conceive in connection with him.

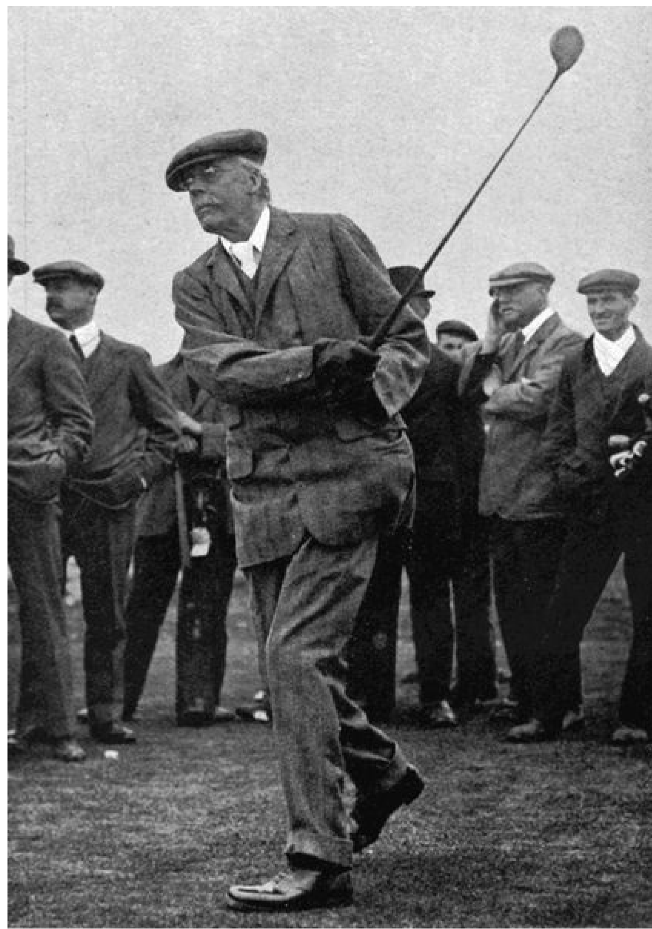
And "putt-fever" at golf was equally far from him.

I am very far indeed from saying that if golf had not been at this moment just ready for a "boom" the example of Arthur Balfour would have set the boom going, but as a matter of fact it was just ready. Courses were being made and Clubs founded all over the country, the amateur championship was both a cause and an effect of the new impulse, and then came the beat of the Balfour drum and the note of "Ca ira" came from it triumphantly. I date from that year, and principally as arising from the sources indicated, that "boom" which has never ceased to march and which is marching still. So much for what the incentive of one man's example may be in a race still generously capable of hero-worship.

For a while at North Berwick Arthur Balfour's chief henchman was Crawford, Big Crawford, as he was most appropriately called, about whom many a legend clings in North Berwick tradition. The big Crawford was also the caddie of little Sayers in any of the important matches played by that great little man. The Crawford legend might run to far lengths, farther than I care to spin it now, but of all the instances of his wit and repartee the best I think is that which he produced, [Pg 99] perfectly impromptu, so far as I know, when there arose a great discussion as to the precise nature of a toad-stool in course of a match which Sayers, his little man, played against Andrew Kirkaldy at St. Andrews. It was lifted, the lifter saying that it was a dead and loose-lying toad-stool, the objector that it had been rooted in the ground and therefore was not legally liftable. The discussion instantly raised numerous side-issues, as to one of which Crawford, having delivered his opinion, heavily, of course, in favour of the view of the case that would assist Ben Sayers—pronounced, finally, "Weel, het's the rule o' the game, an'——" at this point he paused an instant and lifted an enormous fist, "an'," he repeated, indicating this leg of mutton bunch of knuckles, "there's the referee!" It is not the first time, nor the seventh time, that I have told this story; nor do I care if I repeat it seventy times seven. It is good enough to bear it.

At the conclusion of an historic home and home foursome in which Sayers and Davie Grant defeated Andrew and Hugh Kirkaldy, Crawford would demand of any whom he could get to listen who it was, in their opinion, that had won the match, and when they professed a doubt, he would draw himself up with enormous dignity to his immense height, and striking himself dramatically on the chest, would exclaim with conviction, if not with grammar—"Me!" and really it was not altogether too large a claim. His overmastering size and the fearsome aggressiveness of his manner might very well give pause to any tactics of an aggressive nature on the other side. He [Pg 100] was a tower of moral (or immoral) support to little Sayers, and his presence at the hole when a hostile putter was attempting to approach it had all the effect of a black cloud overshadowing the atmosphere. But beneath all his dourness, and his sardonic air, he had a kindly nature, and of his loyalty to him whom he regarded as his chief, and incidentally the greatest man that ever lived, Arthur Balfour, there is not the slightest question.

With his rugged independence, he might stand as the type of the old Scottish caddie, now practically extinct. In later years he set up a booth at the far end of the North Berwick links where he would dispense ginger-beer and the like innocent refreshment, though it was said that to the initiate few a more generous and cordial liquid might be proffered. I do not know. What I do know is that when we went out, of a morning, and came to Crawford at his booth, he would often ask us, "Is Ar-rthur oot the day?" rolling the "r's" upon his tongue as if he loved to prolong the sound of his hero's name. It is thus that he would put the question—for all his worship, making use of the familiar first name. And then, if we were able to comfort his soul by the assurance that the great man would soon appear, he would hoist a little flag on the booth's peak, for honour's sake. And one day it happened that the Grand Duke Michael of Russia, coming to the tent and seeing the flag, inquired of Crawford in whose honour it was flying. I do not know whether the Grand Duke had been put up to making the inquiry, and asked it humorously, to see what Crawford would say. At all events he had his satisfaction, for in answer to the query, "Whom is yon flag flying for?" the uncompromising reply was given, "A better mon than you." No doubt loyalty here leaped over the bounds of courtesy, but there is sign of a better quality than mere rudeness in the reply. Very well must Crawford have known that if he had chosen to reply to the foreign prince that it was in his honour that the bunting waved, it might have meant a piece of gold transferred from the princely pocket to Crawford's, but he did not hesitate. Partly perhaps the native disdain of the foreigner rang in the reply, but chiefly I think a very rugged honesty, which, in spite of the lamentably rude form of the speech, has its dignity.



A.J. Balfour.

Crawford.
Dispenser of refreshing drinks and counsel.

We had great fun on the short North Berwick course, in those days, where nothing really paid you but accuracy in the pitch, developed to a nicety by Johnny Laidlay, who was always there. And besides him were Walter de Zoete, poor John Penn and many good golfers besides. I think it was with me as partner that Arthur Balfour first played that foursome against De Zoete, and Penn, which afterwards, with Johnny Laidlay taking my place, was played times without number. "Mike" Mitchell was one of the regular frequenters, in the Eton holidays, and playing with him as partner he and I once did three successive holes in two each on that old short course.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SECOND AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

In 1887 we were back, for the amateur championship, on that Hoylake links which was the arena

of the preliminary trial trip that Macfie won in 1885. I see that Arthur Molesworth was in that tournament of 1887, and survived until the fourth round, where he was beaten by J.G. Tait, eldest brother of poor Freddy. Another name of note is that of a small boy, appearing in such big company for the first time, Harold Hilton. He was beaten in the third round by Mr. John Ball, "old John Ball," as we called him for many years, although when I first went to Hoylake he was only John Ball the second, his father and Johnny's grandfather being still alive. One of the most remarkable points in the championship of the year was the game that Johnny's father put up all through it. It never was a showy affair at all, that game of his, but it was wonderful how effective it was on the Hoylake course which he knew as well as the inside of his own pocket. He beat Hilton, as noted, then he knocked out J.G. Gibson, the Black-heathen, who had been going strongly and had defeated Henry Lamb the round before; and in the fifth round, which was the semi-final, I came up against him. I had only survived the previous round by the skin of my teeth, and remember all about it well. It was against Mr. Gregor Macgregor, a sound player, and a Scot, as his name suggests. I was getting on fairly comfortably with him, with a hole or two in hand, when he played a stroke in which I was morally sure that he hit the ball twice. I did not know whether to claim the point or not, and, not being possessed of the ideally equable temperament, was upset by the incident and played the last holes very badly, halving the round and being rather lucky to win the nineteenth hole. I forget whether, in point of fact, I did claim that foul, which I knew that Mr. Macgregor was quite unconscious of making, but what I do know is that I received from him afterwards one of the very nicest letters ever written, saying how sorry he was that anything of the kind should have happened, and that I should have been upset at all. So the conclusion of that nineteenth hole left me with John Ball, the elder, to play in the semi-final; and meanwhile that other John Ball, whom we distinguished as Johnny, was knocking Jack Tait out in the other semi-final. They were playing ahead of us, and as we went to the seventeenth (now the sixteenth) hole old John Ball was one up on me. And I had not played at all badly; only he had played in the most gallant way and had really hardly made a mistake. He was one up sheerly on the merits.

Then he said to me, as we walked after our second shots to the seventeenth hole and an emissary came back to say that Johnny had beaten Jack Tait, "It would be a funny thing if father and son had to play it off together." It was an innocent remark enough, and yet it nettled me a little, and I said in answer, "Wait a bit, Mr. Ball: you haven't done with me yet." Perhaps I ought not to have said it: it was rather a boastful answer. I can only plead the excuse of comparative youth. I sincerely hope it was not that reply which put him off his next stroke, but something bothered him as he played it. I saw him look up once, as he addressed the ball, at the legs of the people standing (or not standing as still as they should have been) opposite him. Anyone who knows Hoylake will know the stroke he had to play—to pop the ball over the cross bunker before the green, of the then seventeenth and now sixteenth hole. What happened was that he took his eye off and popped the ball into the bunker instead. I lofted mine over all right and won that hole. Then, by a lucky approach and a good putt, I got the last in three; and that was a stroke better than the hole ought to be done in and one too good for Mr. Ball.

So then the next, and the final, problem was the worst—Johnny! I dare say I was a little lucky in that match: I know I had one rather lucky shot. I got into the bunker just before the green, going to the short hole, called the Cop. I dug the ball out, pretty near the hole, and holed the putt. It was fortunate, but I have always contended that with practice, the judgment of the strength with this dig shot is not nearly so difficult as it seems to the uninitiated, and at Westward Ho! there was every opportunity for initiation, in the shape of bunkers close to the hole. Moreover, in those days, there was no rule forbidding you to test the consistency of the sand by a trial dig into it before the real shot. I have always thought the rule which forbids the testing dig a very bad one, because a clever bunker player ought to have the advantage of his cleverness, and this prohibition takes away much of the advantage and puts him more nearly on a level with the man who has no idea of judging strength with this shot. Then, two holes from home, Johnny broke his brassey. I see that Mr. Everard, speaking of this incident in the Badminton Book, described it as "the very bad luck to break his favourite brassey." That is interesting to note now, as a sign of the times. It indicates an importance belonging to a brassey which it certainly would not have now, when a full second shot with a wooden club is hardly ever wanted. But of course it was hard luck then, and perhaps it was due to that that I got dormy one up. Then Johnny obligingly topped his tee shot going to the last hole. I did not play the hole very bravely, and had to hole rather a good putt to get a four. I do not think Johnny troubled to putt out. He was a little nearer than I was, but not stoney. Anyhow, that was the conclusion of a lucky championship for me.

This reference to the far greater importance, in those days, of the brassey reminds me of a queer notion that Johnny Laidlay had. If he had a big match to play he always bought a new brassey for it. His theory was that he could play better with one that was strange to his hand. If this paradox is at all to be explained it must be by psychic, rather than physical reasons. I take it to mean that, just because the club was strange to his hand, the strangeness subconsciously suggested to him the need for a closer keeping of the eye on the ball. And the subconscious suggestions are always the best. I may be quite wrong, but that is the only explanation I can find for it. But in this again we see the vastly greater importance of the brassey in the days when the gutta-percha balls were used. It was equally important with those eclipses with which I won both these championships. Johnny Ball and Johnny Laidlay always stuck to the gutties, I think. Certainly the latter did, and so would I too, had the old short course at North Berwick been my chief golfing haunt; for there the value of the pitch shot was out of all proportion greater than on the larger courses elsewhere. But as for the reason why the brassey was so much more in vogue then, it has been rather misunderstood. It was not because you drive so much further off the tee with the rubber-cored

balls than with the gutties—if both are hit dead true there is not a mighty difference in this. But it is because you can drive the rubber-cored balls so very much further with the iron clubs than you could the gutties. That is the great difference. Ironing range means a considerably longer distance with the rubber-cores than with the solid balls, and the distance gained by taking a brassey instead of a driving mashie or a cleek is as nothing compared with what it used to be.

It is very difficult to draw a correct comparison between these courses of St. Andrews and Hoylake, then and now, in respect of the difficulties that each presented to the golfer. The whins at St. Andrews encroached, on what is now either the clear ground of the course, or is dotted only with occasional trappy bunkers amongst which the ball often finds quite a good lie, in such a dense mass that a wandering ball was hardly worth the trouble of looking for among them. At Hoylake the little rushes, which are now scarcely to be regarded as a hazard at all, used to be very dense too, and in the summer and autumn a tough long grass grew among them, so that your ball lay as if in a plover's nest, and sometimes it took you several strokes to get out. It was a horrid hazard. Then at some of the earlier and later holes of the course the remaining posts and rails of the disused racecourse were very vexing. To find yourself tight up against a post was only a little less annoying than to hit it with a full shot and to find your ball come dancing back to you or flying past your head as if it meant to brain you. All these things happened. Then the rabbit holes were more numerous and came farther out on the course. It was about this time that I was moved to much fury in course of a match by seeing my ball lying at the bottom of a burrow, where I could not reach it, and, when I was on the point of dropping another ball with loss of stroke (as was specifically permitted by the local rule regarding rabbit holes), being told, "You mayn't do that—it's a lost ball." "Lost, be d——d," I said. "What d'you mean by lost? Why there it is: you can see it for yourself." "Yes," said the other, "but a ball is lost unless you can garther it"—he was a Scot, with a patriotic accent, and he spoke of the ball as if it were a daisy or other flower. I concluded the round under protest and a cloud of wrath; and, what made the cloud blacker—the Committee upheld the view of the "gartherer." Possibly they may have been right, but certainly I did not think so at the time.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST GOLF IN AMERICA

In the autumn of 1887 I did a very foolish thing: I went to America. I do not by any means imply that it is not an essential part of a liberal education to visit that great country, nor do I mean that it would be any act of foolishness on the part of a golfer to go there now, but I do mean that in my own golfing circumstances, and in the golfing conditions of the States at that time—which was a condition of no golf at all—it was very silly of me to go away from golf for so long. For that is what it involved. I was abroad for several months. At that date there was no golf in the States. I did not touch a club while I was there; and after I came back, after this long while of letting the hand grow unfamiliar with the club, the game never came so easy to me again. From that experience I believe that it may be taken as a maxim by all golfers who have learnt the game as boys, that they run a risk of losing a measure of skill and confidence, which they may never regain, if they do not touch a club for many months together. You see, this game that a man has grown up with, learning it as his muscles grow, so that it is more or less literally true that he has "grown into it," is rather different from the game that he learns later, after his muscles have set. The effect of going away from golf for a long time is that you lose some of these lessons that you have acquired as you grew; you have then to re-learn them, so far as you may, as if they were a new acquisition that you had to take possession of after you have finished growing; and you never acquire quite the same unconscious and instinctive grasp of them.

I went to America again the following year. But it did not matter then. The harm had been done; the first and best lessons, or a large number of them, were lost—their teaching laboriously and only partially to be regained. And on that second visit I actually did take out some clubs.

It is a condition of things hardly to be realized now, but at that time there was not, to my knowledge, such a thing as a golf club or a golf ball in the United States. Canada had its established Clubs and courses at Quebec and Montreal. Probably somewhere, in secret places, some few Scots were pursuing their national pastime, on very "natural" courses, in the States too: it is impossible to think that it must not have been so. But probably their sanity was shrewdly doubted, and they did not court the public eye. As for "natural" courses, the whole boundless prairies at certain seasons invite the knocking of the golf ball about on them.

On this my second visit to America it had been suggested, I think by Mr. "Bob" Purdey, with whom I stayed near Meadowbrook, on Long Island, that I should bring some clubs over and show the people what sort of a game golf was. But I went first to Mexico and subsequently to California, leaving the clubs in New York the while, and when I came back sundry members of the Meadowbrook Club turned out on a certain Sunday to see me give an exhibition show. We cut some holes in the soil, probably with carving knives, and I proceeded to instruct them, by precept and example, as to what golf meant. I cannot think that my exposition was very effective. They did not seem to think that it meant very much. They tried shots for themselves, and the result of those trials was not such as to give them a very exalted opinion of golf. The most favourable criticism that I can recall was that "it might be a good game for Sundays." I do not think it was

extravagant praise.

I believe that was the first time golf was ever played in the States, though there may, of course, have been these secret Scots, as I have said. However, the Meadowbrook people were so far impressed as to ask me to send them out some clubs, when I got back—which I did, from the shop of Peter Paxton, then at Eastbourne. But what became of those clubs I never heard. Neither they nor my excellent example inspired America with golfing zeal. That great country had to wait before awaking to a true sense of the merits of the great game. But time has its revenges and the awakening has come. Also, at the moment of writing, it has the effect of making England conscious that she must "Wake up"; for that twenty-year-old Mr. Ouimet has just taken the American championship, in a manner that has made history, out of what seemed the securely holding hands of either Ray or Vardon.

I think it was in 1888, soon after I came back from America, that I had my first match of any public note with Johnny Laidlay. I think it was the Town Council or some other people anxious to attract golfers to North Berwick—is it conceivable now that there should be a desire to attract more?—that gave some prizes for a scratch tournament open to all amateurs. Johnny Laidlay persuaded me to enter (he was my host for the occasion), and he gave me a good hammering in the final bout. For we both survived till the final, and I remember that, starting out, we both played badly enough for a hole or two. Then I lighted a pipe and smoked it, and it is a sign of how times have changed that one of the Scottish papers, commenting on the match, said, "At this point Mr. Hutchinson lit a pipe and smoked it and actually did not remove it from his mouth while playing the strokes—a thing never seen before in a big match." That seems queer comment at this time of day, when the incense of tobacco curls perpetually upward from the pipe of champion Ray and when the cigarette of Harold Hilton is like the fire that is never quenched. But the soothing of the nerves and accuracy of game that I had hoped to follow from the lighting of that particular pipe did not ensue. Mr. Laidlay found his game, while I was still looking vainly for mine, and he hammered me, if I remember right, pretty easily. The reporters were fairly out after me that day. They criticised the pipe unfavourably, and then one of them recorded a painful incident of the game in the following terse and pregnant sentence: "Here Mr. Hutchinson broke his niblick, his favourite club." I do not know whether this literary gentleman had seen me in bunkers and niblicking out of them so frequently that he inferred the niblick to be the club that I most loved to have in hand; at all events, that was his comment, and it went home. I think they must have had a golfing reporter at this time with a vein of ironic humour about him, for it was then, or nearly then, that one of them wrote about Captain Willy Burn: "Here the Captain hit one of his characteristic shots—far into the whins!" Whether it all was irony or innocence we did not know, for this commentator did his good work by stealth and we never found him out.

I was in no way surprised at losing that match with Mr. Laidlay, especially at North Berwick, where he was very strong. But I did lose a match about this time which I had not thought of losing, and by its loss did a little towards the making of golfing history. All history is curiously made. The coming of a little sandy-haired boy from Northam village to do the work that an odd boy does about our house near Northam village is not an incident that looks big with history, but when the little boy's name is known to be J.H. Taylor, the historical importance becomes evident. He left that "odd boy" work and went as a gardener's assistant, where, for a short while, we lost sight of him. But then he was put on as an assistant on the Westward Ho! links in aid of Sowden, the old Californian Forty-niner, who looked after the green, or left it to look after itself. We passed the time of day with him, quite as if we were his equals, with no notion of his future greatness. Then the Northam village players (I hardly know whether their Club was formally instituted by that date) said they would like to play the Royal North Devon Club a match. I was put to play Taylor. I did not think much about the job. I had hardly seen him play a stroke before. Going to the very first hole I remember a shot of his with a cleek: it went low; I thought he had half topped it; but it continued going. It had seemed certain to fall into the bunker guarding the green. But it carried that bunker and lay close to the hole. Again and again I found the same deceptive low-flying shot going a great deal further than I had expected it to. I began to realize then that it was because of his stance, with the ball so very far back towards his right. I also began to realize that I was a hole or two down. I did not play well; really, at that date, I ought to have beaten him. But he was one up with four to play, and then I laid him a stimy. He had two for the half. But instead of putting round, as all ordinary men of experience would, he tried to loft, for the hole, with his ordinary—and his only—flat iron. He just failed: but he holed the next putt, though he was not dead. Finally he beat me—I think at the last hole—and I congratulated him, as in duty bound, adding that when he knew a little more he would not be trying to loft stimies when he was one up and had two for the half. So I said, thinking to be wise, whereas it was I really who did not know—not knowing of what Taylor even then, and even with a flattish iron, was capable in the way of putting stop on the ball.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW I LOST THE CHAMPIONSHIP AND PLAYED THE MOST WONDERFUL SHOT IN THE WORLD

In 1888 I lost the amateur championship at Prestwick, and I lost it badly. I do not mean by that

that I lost it to a bad player. It was Andy Stuart who knocked me out, and for his game I have always had a high respect. But I do not think that either of us played very well in that match. I know that I did not. For one thing (or for two things) I topped two tee-shots running, and one of them was going to the "Himalayas Coming In," which, as all who know Prestwick will realize, is not a good place to choose for a tee-shot "along the carpet." He was three up and five to play, and I worried him down to one up and two to play, but he did the seventeenth hole better than I and finished by laying me a stimy. But I do not think I should have holed the putt anyhow—I was by no means dead—and at all events he won the hole and so the match.

And then the next morning, when he was stropping his razor, he cut his hand so severely that it was against the doctor's advice that he played at all, but play he did, and seeing that he was far from his best by reason of this damaged hand and that it was Johnny Ball that he had to play, it is no great wonder that he was defeated; and he had all my sympathy. He had my sympathy by reason both of his damaged hand and of his defeat, but still I did think that if he were going to cut his hand at all, it would have been as well that he should have done so the morning before. In that case I, and not he, might have been up against Johnny on the morrow.

I have no reason to look back on that match with pride, but I remember it with special interest, because it had one of the most extraordinary incidents in it that ever did happen in any match at golf. And this notable incident was as follows. Going to the hole after the Himalayas going out, which was much the same then as it is now, save that the green was not levelled up and that the tee-shot probably did not run as far, I sliced my second very badly, right over the hillocks on the right of the green. I went over the ridge, with my caddie, to play the ball, and pitched it over, with a loft, to the place where I thought the green to be. Then I ran up to the top of the ridge, and looked, but could see no ball. I asked then, as I came down over the ridge, where the ball was. There was a small concourse of perhaps a score of spectators. "Oh," they said, "the ball has not come over." "Not come over!" I repeated, filled with astonishment. "Why, I know it has!" As a matter of fact it had been lofted high into the air and both I and the caddie had seen it with the most perfect distinctness. Still, it appeared that it was not there; it almost seemed as if the ordinary operations of Nature's laws had been suspended and the solid gutty had been dissolved into thin air in mid flight.

Then, as we all were looking about, in much surprise, a man spoke up. He was a Mr. Kirk, a townsman of St. Andrews and a fine golfer. He took part in the first amateur championship when it was played at St. Andrews, but he had come to this one as a spectator only. He said, "Well—I did think I felt a tug at my pocket." (By this time we all were very much intrigued to imagine what could have happened to the ball.) And at that he looked into the outside breast pocket of his coat; and there the ball lay, on his handkerchief, like an egg in a nest.

Has a more wonderful thing ever happened at golf? I, at all events, have never heard of any more extraordinary series of small marvels ever taking place. In the first instance it was wonderful enough that the ball should thus plump down so cleanly and neatly into the pocket at all; then that none of the score or so of watchers should have seen it; next, that not even the man into whose pocket it thus plumped should have noticed it as it came down, imperilling his very nose and eyes; and, finally, that it should have landed so gently that he did not actually realize that anything had struck him—only "fancied he felt something tug at his pocket." Naturally, if it were not for the cloud of witnesses, I should never have ventured to tell the tale. My own character, if I have any, for veracity is not nearly high enough to stand such a strain.

These are the facts; and then of course arose the question as to what should be done with the ball. As it happened, it did not arise in a form very acute, because Andy Stuart was well on the green in two and I, in Mr. Kirk's pocket, standing on the edge of the green, in three. We agreed finally that the pocket should be emptied where the pocketer stood, and from there I played out the hole and lost it. It is almost a question whether such a shot as this did not deserve to win the hole.

Curiously enough the only other golfer I ever knew who played a ball into a man's pocket is Andy Stuart himself. He hit a full drive right into the coat tail pocket of Lord Lee, the Scottish Lord of Session. But his lordship was very far from being unaware, like Mr. Kirk, of the pocketing. He was quite painfully aware of it. As Andy was at that time at the Scottish Bar, it seems to me that it was a very injudicious stroke for him, as a rising young advocate, to play.

The curiosities of that great shot of mine are not exhausted yet. For a full quarter of a century I told that story, saying that not a soul had seen the ball come over the hill, and that, but for Mr. Kirk bethinking himself of the fancied tug at his pocket, I should have had to treat that ball as lost. And then, one day when I was waiting before the Clubhouse at Biarritz, there came up to me one whom I knew by sight only, Colonel Von Donop, of the Royal Engineers. He introduced himself, using as the medium of introduction that stroke and that ball. It appears that he, though I had not known it all those years, had been standing further along the ridge at a point whence he could see both me as I played the shot on the one side and the little crowd of spectators on the other. He saw the ball rise into the air, and also saw it drop, as he thought even at the time, into a spectator's pocket. He also saw the discussion and the search which took place when I came over the hill, and when I replied with some indignation to the statement that the ball had not gone over also. He was just about to come forward to explain what he had seen when Mr. Kirk found the ball and the incident terminated. It was the last and crowning act in the curious comedy, that I should discover, twenty-five years later, and in the south of France, that there had been an unsuspected spectator of that funny little episode in the West of Scotland.

Johnny Ball, thus defeating Andy Stuart, found himself in the final face to face with that very frequent foe, in this and after years, Johnny Laidlay. The latter had been playing very finely: he had won a tournament with a good entry at Carnoustie, and had picked up many medals in the Lothians, but he could not hold Johnny Ball in that final. The Sassenach seemed to have the better of the match all the way and won quite comfortably. The Hoylake folk had comfort at length in the long deferred fulfilment of their great hopes for the local hero, and certainly they have not to complain that he has disappointed them since.

There was something very attractive about the Prestwick golf at that time. Nor has it lost that special attraction since. The West of Scotland did not then, nor does it now, take the same general interest in golf as the East, but there was a very zealous and very friendly society of golfers belonging to the Prestwick club. It was the country of the Houldsworths, the iron people, who took the keenest interest in golf. Mr. William Houldsworth, known as Big Bill, was most kind to me when I was a boy at Westward Ho! He made frequent pilgrimages to that green. He was my first host at Prestwick, at his house of Mount Charles, some miles out, and I think looked on it as some disgrace that, coming from his house, I should lose the championship. At Prestwick itself too, looking out on the fourteenth green, lived Mr. Whigham, the father of a family of great golfers, both the brothers and the sisters. And about the whole course there was, and still is, an air of friendliness. It is not great golf, but it is exceedingly pleasant golf and also it is exceedingly difficult golf. In the days of the "gutty" ball it was great, as well as good, golf, but the golf there has never, to me, worn the very business-like aspect of the East Coast golf. I do not say that it is any the worse for that—on the contrary. It lies in a district of more kindly climate and more rich pasturage than the East, and I remember one open championship there when Willie Fernie, always a fellow with a ready jest, came in humorously lamenting that he had lost his ball twice "on the putting green." It was a sad grassy year that season, and if you might not actually lose the ball on the putting green itself, you might, and you did, spend many a minute in search for it only just off the green. No mowing could overtake the growth. And of course Prestwick has all the picturesqueness of the Clyde estuary—the Kyles of Bute, Arran and the rest of the professional natural beauties of that coast—for its setting.

CHAPTER XIX

JOHNNY BALL AND JOHNNY LAIDLAY

I have not said very much, or not as much as the subject deserves, about Johnny Ball as a golfer; have not attempted any appreciation of his game. He would not, as I have indicated already before, do himself any kind of justice at the beginning of his career, when he was off his native Hoylake heath, and this failure was a source of bitter disappointment to his friends at home. They began to be afraid whether he ever would make that mark which they knew his golfing talents ought to put within his achievement. They need not have feared.

So now that I have brought the course of this faithful history to the point at which he and the Scottish Johnny—Laidlay—came together in the final of the amateur championship, it seems as if both of them had at length "arrived." They have set their names on the scroll of Fame and will grave them constantly deeper as the years go. The one, to be sure, was destined to perform many more deeds of glory than the other, and the English Johnny to win a big balance of their matches, but they were in constant competition with one another, and for four successive years at this time one or other of them was amateur champion. It was not indeed until after that great tournament had been going for six years that another name than theirs and my own was inscribed on the championship cup.

John Ball.
As a Yeoman (S. African War).

From "Golf and Golfers" (Longmans, Green & Co.)
J.E. Laidlay.
Characteristic throw forward of the body at the finish of approach stroke.

I may have suffered—probably I have—under many illusions with regard to my ability to play golf, but I never so deluded myself as to suppose I was as good a player as Johnny Ball. I believe I am right in thinking that Johnny Laidlay has just the same opinion of him, in comparison with himself. He, too, I believe, would put Johnny Ball on a pedestal by himself, and leave him there, as the best match-player that we ever have had among the amateurs. I say match-player with deliberation, for of all amateurs by far the best score-player that we have seen is, in my judgment (and I cannot believe that anyone is likely to think differently), Johnny Ball's younger schoolfellow

at Hoylake, Harold Hilton. But of course his is rather a younger story, and so, too, is that of Jack Graham, another Hoylake prodigy, of Freddy Tait, of Bobby Maxwell and others. Still, I make no exception of any of those later ones when I claim that Johnny Ball is the best amateur that has ever been seen, for a match. It did not need that he should win the open championship and the amateur championship eight times, in order to prove this. I knew it well, even before he ever won either championship once.

It has always amused me, as it has amused Johnny Laidlay too (we have compared notes about it), to hear people in some of these latter years saying, as Johnny Ball won championship after championship, that "he is as good as he ever was." But the one who has always been most of all amused by these statements is Johnny Ball himself. Perhaps the most humorous thing about it is that they are invariably statements made by those who never saw Johnny Ball at all when he really was at his best. Those who did see him then know better than to make them.

I know that I never started out to play a match with Johnny Ball without the full consciousness that if we both played our game I was bound to be beaten, or, rather, that it could only be by an accident if I should win. It is a feeling I have never had, when I was playing tolerably well, with any other amateur, except when playing Bobby Maxwell over Muirfield. But then I cannot pretend that I was playing at all as strongly as I once might have played when I had to encounter that great man. Still I do not suppose I could ever have held him at Muirfield. He was not quite as terrible elsewhere.

Curiously enough I have had rather the better of the exchanges, in the so-called "big" matches, amateur championship matches, and the like, that I have played with Johnny Ball. He would sometimes miss a short putt—in fact, I always rated him as good for a couple of missed short putts in the round—and that just gave one a chance to come in. But as to "friendly" matches—though I am sorry to say I have had but few with him—I think he has beaten me every one. It is true they were always on his native Hoylake. With Johnny Laidlay, on the other hand, of whom I never had the same consciousness of being in the hands of a stronger man as I had with the English Johnny, I have had the worse of it in the "big" matches. I beat him, I remember, in an international match, but he beat me at least twice in the amateur championship, and I have not a win from him to my score in that encounter. Yet in the "friendly" matches—and we have played a great many, for I have very often been the guest of his kind hospitality, both at North Berwick and elsewhere—I do not think that I have come off at all the worse.

But Johnny Ball, at his best, and especially at Hoylake, was a terror. For one thing he was so very long. Generally driving with a hook, the ball carried very far and then set to work to run till it made you tired watching it. And then he had that wonderful long approach with his brassey, banging the ball right up to the hole, with a concave trajectory—you know what I mean—the ball starting low and rising towards the end of its flight, then dropping nearly perpendicularly, and with no run. It is a shot that I have seen played in any perfection only by three players, and all young ones—Johnny Ball, Hugh Kirkaldy and Jamie Allan. Only the first is still alive, and he does not, probably cannot, play the stroke now. I believe it is a stroke that was easier with the gutta-percha balls than with the modern rubber-hearted things. At all events no one plays the stroke now. Perhaps that foolishly named "push-stroke" of Vardon's comes most near to it, and now and again Taylor gives us something of the sort: but this is with iron clubs, not with wood. In the old days Bob Ferguson had the stroke, with his irons, played up to the plateaux greens at North Berwick with great accuracy; but he did not achieve it so well with the wood.

Then Johnny could drive that gutta-percha ball most ferociously with his cleek. I remember Colonel Hegan Kennard saying to him, as he and I were playing a match, "I wish you could teach me to drive as far with my driver as you can with your cleek."

Johnny had just driven a huge cleek shot to the end hole. And Kennard was a very fair scratch player of the day. Johnny was full of resource too. When you had him, as you thought, in a tight place, he would bring off some *tour de force*, with a great hook or slice, and lose very little. He delighted, too, in an evil and windy day: the harder it blew the better he could play and the more he enjoyed controlling his ball through the storm.

The short game was where he gave you your chances. If you could live with him at all through the green and up to the hole you need not despair of stealing a shot or two back from him, now and then, on, and from just off, the putting green.

And that was the very last point at which you might think to have any advantage over that other, the Scottish Johnny. He never could quite trust his wooden clubs. The occasional hook or slice was apt to put in a sudden appearance, after he had been playing perfectly straight for a number of holes. On the putting green he improved very much after I had known him for a year or two. But always, from first to last in a golfing career which has been crammed full of glorious achievement, once he came within ironing reach of the green there was no man, till Taylor came, that was his equal. That is my humble opinion. Bob Ferguson, who was really his teacher, on that fine old nine-hole course at Musselburgh, may have been even better at the full iron bangs up to the hole: he had the concave flight and the straight drop which are worth anything in the approach; but Johnny Laidlay was better than his master at the little chip shots. He learned them, no doubt, at North Berwick, where you are undone, if you cannot play them, and where the other man is undone if you can. And, then, Johnny Laidlay was a very fine finisher in a tight match. How many times I have known him do that last hole at North Berwick in three—a hole hardly to be reached from the tee and guarded by a very tricky valley—when the match depended on it I should be sorry to say. I always thought his stance, as he addressed his ball all "off the left leg,"

an ungraceful one, and am inclined to think it the cause of the occasional uncertainty of his driving, but his manipulation, by which I mean his hand and finger work, of his iron clubs was beautifully delicate. I do not think he had given much thought to the way in which the different strokes were played—the slice and the pull and the rest of them—but there was not, so far as I know, a stroke or a subtlety with the iron clubs that he was not master of. His clubs were all curiously thin in the grip, and one of his great theories was that the club should be held as lightly as possible. There is not a doubt that most men can put more cut on the ball with a lightly than with a tightly held club, but further than that, there is not any very general recognition, so far as I know, of a virtue in the light grip.

After I lost the amateur championship at Prestwick in 1888, these two Johnnies, the English and the Scottish, held it between them, winning two apiece for four years, so that it was not until Mr. Peter Anderson won, in the seventh year of its institution, that we let it go out of the hands of one of the three. Neither Johnny Laidlay nor I were fated to win again, but as for the other Johnny, there seems to be no saying when he will be done with it. To be sure he has a few years' advantage.

[Pg 126]

CHAPTER XX

A CHAPTER OF ODDS AND ENDS

In 1886 my father took a house at Eastbourne, and I was no longer at Westward Ho! as constantly as before, although a frequent visitor there at the house of Claud Carnegie. He and I used to have many matches on terms that are rather to be commended as a means for bringing together two players of different handicaps. We used to play level, but I had to give him five shillings before starting and at the end he paid me back a shilling for every hole that I was up. It came, of course, to the same thing as giving five holes up, but it is rather a more amusing way of stating these odds. The five shillings puts me in mind of a very much more gambling match that was played about that time, when I was at Hoylake. There was at that date a very festive company of Edinburgh golfers going about the various links under the leadership of old Mr. Robert Clark, who edited the great book on golf. There was Sir Walter Simpson, who also wrote a great golf book and was the son of the doctor who discovered the blessed uses of chloroform, Hall Blyth, Valentine Haggard, Cathcart, Jack Innes, and a few more—all, I fear, except Hall Blyth, gone over to the majority.[4] Five of these warriors started out one day at Hoylake to play a five-ball match, for a fiver a hole, and—this was the prudent stipulation of Mr. Robert Clark, in his ancient wisdom—they were to settle up at the end of each hole. The man who happened to fall into bad trouble would thus have to part with four fivers on the putting green, so it must have needed a well-filled notebook to make a man sure of living through to the finish without bankruptcy. I had suggested that a six-ball match would be really more fun than a five-ball, and that I was willing to make the sixth; but the well-meant suggestion was not taken in good part. I forget the ultimate result of the encounter.

[Pg 127]

Naturally I was at Eastbourne a good deal, as I had no other home than my father's, and I arrived just at the time of the first laying out of the original nine-hole course there. Mayhewe was the most active of its originators, and he and I planned it together. It implies no reflection on the designers of the later eighteen-hole course to say that the old nine-holes were better than any of the later developments. It is a very different problem laying out nine, and laying out eighteen holes on almost the same circumscribed piece of ground; for the later additions to the area do not amount to a great deal.

It is amazing to me now to think how ignorant we were in those days of the proper treatment of inland putting greens. We could plan the rest of the course well enough. But the great idea was to keep on rolling and rolling and rolling—the heavier the roller the better—until we had the surface just round the hole so slick that if there was any gradient at all the ball would not stay near the hole even if you placed it there by hand. There was (there still is) a green called "Paradise"—and no green was ever named more aptly according to the classic principle of *lucus a non lucendo*. If you were below the hole, and below it on this green you were sure to be, because the ball would not rest above, you might putt up to the hole, and if you missed the hole the ball would come trickling down to you again, and so you might go on putting "till the cows came home." By which time there might probably be a little dew which possibly might allow your ball to come to rest in the hole's vicinity. But long before that you would have come to the conclusion that golf, on Paradise green, was not a good game. One device used to be to cut some jagged raw edges to stick out on the ball's surface, before driving off the tee for this hole. Thus jagged, the ball would not fly properly, but it was better to lose a shot, owing to this jaggedness, through the green, than to lose twenty on the putting green. On the rough edges of its scars the ball would come to rest even in Paradise.

[Pg 128]

However, this is a picture of that green at its most grievous worst. It was not always thus, and on the whole the course, with its drives over a great chalk pit and over the corners of one or two high woods, gave us great fun and was not a bad test of golf. Peter Paxton was the professional, a humorous little fellow and a wonderful putter on those tricky greens. I remember, when he sent us his credentials, he added the comment "and, Sir, I drink nothing stronger than cold water." I liked the "cold," as if he feared that water with the chill off might go to his head. He grew braver

later.

This course at Eastbourne, be it understood, was technically of the "inland" kind, though at the seaside. It was of the chalk-down soil; and it was among the first of the new supply of inland courses which the ever spreading vogue of golf demanded. Still we looked on these inland greens as giving us at best only a poor substitute for the real game. We had yet to learn of what inland soil, cleverly treated with an eye to golf, might be capable. The only inland Club which was at this time of any weight in the general golfing councils was the Royal Wimbledon, which had seceded from the London Scottish, building itself a club-house at the opposite end of the common. Some of the golfing leaders of the day, such as Henry Lamb and Purves and others, made this their headquarters, and there they were already hatching schemes which were ultimately to lead to all that great development of golf in the East Neuk, so to say, of Kent, and at first were to take form in the St. George's Club and links, at Sandwich. Purves, with characteristic, energy, was scouring the coast of England in these years, looking for links as by Nature provided, and it was here, at this point, that he had his great success. Of course there was much palaver and indecision, as well as prolonged negotiations with the landowner—or his trustees, seeing that Lord Guildford was then a minor—before any real move could be made; but when it was made it meant a very great deal for London golfers and gave an immense drive forward to the already fast booming boom of English golf. In 1886 Mr. Du Maurier, the *Punch* artist, was at St. Andrews, already, as I remember, in large goggles and having trouble with his eyes, and he then drew a picture of "the Golf Stream," as he called it—a succession of pilgrims of all sorts, sexes and sizes, making their way to St. Andrews. Will it be believed that this was the first golfing picture in *Punch*; that it was the very first mention, as I think, of golf in a comic paper? What would *Punch* do to-day, we may ask with wonder and dismay, if all the humorous opportunities which golf gives its artists and its writers were withdrawn from them? They would feel impoverished indeed. A year or two later, when I was editing the Badminton Book on Golf, Mr. Harry Furniss showed me a letter he had just received from Mr. Frank Burnand, then staying at Westward Ho! and then editing *Punch*. Harry Furniss was, and is, a golfer; Frank Burnand was not. "I think you would like this place," wrote the author of *Happy Thoughts*—"there are fine golfing sands (*sic*) here." Therein he expressed an even happier thought than he knew, for Westward Ho! at that moment happened to be suffering from a considerable drought, and a heavy gale had scattered the dry sand far and wide out of the bunkers, so that "golfing sands" gave rather an apt description.

The Badminton Library of Sport was then coming out, volume by volume, and delighting all to whom Sports and Pastimes made appeal. I do not wish to bring too great discredit on a very eminent firm of publishers, but it is a fact, sad as it is true, that when I first waited on them, obedient to their summons, in Paternoster Row, and they broached to me the subject of a golf book in their series, they made the very shocking suggestion that it should be included in the same volume with other Scottish sports, such as skating, curling and perhaps tossing the caber. They did not know, they said, when I met them with some mild expostulation, whether the game was "of sufficient importance to carry a volume to itself." I must do them the justice to say that they quickly saw and repented of their error, and I believe that ultimately the golf volume did better than any other in all that popular series.

While I was doing some of the writing for this book, Sir Ralph Payne Galway was writing the Shooting volumes, and we were both staying with poor John Penn at his house in Carlton House Terrace. One night John Penn asked Mr. Purdey, the gun-maker, to dinner, to talk guns with Sir Ralph; and these two sat long over the dessert, after the rest of us had left the table, talking of loads and bores and so on. The next morning, while we were at breakfast, a four-wheeler drove up to the door, and Sir Ralph, looking out, said in dismay, "By Jove, John, I believe that under the influence of your champagne I must have ordered a whole 'bus load of guns from Purdey." We looked out, and the four-wheeler was filled, from roof to floor, with guns. It appeared, however, that they were not all on order, but had merely been sent round by Mr. Purdey for inspection. This, however, is not golf; nor was Sir Ralph then, I think, a golfer, in spite of the good service he has since rendered to the dynamics of the golf stroke and in spite of the excellence of the "P.G." ball.

FOOTNOTES:

[4] Re-reading this, in 1919, even Hall Blyth's name has to be added to those that have gone.

CHAPTER XXI

A MORE LIBERAL POLICY AT ST. ANDREWS

In those days Professor Tait used to be a great deal at St. Andrews, in the intervals, which were wide, of his professional duties in Edinburgh. He used to play a round of golf, generally by himself, generally talking to the ball all the time, as if asking it why it behaved as it did, and very frequently laughing at it—for he was essentially a laughing philosopher—long before the ordinary golfer had his breakfast. Six o'clock, it was said, was his hour for starting, and the rest of the day,

when he came back, he had at his own command for study, of which he did an enormous amount, for tobacco, of which he consumed a mighty deal, and for chaff and talk, of which he was most genially fond. He was a lover of humanity, and not even the biggest fool on the links (which is a liberal order) was made conscious of his folly when it came up against the Professor's learning. He used to let me come into his laboratory in Edinburgh, and in return used to employ me in driving balls at a revolving plate of clay and all sorts of experiments.

Poor young Freddie was not yet of the stature to drive very fiercely, though he was already fiercely keen. He was at school at Sedbergh, in Yorkshire, where Fred Lemarchand, who had been at Oxford with me, was a master. Lemarchand putted the weight for the University, being a very strong fellow, and developed into a very useful golfer. And he, apparently, made it his business to get "rises" out of young Freddie, telling him in chaff that the Scots did not know how to play golf: that Johnny Ball and I were better than their best amateurs, and so on. I have always wondered whether this chaff helped to incite Freddie to become the great golfer that he was. Golf, to be sure, was bred in him—his eldest brother Jack was a fine player—but perhaps Lemarchand's chaff gave him an added zeal. I remember him first as a stalwart, very cheery little boy hitting a ball about with very slight respect for human life or limb. [Pg 133]

It was about this time that I moved a resolution at a general meeting of the Royal and Ancient Club that their local rules, such as that touching the dreary palisaded cabbage patch magniloquently styled the Stationmaster's Garden, should be taken out of the body of the rules and be printed under a separate heading, in order that the many Clubs which were being established in divers places might adapt more easily for their own use the rules capable of universal employment, and might make their own separate local rules besides. This was passed, and was a useful move for those other Clubs, which heretofore had included in their own rules regulations dealing with a Stationmaster's Garden, a railway and other "amenities" which had no existence at all on their courses.

And a little later a Committee, of which I was a member, was appointed under Lord Kingsburgh to revise and amend the rules. We worked hard at the job and evolved something that we thought very admirable, whereupon Sir Alexander Kinloch, on the presentation of our work to the general meeting of the Club, proposed "that the Committee be thanked for their labours and that the result be put into the fire." I think if it had been any other than Sir Alexander that had brought forward the proposal we should have been very angry, but we all knew him and liked him too well to mind. He was rather a specially licensed person with a knack of putting things into words which might give offence if anyone chose to take it. "What's the good," he said once, to another general meeting, "of all this talk about first-class players? There are only three first-class amateurs, Johnny Ball, Johnny Laidlay and Horace Hutchinson." That is as it may be; but evidently it was not a remark that was likely to be received with universal favour. [Pg 134]

Sir Alexander, father of the present baronet, Sir David, and also of Frank,[5] the writer on golf, was not a first-class player by any means, but he had all the qualities that are connoted by that phrase which was much more often heard then than now—a "first-rate partner in a foursome." He was one of those who liked his caddie to point out to him the line of the putt. Taylor, the one-armed man, who became the caddie-master at St. Andrews later, used to carry for him, and there is a picture of him in the Badminton Book showing the line. We used to be allowed to do a great deal in the way of brushing loose impediments, often more imaginary than real, out of the line with the club: there was no rule against the caddies indicating the line by a club laid right down on that line, and a cunning caddie would often select the roughest spot on the line on which to lay it—with the result that when the club was lifted again that spot was just a little less rough than it had been before. Some of these good old "partners in a foursome" were not at all pleased when the rule was so changed that the caddie was not permitted to touch the line in giving this indication. At first the modification was only to the extent of requiring that the line should be pointed out only by the end of the shaft of the club, and not by the head, but this too was liable to abuse, for the effect often was to leave a little mark on the turf, which served as a guide for the eye. [Pg 135]

I do not know whether our general recommendations regarding the rules were actually consumed by fire, as advised by Sir Alexander Kinloch, but at all events they were not passed. They were remitted back to Lord Kingsburgh, as a committee of one, to revise, and he brought them back with one only, so far as I know, modification of importance. It was a modification of great importance to the slow player and the short driver, and probably is largely responsible for the modern congestion of greens. It is also responsible, no doubt, for the saving of some lives; but they would be, at best, the lives of short drivers, who, perhaps, do not matter. There used, even of old, to be a rule that parties behind should not drive off the tee until those in front had played their seconds. Obviously this put people who could drive only a hundred and fifty yards very much at the mercy of others coming behind who could drive two hundred yards. In the new version of the rules, according to Lord Kingsburgh, the parties behind had to wait to drive off, not only till those in front had played their seconds, but also until they were out of range. Manifestly that gave the shorter drivers a much better chance for their lives. At the same time it delivered the longer drivers behind right into their hands. They could be as slow as they pleased, and had no fear, under the law, of being harassed by those who came after them. Lord Kingsburgh himself was a short driver, and of course sympathized with his kind. I imagine he made golfing life much more pleasant for himself for the remainder of his days by this enactment. For his version, which altered the old in hardly any other respect than this, was passed by the meeting. There were more short drivers than there are now, in the days of the solid "gutty" ball. [Pg 136]

The best of the players more or less resident at St. Andrews in the later eighties were Leslie Balfour, Jim Blackwell (it was extraordinary to what extent he lost his game after a residence of some years in South Africa), Mure Ferguson, Andy Stuart and David Lamb. Leslie I have always regarded as one of the soundest golfers I ever met. "If you're playing your best you'll beat him, but if you're playing anything below your best he'll beat you." This used to be Johnny Laidlay's verdict on him, and it always seemed to me to express the reliable quality of Leslie's game very well. I cannot but think that Mure Ferguson became a better golfer in the later years than he was in these early days at St. Andrews, but it is rather difficult for me to do justice to the great game that he had in him because he seldom happened to play his best against me. I have seen him play great matches. In the amateur championship at Hoylake he was in the final with Johnny Ball, and though that champion of champions was four up at one moment of the match, Mure had him square with two holes to go—a great performance! Then Johnny went out for a great second shot to the then seventeenth (now the sixteenth) hole, right across the corner of the field, and so gained the green with his second; and that stroke virtually settled the match. Johnny asked me afterwards if I thought he was right in going for it. All I had to say was, "Absolutely, if you felt that you could do it." It all lay in that—in this confidence in himself. And no man knows Hoylake distances better. No doubt Mure was, and even is, a fine match-player, especially a fine finisher of those few last holes when the match is to be decided by them. David Lamb, brother of Henry, who has been often mentioned, was a great player in his day, but he could not make much of the game unless all was going right with him. And the quality of match-playing depends very largely, as I think, on the ability to make something of the game (if possible sufficient to avert defeat) when things are not going kindly. But of all these St. Andrews' players, just a little the best of the bunch, in my opinion, was Andy Stuart at that particular moment. His golfing day was rather a short one, but few folks realize how great a player he was, when at his best. [Pg 137] [Pg 138]

FOOTNOTES:

[5] Frank Kinloch, as gallant a golfer of his class as ever held a club, has died since this was written.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FIRST AMATEUR WIN OF THE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

In 1889, having, as aforesaid, exhibited to the Meadowbrook Club, on Long Island, a specimen of what they were good enough to say "might be a very good game for Sundays," I returned to Great Britain a brief while before the amateur championship and went up to St. Andrews, very short of practice, to take part in it. The second or third round brought me up against Johnny Ball, and I put up a very poor fight against him. He was playing respectably enough—not more, for he never has been a real lover of St. Andrews—but I know that he had some satisfaction in thus getting back on me a bit of what was his due. I know that he had a little of this feeling because Johnny Laidlay told me that Hilton said to him, as we started off, "If there is one man that Johnny Ball would like to beat in the amateur championship, it's Horace Hutchinson." So he had his wish, by some four or five holes, and it was at this same championship, I think, that we first began to have an idea how sore a trouble Hilton was going to be to us in the years to come. For he was playing Johnny Laidlay, who was then at just about the best of his game—which is saying much—and he stuck to Johnny like a man, though he was hardly more than a boy, and Johnny confessed to me afterwards that he acquired a great respect for Hilton's play from that time forward. [Pg 139]

Now the outstanding feature of that meeting was, beyond all possible question, the match between the two Johnnies, Laidlay and Ball. It was not the final match, but probably it decided the final result. They halved the round. Then, setting forth for extra holes, they halved the first of these—and not too creditably, if the truth be told, for I think the figure was five apiece. But the second hole they both played like tigers. They had two good tee shots, Johnny Laidlay's being a yard or two the longer. So Johnny Ball had to play. He took his cleek. Now to reach that second hole in those days, when the ground was not so keen and it was a gutty ball that had to be dealt with, with an iron club, at all was no easy matter; but Johnny's shot looked a beauty. I judged it, as it ran over the gradients, after pitching, to be as near perfection as a shot could be, and to be resting very near the hole. Johnny Laidlay then had to play; he, too, took a cleek; he, too, played a shot as near perfect, as it seemed to me, as might be. My only doubt was whether it was quite strong enough, whether it would quite hold its way over the undulations, whether it might not possibly die away, even towards the bunkers on the left, a little short of the green. I was, as events proved, wrong in my estimate of both shots. Johnny Laidlay's had just the strength to take the undulations at the right curve: it lay on the green quite near the hole. Johnny Ball's had been a shade too strong: it had even over-run the green and was in the bunker, just beyond. Of course that was the end. No doubt it was a most unlucky shot; no doubt it was a shot that deserved to win, rather than lose, a championship. But I do not mean, saying this, to imply that there was any luck in Johnny Laidlay's winning that match and that championship. His shot was perfection. But Johnny Ball's was very perfect too. It must have been given an unduly running fall. However, such is golf, and such is life. Then Johnny Laidlay had to play Leslie Balfour in the final, and beat him, [Pg 140]

as he really was likely to do, if both played their game. Gallant player as Leslie was, Johnny had all the advantage of the years on his side. Yet the time was to come, and many years later, when Leslie actually should win the championship, beating Johnny in the final, and in a very wonderful manner, as shall be told in its due place in the story.

Now all this while I have said mighty little about the open championship, because really the golfing world in general took little interest enough in it at that time. It was regarded as virtually an affair of the professionals. Now and then a few of us amateurs took part in it, but it was with scarcely an idea of possible success. And then, all at once, something happened, in 1890, which put the open championship within the possible grasp of the amateur, and therewith the general interest in that great competition became at once very much more vivid.

Johnny Ball had won the amateur championship that year at Hoylake, defeating Johnny Laidlay in the final. My own part in the contest was an ignominious one, for I allowed myself to be defeated rather weakly by Johnny Laidlay at the last hole after being one up with two to play. I missed a short putt at the last hole, of which the memory is still painful.

[Pg 141]

I was playing fairly well that year, notwithstanding, and went to Prestwick for the open championship—began by missing a very holable putt at the first hole and continued in a like vein throughout the two rounds. So that was the end of me. And then I, having finished my futile efforts, heard that Johnny Ball, who was still out, was doing terrible things. I went out to meet him, and as he reeled off hole after hole in the right figure it became apparent that "bar accidents" he was going to do the most terrible thing that had ever yet been done in golf—he, as an amateur, was going to win the open championship. Dr. Purves was hurrying along at my elbow as we went, with the gallery, towards the sixteenth hole. "Horace," he said to me, in a voice of much solemnity, "this is a great day for golf." It was.

Johnny was playing with Willy Campbell, poor Willy Campbell, splendid player, most gallant of match-fighters, certainly deserving of championship honours and only missing them on the last occasion of the championship being played at Prestwick by one of those fatal accidents, very near home, bar which, as aforesaid, Johnny Ball was bound to win the championship of 1890. But poor Willy on that occasion got heavily bunkered; lost his head a little and perhaps his temper more than a little. He had strokes to spare; but he wasted them hammering in that bunker, and when I came into Charlie Hunter's shop at Prestwick half an hour later I saw a sad sight. Willy Campbell was sitting on an upturned bucket on one side of the door, his caddie had a similar humble seat on the other side of the door, and both were weeping bitterly.

[Pg 142]

This, however, is a digression into a vale of tears. Johnny Ball did not digress into any such vale. He continued the scoring of the right figures and accomplished the great feat, for an amateur, of winning the open championship. It was a win which made a difference. It seemed at once to bring the open championship within the practical horizon of the amateur for all years to come. It had broken a spell. Incidentally it may be noted that it put Johnny Ball's name higher than any other's had ever been, for he held the championship of the amateurs and of the professionals at the same time.

And what interested me much at the moment was the attitude of the professionals towards the result. I had expected that they would feel rather injured by seeing the championship which they had been used to regard as theirs going to an amateur. To my surprise that did not appear to disconcert them in the least. What they did resent, however, so far as resentment may be carried within the limits of perfectly good sportsmanship, was that it should be won by an Englishman. You see, it was not only the first time that it had ever been won by any other than a professional, but also the first time it ever had been won by any other than a Scot. That is a fact which will strike the reader with astonishment now perhaps, when the poor Scots must have become fairly well inured to Englishmen annexing the championship. Taylor and Vardon, to say nothing of Harold Hilton, have taught them to grin and bear it as best they may. But up to that time a Scot had ever been open champion of the game of Scotland, and Scotland did not much like another taking it.

[Pg 143]

So that was "a great day for golf," as Dr. Purves had truly said to me. It gave an added interest to all further competitions for this open championship; for what an amateur had once done, it seemed as if an amateur might do again, and thus the active interest was no longer confined to the professionals. The amateurs became at once something more than mere lookers on. There was only one man who did not seem to realize that Johnny Ball had done a big thing, and that was Johnny Ball. A week or so later he was playing a friendly match at Hoylake, and just as he was starting a stranger came up to him and said, "Can you please tell me, is the open champion playing here to-day?" and Johnny answered, "Yes, I believe he is." On which the stranger started out at score over the links in search of this "open champion," whom, presumably, he expected to recognize by some special halo set about his brow if he should come across him. Willie Park, fine all-round golfer and magnificent putter, was the previous holder of the championship, which he had won in 1889 at Musselburgh; and that was the last occasion on which this open championship ever was played on that excellent old nine-hole course. Just at this time the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers migrated down to Muirfield, and that green, instead of Musselburgh, became the third championship arena, the other two, at that date, being St. Andrews and Prestwick.

[Pg 144]

CHAPTER XXIII

GOLF ON THE CONTINENT AND IN THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

In 1890 I took rooms in London, near a studio, and begun the serious study of anatomy and sculpture, with the idea of taking up sculpture as a profession. It was an idea which conflicted a good deal with the whole-souled devotion to golf. But following an attack of influenza, I went out to Biarritz in the winter and there found some of the most curious and amusing golf to be played that a man could meet with—up and down immense cliffs, in lies that were unspeakably bad, and yet, withal, the whole making, by some extraordinary means, not only an interesting species of golf, but also a species that has produced some fine players. Massy was then a boy there, going out in the sardine boats when he was not at golf, and thus gaining a perfect indifference to stormy weather which has been very valuable to him in his after life at golf. The storms on the Basque coast are not to be beaten: they are scratch, or even *plus*, as tempests.

Then Lord Kilmaine gave that Cup for foursome match competition between Biarritz and Pau, which has been the occasion of grand fun every year since. We had a terrific match on the first occasion of its playing. Eric Hambro and I—he was only a boy then, though a big one—played Johnny Low and poor Bobby Boreel, for Pau. We were any number of holes up—I forget how many, but the result looked a dead certainty—and then at one hole we put three shots running out of bounds. That was the beginning of our undoing. Hole after hole slipped away, and I know that it was only by a kindly dispensation of Providence that we even halved that match, which we had reckoned as safely in our pockets. And in playing off the tie, I think (I am not sure) that we were beaten.[6]

The Chasm on the old Biarritz Course.

Arnaud Massy.

But the result of these matches mattered little. What did matter was the admirable fun we had out of them, the going and coming, to and from Pau and Biarritz, the entertaining, the mutual compliments, the eating and drinking. All the amenities of the match were so pleasant; for, with the foursome for the cup, was played, at the same time, a team match, of sides representing the two places. Some humorous incidents nearly always occurred to make us all happy. After I married, my wife, walking in the gallery, would often hear delightful comments on my play and other qualities, and one or two of the most pleasant of these were culled in these Pau and Biarritz matches. On one occasion I had Roller, the old Surrey cricketer, as my partner. He was not playing with very great confidence, and my wife overheard one man in the gallery say to another: "Old Roller seems a bit nervous, doesn't he?" To which the other replied, "Well, you'd be nervous, too, if you were playing with Horace Hutchinson." "Why?" asked the first man, innocently. "Because he's got such a devil of a temper" was the reply. That is the sort of comment which it is most unfortunate that a wife should overhear. [Pg 145] [Pg 146]

A failing common in our family is that of going white-haired at a comparatively early age. I began to put on that "crown of a virtuous life" when I was no more than sixteen. Partly on that account I have usually had the credit of being some years older than I am, and the golfing reporter, with the usual unconscious humour of his kind, began to write of me as "the veteran" at the age of thirty-five. One of the most constant habitués of Biarritz was the fine old sportsman Mr. Corrance, in his day the best shot in Norfolk, and, besides, a fine fisherman, billiard player and expert at all sports and pastimes demanding quick harmony of hand and eye. In the course of one of these Pau and Biarritz matches, when I was playing for the seaside place and we were not going very strongly, Mr. Corrance found himself walking beside my wife. He knew her quite well, but for the moment had forgotten her name, and at once began to discuss with her the chances of the match. "The mistake is, you know," he said, "playing Horace Hutchinson. He was a good player once, a very good player; but he's too old now"—I think I was thirty-eight at the time—"they ought to have put in a young man."

One of the attractions of returning year by year to Biarritz was to note the constantly increasing skill and power of Massy. Just off the green at Biarritz the course was very loose and gritty. The accurate approach was most difficult to play. Massy, of his own genius, had developed the playing of the stroke very perfectly, and very curiously. He used to swing the mashie very far back, in proportion to the distance that the ball had to go, and to let it come back to the ball very slowly, with very loose wrist. It is a stroke quite of his own invention, so far as I know, and I never saw anyone else play it quite in the same way nor as accurately. And out of the ranks of the Biarritz caddies came other good and great players, such as Gassiat and that Daugé of whom Braid declares that he can drive a ball to carry as far as his (Braid's) ball will go with run and all. It seems a large order, but no doubt this Frenchman is a wonder. [Pg 147]

On the way home from Biarritz we used sometimes to take a rest at other French golfing places, and most delightful was Dinard, where the course goes out beside a sparkling sea. It was good golf and beautiful. And on one occasion we took the Channel Islands on our way, and there my

wife had yet another chance of hearing pleasant things said of me. Stuart Anderson was at Jersey. He was son of the English clergyman whom we have all known at North Berwick. A match was arranged—I think with some little money on it, though I had none—that I should play him thirty-six holes; and coming out in the train from St. Heliers to Gorey, where the links are, my wife heard some one say to another, discussing the match, "I hope Anderson beats that fellow Hutchinson; he swaggers so." However, on that occasion, I escaped the salutary chastisement. I played fairly steadily, and after a while Stuart Anderson broke up a little and let me win pretty easily. The course at Jersey is a worthy school for those great golfers, the Vardons, Ray and so on that it has sent out since; but at that time the one who gave most promise was Renouf. He was not more than a boy, but he was a demon putter.

I had for caddie at Jersey a very small and very stolid little boy. Most of the Jersey folk are bi-lingual, speaking English and French indifferently, but this little boy seemed to have no tongue at all; I could not get a word out of him. But towards the end of the round there is, or there was, a hole which was just to be reached by an extra long drive from the tee. I made a very fine drive to this green, and the ball, as we came up, proved to be stone dead, just six inches to the right of the hole. And then this astonishing little boy did open his mouth, and, still with the solemnity of a cod-fish on his face, ejaculated this comment on what was perhaps the very finest stroke I ever played in my life—"Too much to the roight!"

It was perfectly just criticism. The shot was "too much to the roight"—by six inches, at the end of a very long drive. Had it not been so, the ball would have been in the hole. I do not know to this day whether that little boy was a humourist of the very finest and dryest—really of the *extra sec*—quality, or whether he was just the very stupidest thing ever made in the Channel Islands.

From there we went to Guernsey, where the caddies were certainly anything but stupid. They were little girls, bare-legged and bare-headed, but wonderfully keen and wonderfully pious, for they would make the sign of the cross over the line of the opponent's putt to prevent the ball going into the hole. And really it is extraordinary how difficult it is to putt straight along a line that has been thus crossed. Guernsey has a course which is finer in some of its natural qualities than that of Jersey, yet it does not seem to have grown a single great golfer, whereas the Jersey soil seems to bring them up like weeds. It is rather curious. But the great days of the Jersey professors had not yet dawned. Harry Vardon was still working in a garden not far from the Gorey links, with dreams, perhaps, of future glory, but no present achievement. Massy was picking the ball up with his marvellous nicety from the loose rubble of the stuff just off the Biarritz greens, but had not yet gone in the train of Sir Everard Hambro, my own most kindly host at Biarritz, to North Berwick. The Scottish golfers had received the first shock to their national pride, in seeing the open championship of their own game won by an Englishman. It had not yet entered into their astonished heads that it was to be won by invaders from outside the British Islands.

FOOTNOTES:

[6] I have been since assured, by Eric (now Sir Eric) Hambro, that we won on the last green. —H.G.H.

CHAPTER XXIV

ABOUT HAROLD HILTON, FREDDY TAIT AND OTHERS

What between trying to be sculptor and succeeding in getting married, I did not pay all the attention that I should have done to golf in the early nineties. Hilton was runner-up in the amateur championship, first to Johnny Laidlay and then to Johnny Ball, in 1891 and 1892 respectively: so we may regard him as thoroughly well arrived. In 1893 Mr. Peter Anderson, at Prestwick, beat Johnny Laidlay in the final for the amateur championship and so broke up our triumvirate. I was not there, and know nothing of the merits of that champion, who soon, on account of an unfortunate chest weakness, migrated to Australia. But the amateur championship of 1892 deserves a special word, because it was played for the first time at Sandwich. It was a sign of the times, sign of a generous policy on part of the Scottish clubs, sign of an extension of the golfing spirit, that this South-country green was welcomed into the sacred number of those on which championships should be played.

In that same year, though I was not golfing very assiduously, I was at North Berwick when the open championship was played at Muirfield, and had a narrow escape of winning that open championship. It was the first year that the competition was extended to an affair of seventy-two holes, stretching over two days. Previously, two rounds, or thirty-six holes, had decided it, and at the end of the first two rounds I astonished myself and most other people by finding myself heading all the field. I forget by how many I had the advantage, but I think it was by two or three strokes. Then, on the morning of the second day, hitting off from that first tee at Muirfield, which then was not far out from the wall, I pulled my very first shot over the garden wall, and took I forget how many to the hole. But I remember intimately that this evil start had a baleful influence

against which I struggled in vain; I went from bad to worse, and what my eventual score was for the seventy-two holes I do not know.

J.E. Laidlay. Horace G. Hutchinson. John Ball, junr. P.C. Anderson.

H.H. Hilton.

Really it was rather hard luck: if only they had deferred that extension of the test, from thirty-six to seventy-two holes, for one year more I might have written myself open champion, but it was not to be; and as it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, so that extra day gave Hilton just the opportunity he wanted. I can see him now as he came up to the last hole—I had gone out to meet him hearing that he had been doing very well—walking along at top speed, chatting volubly with his friends, very pleased with himself, as he well might be, brimful of confidence and with the smoke trailing up from his cigarette, even while he was playing the ball, so that it seemed impossible that he could see through it to hit the ball correctly. But he did hit it mighty correctly, for all that, and won the championship. I believe he did several conjuring tricks during the course of the round, such as holding mashie pitches from the edge of the green. But however he did it, he won, and therewith, from that time forward, established himself as very distinctly the best amateur score-player that we have ever seen. Of that there can be no question.

So far as I can make out I played very little golf in 1893. Probably I was amusing myself with being ill, in some form or other, but in 1894, I had golf and greatness thrust upon me by being elected captain of the Royal Liverpool Golf Club. The local people showed me no little kindness, and made my year of office very pleasant. I stayed at the ever hospitable house of Alec Sinclair,

most cheery of companions, just beside the links, and I see by the record that they were kind enough to let me win the first medal on the first day of the spring meeting and again the first medal on the first day of the autumn meeting. The following year I was not at the spring meeting, but at the autumn meeting I won the first medal on both days. The next year again I won the second medal on both days of the autumn meeting—rather a quaint record and one that I am proud of.

I am proud, because those Hoylake medals were not very easy to win. The local talent, with Johnny Ball and Hilton always on hand—Jack Graham was not yet a force to reckon with—was very formidable. But I remember that on one of these winning occasions I had a portentous piece of luck. It was playing to the then third hole. We drove from the present second tee, but the green was about where some estimable gentleman's dining-room now stands—far to the left of the present second green. It was a ridge and furrow green, so that though you could reach the hole with an iron club for the second shot you were grateful enough if you holed out in four. By some providential chance my second, with the driving iron, found its way into the hole, saving two clear shots. It is the biggest and best fluke I ever had on a medal day, and I took good advantage of it.

By way of showing what an extraordinary condition the handicapping at some of the Clubs had fallen into at that date, I may note that Johnny Ball, Hilton and I were all handicapped at Hoylake, for a short time about this period, at *plus* eleven! You see what the effect was—you see what kind of player a scratch player would be, when there were such penalty handicaps as this. As a matter of fact I believe the absurdity arose from a tender feeling for the too acute sensibilities of certain players who had been what was known as "scratch" in the old days and liked to style themselves so still, and yet could only be kept on the scratch mark, in any reasonable handicap, by penalizing the good players to such a terrific extent as this.

In that year, 1894, when I was captain of the club, the amateur championship was played on the Hoylake course, and I have a lively remembrance of it because it was the first time that I came up against poor Freddy Tait, as a grown golfer, and suffered at his hands and from the peculiar characteristics of his game. Again and again I had the better of him, in a tight and well-fought match, and again and again he came up, from somewhere right off the green, with a wonderful approach, which he followed by a good putt and so halved the hole. Going to the last hole we were all even. His second was away to the left, far off the green. He laid up one of his usual approaches and put himself within holable distance. My own second was a very good one, and I had a chance of a three. I know even now that I went for it all too boldly, rather tired by the recoveries of the gallant Freddy. He holed his putt. I, with a much shorter one to hole, missed: and so he won hole and match.

He was really but a lad then, though a strong and sturdy one, but in the next round he met his master in Mure Ferguson. That brought Mure into the final with Johnny Ball against him, and very gallantly Mure played. Johnny had some holes the better of him to begin with, but he was not, even then, playing quite like his old self, and he let Mure wear him down, and only by a very daring and splendid shot at the seventeenth hole did he take the lead and practically settle the match, and the championship.

Freddy Tait was the very keenest golfer, as a boy, that I ever saw. I had watched him at St. Andrews, growing up from small boy's to young man's estate, and acquiring the mastery of his clubs as he grew. He was a favourite with everybody. At this time, when he beat me at Hoylake, he was still in the hard-hitting phase of his game, rejoicing, as a young man will, in his strength, and delighting to let the ball have it. And he had great strength. Later, as his game developed, he grew to play more within himself with more reserve force to call up when occasion required it, than any other first-class player, and at times he played very finely and very accurately indeed. But at all times, even when he was not playing accurately, he was very dangerous, just by reason of this, his marvellous faculty for recovery, which he exhibited even in this match against me at Hoylake. You never had him beaten at any hole. That not only made him in himself very formidable, but it also made him very difficult to play against, because you never felt any confidence that you had him. I do not know whether it was this quality of his game, or some other influence more psychic and personal, but for some reason Harold Hilton appeared to find it almost impossible to produce his true game when he was brought up against Freddy Tait. He gives some account of it in his own reminiscences, showing too that by steadfast work and stern endeavour to get the better of that influence—really it was as if Freddy put the evil eye on him—he was succeeding in conquering it. He made a progressively better fight in their later matches. For Johnny Ball, on the other hand, Freddy had no terrors. I was surprised, looking through poor Freddy's biography, written by Johnny Low, to see how consistently Johnny Ball had the better of Freddy—I think with only one exception of any importance at all—in the many matches that they played together. I had thought the balance would have stood far more level, especially as Johnny was not quite at his best when Freddy began to tackle him. Their matches were well fought and close, but Johnny won a very big majority.

Freddy Tait.
(With Championship Cup.)

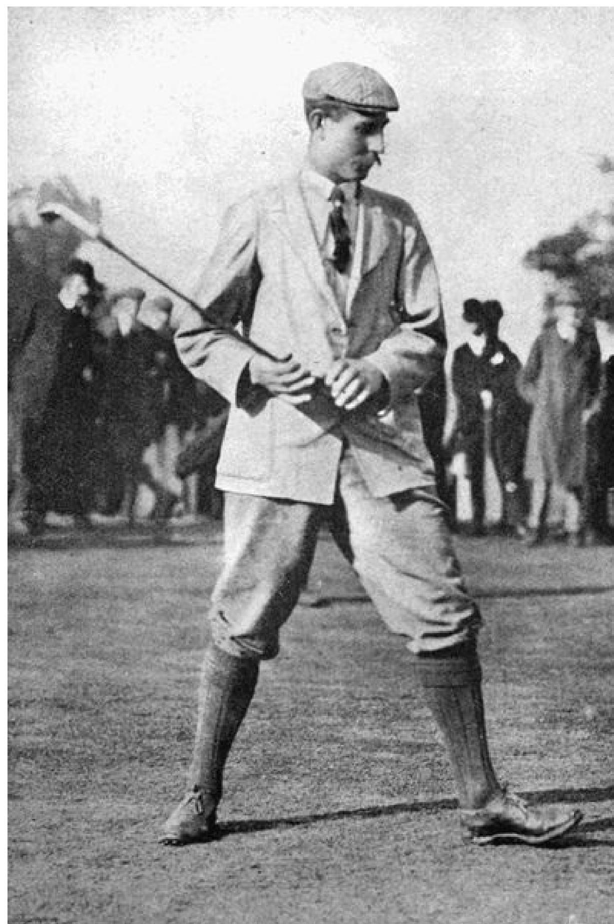
CHAPTER XXV.

THE COMING OF THE THREE GREAT MEN

I have said that a little white-haired boy used to carry my clubs at Westward Ho! in my Oxford days. Also that, a few years later, reappearing as an assistant greenkeeper on the course, he was put against me, representing the Northam village club against the Royal North Devon, and gave me a beating. The next year the Club organized a professional tournament. Archie Simpson, at that time in the best of his form and one of the most likely champions, though he never did win the championship, came down to take part in it, and at a certain point in the competition word came in to the club-house that Taylor (he was the little white-haired boy, and the lad who beat me for the village club) was leading the great Archie, and likely to beat him. Therefore there sallied forth a gallery to see this great thing happen; and thereby effectively prevented its happening, for the gallery affected the untried nerves of the lad, he fell away from grace, and Archie Simpson just got home on him.

Soon after that, Canon, now Monsignor, Kennard, carried him off to take charge of the green at Burnham in Somersetshire, and a year or two later, at the open championship at Prestwick (I think in the year that Auchterlonie won) Taylor electrified everybody by putting in a first round which was better than ever had been heard of before. But he could not keep it going and failed to make good.

From "Golf and Golfers" (Longmans, Green & Co.)
J.H. Taylor.
(With his eye on the place where the ball used to be.)



Harry Vardon.
"Will it go in?"

In 1894 the open was at Sandwich. From first to last there was one, and one only, most likely winner—J. H. Taylor. His driving was of so marvellous a correctness that it was said that the

guide flags were his only hazards, and his pitching was perfect. He was but twenty-three, and I feared all the while lest he should not be able to keep it up. Coming to the last hole he had strokes to spare to win it. I think a seven would have served him. I found myself beside Philpot, so long at Mitcham, but an old Northam man, and said, "He's bound to be right now, unless he goes to pieces altogether." Philpot answered with confidence, "He won't do that, if I know anything of 'un." And he did not. He played that last hole quite sufficiently well. The championship was his.

It meant a great deal, that championship. It meant a great deal not only to Taylor personally, but also to all English professional golf. You see, Taylor was really the first English professional. Hitherto, when we wanted professionals, we had always been importing them from the North. It did not occur to the English caddie that he might become a professional, that there were possibilities, and money, in it. But all these possibilities the success of Taylor revealed to the English. Moreover, Taylor in himself was not only a very fine golfer; he was also a very fine, in some respects a very remarkable, man. He had a character. He was determined to go straight, to give himself all chances. He was teetotal. He had himself perfectly in hand in every way. He was a great example to the profession and to all the English that should take it up, following his example. It is not easy to over-rate what that success of Taylor's meant for the professional golf of England. It was an influence which re-acted upon Scotland too.

The next year, at St. Andrews, Taylor won again, and really there seemed no particular reason at that time why he should not go on winning indefinitely. He was distinctly more accurate and certain than any of the older men, and there seemed no immediate sign of any younger man coming up to dispute his supremacy.

And then at Muirfield, the following year, I heard (I was not there) to my surprise that one Harry Vardon, a Jersey man, had tied with him. We had heard of the Vardons by this time, but the common idea was that Tom, the other brother, was the stronger man. It was not Taylor's idea, however. He told me afterwards that he had realized, even then, even before the competition, what a terror this Harry Vardon was. Perhaps it was the consciousness of this that helped Harry Vardon to beat him in playing off the tie; for beat him, to my great surprise, he did, and so there we have the second of our great men already arrived.

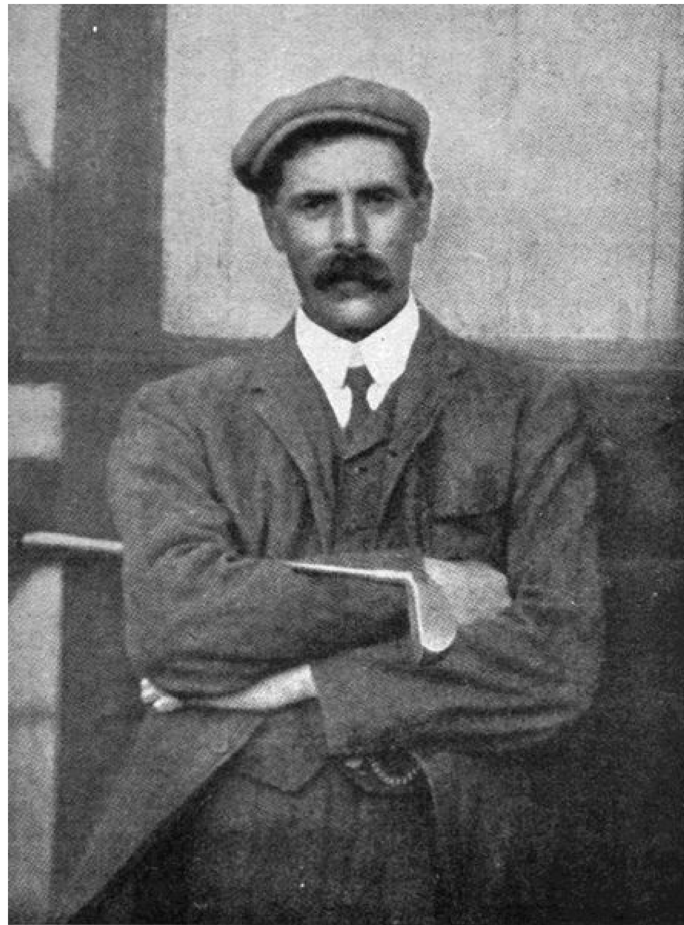
In spite of this defeat by the great Harry, whose unique greatness even then we did not at all fully appreciate, the big man in golf was still Taylor. He was still at the very top of his game. And about the same time we began to hear that there was a young fellow working as a club-maker at the Army and Navy Stores, who was capable of playing a very good game of golf. He was said to be a cousin of Douglas Rolland, the great driver, and, like him, to come from Elie, in Fifeshire. His name was James Braid. Few people knew much about him, but the few who had seen him play had the greatest opinion of his game. He was brought forward, on half-holidays when he could get away from the Stores, to play exhibition matches, and amongst these matches was one that he played against Taylor at West Drayton; and he played that great man to a level finish.

That was a result which caused a buzz of talk. The young fellow at the Stores was evidently worth watching, perhaps worth exploiting. Not very long after this the newly formed club at Romford, in Essex, found itself in want of a professional. James Braid was engaged for the post.

I had a game with him shortly after he was appointed to that job, and what impressed me about him more than anything else was the enormous distance that he could smite the ball with the cleek. I remember that this ability to get huge distances with the iron clubs was the quality that had most struck me when first I became acquainted with the game of Rolland, and I said to Braid, "It seems to me you can drive just as far as Douglas Rolland can." He looked at me a moment, as if in a kind of mild surprise that I should make such a comment, and said, "Oh yes, sir, I think I can do that."

It was an amusing answer: also it was an answer which meant a good deal, coming from a man so absolutely unable to swagger or to over-rate his own power as James Braid. I realized that we had here a great force in golf; but it was rather a long while before he made that force fully felt. Nevertheless it was there: he too had "arrived," though it was not for a year or two that he was fated to begin the writing of his name first on the championship list. But he was there: the triumvirate was complete.

Never, as leaders at any game, were there three men so closely matched with methods so widely different. You may put that down in large measure, if you please, to the physical, anatomical differences of the three: there was Taylor, square, short, compact, stubby; there was Braid, long, loose-jointed; and there was Vardon, a happy medium between the two, and really a very finely-shaped specimen of a powerful human being. It is hardly to be questioned which of the three had the most perfect and beautiful style. Vardon hits up his body a little, away from the ball, as he raises the club—that is a movement which we should tell a learner was apt to unsettle the aim a little. It did not upset Vardon's aim; but then Vardon was rather past the learner stage. For the rest his style was the perfection of power and ease. Taylor, with the ball opposite the right toe and every stroke played rather on the model generally approved for the half iron shot, had a style as peculiar as his "cobby" build, and specially adapted for it. Braid swung in a loose-jointed way at the ball that did not suggest the mastery and the accuracy which he achieved. I have spoken of a kind of "divine fury" with which he launched himself at the ball. Those were long before the days of his studies in "Advanced Golf" and so on. I doubt whether he played according to any very conscious method. But the results well justified the method, or the method-lessness. For a while there was little to choose between these three great ones.



James Braid.

Horace Hutchinson and Leslie Balfour Melville at the starting box at St. Andrews.

But by degrees it became evident that there was a choice: that one really was distinctly better than the other two. Certainly there was a while, just before he had to go to a health resort, with a threatening of tuberculosis, when Harry Vardon was in a class by himself. For a while he was, I think, two strokes in the round better than either Taylor or Braid, and, I believe, better than any other man that we have seen. He was the first professional I ever saw play in knickerbockers, and with the flower at his button-hole he set a mode of gaiety and smartness to the rest which younger men were not slow to follow. There was a gay *insouciance* about his whole manner of addressing himself to the game which was very attractive. It was as different, as their styles were different, from the imperturbability of Braid or again from the tense and highly strung temperament of Taylor. The three great men provided a striking contrast in every particular. But they had this in common, that they all took the game earnestly and kept themselves very fit and well, in order to do their best in it; therein marking a new point of departure from the usual mode of the Scottish professional of old days, who was a happy-go-lucky fellow, not taking all the care

of himself that he should if he was to excel in such a strenuous game as golf. And the example of these men was infectious, so that we have now arrived at the date of the coming of the great army of English professionals. [Pg 162]

CHAPTER XXVI

THE REVOLT OF THE AMAZONS

Lord Moncrief (then Wellwood) writing in the Badminton Book on Golf, had said that ladies were relegated and restricted to a species of "Jew's quarter" where they were graciously permitted to play with a single club, the putter, those little strokes which we all of us are fond of saying are the most important in the game of golf, but which we all feel to be the least interesting.

It was either in 1892 or 1893 that Lord Eldon asked me to stay with him at his Gloucestershire place, Stowell Park, on the Cotswolds, and there, incidentally, I received quite a new impression as to the possibilities of feminine golf. I had already played on the long links at Prestwick in foursome matches with the Misses Whigham—Johnny Laidlay being the man on the other side, and taking one of the sisters as his partner, while I took the other; but they had not then come to their full golfing due. They were rather in the phase which would now be known as the "flapper stage." Still, they played remarkably well. But the most remarkable thing, as we thought then, was not that they should play the long game so well, but that they should play it at all. It was like Dr. Johnson's comment about the dancing dogs. They played, and we as their partners played, [Pg 163] with all consciousness that we were guilty things, doing that which we ought not to do. It was an enormity for ladies to play on the long links at all.

At Stowell Lord Eldon had a course of nine very good and interesting holes in the park, and there I found the Scott brothers, Osmond and Denys, playing with their sister, Lady Margaret. I had never at that time seen any lady capable of playing at all the same kind of game that Lady Margaret could and did play. You must remember that these were the days of the solid gutta-percha balls, which were far less easy to pick up clean off the ground and raise, without putting a little slice on them, than the modern rubber-cores. The ladies have especially been helped by the more resilient balls which rise more readily. But Lady Margaret Scott had a perfect facility in picking the ball up with her brassey, off the ordinary lie of the course, and sending it flying straight to the mark without any slice on it. She had a very long, an exaggeratedly long, swing back, but then the weakness of the extra long swing back was not realized at that time as it is now, and certainly she never seemed to lose control of the club, although there must have been some wasted labour about it.

I never had seen a lady able to play golf at all as Lady Margaret played the game. She had all the crisp and well-cut approach strokes at her command. It was some years after this that the ladies' championship was started. Meanwhile ladies, greatly daring, had begun to play on the long links. As a rule they would have been both better and happier on their own short putting greens; but there were exceptions who were quite able, by their skill, to appreciate the longer courses and to play them as well as the men. As soon as ever the ladies' championship was instituted, Lady [Pg 164] Margaret Scott (now Hamilton Russell) justified all the opinions I had formed of her game by winning that championship three times in annual succession. And I think that the only reason why she did not go on winning it was that she did not go on playing for it. Surely she had done enough for glory.

It is very unprofitable work trying to estimate the relative golfing merits of different generations, but I am disposed to think that our best ladies of to-day (whom shall we name? I think Miss Ravenscroft and Miss Leitch) are not greatly better, if at all, than Lady Margaret at her best. We have to take the difference in balls into consideration for one thing. It is certain that the change to the livelier ball has helped the best of the ladies more than the best of the men. But I get a certain line of comparison in this way: some of the finest of the lady golfers, when ladies first began to invade the long links, were the Misses Orr. They used to play at North Berwick. But they did not, in the daring fashion of the ladies to-day, claim to play at reasonable hours. They started very early and were finishing their round when lazy men were finishing their breakfast. They were just about representative of the best feminine golf of the time, and on the only occasion in which they took part in the Ladies' Championship one sister beat another in the final. I played one of them at Nairn, giving, as far as I remember, a half, and that seemed to bring us very nearly together. In these latter days, since the ladies have claimed, and as I think, quite rightly claimed, practically an equal right to our long links, we have had several matches at odds of a half, and again they have worked out very level. There was that much-talked-of match [Pg 165] between Miss Cecil Leitch and Harold Hilton. The lady won it. I do not think that either played up to his or her true game, unless it was perhaps Miss Leitch in the final round. But the match was a close one, showing that the odds were adequate for bringing the sexes to something like a golfing equality. Then again, giving the same odds of a half, we played a team of men against a team of ladies at Stoke Poges. The one side was just about as representative as the other. Our masculine side won. To this day I do not know how we won: I do not understand how it is that the best of the men (speaking of amateurs) is able to give the best of the ladies anything like a half, but it does appear that these are very approximately the right odds, and it also appears that these have been just about the odds ever since the ladies began to play the long game. The inference is that

the quality of the game of the best of them has not greatly altered. I know that when I played Miss Violet Hezlet in that Stoke Poges match, I found myself hardly at all in front of her off the tee, when we both hit good shots, going against the wind. Down the wind it was quite another story: I could outdrive her usefully with the wind behind. And here I think it possible to give ladies a hint by which they might profit: if they would but tee their ball high, going down the wind, they would find it far more easy to give it that hoist into the air which is essential for its getting advantage of the favour of the breeze. They seem to have a lofty-minded idea that there is something not quite right about putting the ball on a high tee—that it is rather on a par with potting the white at billiards. It is splendid of them to have such fine and noble ideals, but it would be to their practical advantage to forget them now and then. [Pg 166]

And I am quite sure that the ladies, as a rule, do not take the pains they should about their putting and the short game generally. There is but one of them, Miss Grant Suttie, so far as I have seen, who really studies her putts as a good man player studies them, and that is because she has played so much with men at North Berwick and has adopted their methods. She has her advantage therein, for she is the most certain on the green of all the ladies. It is a wonder, seeing that it is a part of the game which demands delicacy of touch and no strength of muscle, that ladies do not putt far better than men. As a general rule they putt far worse.

Naturally, when this incursion of the ladies arrived on the links of the men, it intensified the trouble of those problems of the congestion of the green which were already beginning to be acute. Naturally, too, men dealt with the incursion according to their powers and according to their gallantry. No doubt it was felt that it was a hard and discourteous thing to deny the ladies equal rights, even over the private courses. Obviously, on the public courses they had the equal right, and they were not shy of claiming it. On the private courses we used to hear at first, "It's absurd, these ladies not sticking to their own course: they can't drive far enough to be able to appreciate the long course," and so on. But then it very soon became evident that they could drive further and play better than a large number of the male members of the Club, which rather knocked the bottom out of that argument. As a rule some compromise was effected, the ladies being restricted to certain hours—after all, the men were generally workers, so that they had the more claim to have the course at their disposal in their hours of leisure. A very good form of compromise is that which is in vogue at Biarritz, and it may be commended to the notice of other Clubs. There is one afternoon in the week set apart for all and sundry ladies, but besides this there is a permission for ladies whose handicap is four or under to play at any time and on equal terms with the men. This seems to meet the case admirably, for it keeps off the links the inefficient lady players who would be apt to block the green and whose right place is their own short course, while it freely admits those who are capable of appreciating the blessings of the long course and are quite as good golfers as the average of the men whom they will meet there. As time goes on it appears as if we shall be fortunate if the ladies do not take exclusive possession of the links, and only allow us men upon them at the hours which are the least convenient. [Pg 167] [Pg 168]

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MAKING OF INLAND COURSES

The first architect of the inland courses, when golfers began to learn that inland courses might, in some large measure, give them the game that they wanted, was Tom Dunn. He went about the country laying the courses out, and as he was a very courteous Nature's gentleman, and always liked to say the pleasant thing, he gave praise to each course, as he contrived it, so liberally that some wag invented the conundrum. "Mention any inland course of which Tom Dunn has not said that it is the best of its kind ever seen."

His idea—and really he had but one—was to throw up a barrier, with a ditch, called for euphony's sake a "bunker," on the near side of it, right across the course, to be carried from the tee, another of the same kind to be carried with the second shot, and similarly a third, if it was a three shot hole, for the third shot. It was a simple plan, nor is Tom Dunn to be censured because he could not evolve something more like a colourable imitation of the natural hazard. A man is not to be criticized because he is not in advance of his time.

Moreover, these barriers had at least the merit that they were uncompromising. You had to be over them, or else you found perdition, and if you only hacked the ball out a little way beyond the first barrier with your first shot you could not carry the second barrier with your third. You were like a hurdle racer who has got out of his stride. [Pg 169]

The course, constructed on these lines, on which I used to play most, from London, was Prince's at Mitcham—the most convenient of access of all, before the days of motors. I used to have great matches here with Jack White, before Sunningdale was made and he went there in charge.

Subsequently the mantle of Tom Dunn, as course constructor in chief, fell on the shoulders of Willy Park, and his ideas were more varied. He was also a good deal more thorough, more elaborate and more expensive in his dealings with the inland courses. He was the first to advocate the wholesale ploughing up of the soil of the course, and the re-sowing. He architected

Broadstone, Sunningdale and a host more, and when he had finished with the Sunningdale green he had certainly produced the best thing in the way of an inland course that up to that time had been created. He did his work well, but it was not entirely or even mainly due to him that Sunningdale was so good. The soil was more light and sandy, more like the real seaside links, than that of any other inland course.

They had done wonderful things at New Zealand, where Mr. Lock-King, with Mure Ferguson aiding and abetting, had fastened mighty engines to pine trees and dragged them up by the roots, fashioning a golf course out of a pine forest.

That was pioneer's work in a double sense, for it not only engineered this particular course where the trees had covered all the land, but it also showed to other people how possible it was to make a course out of forest in other places. It is not only possible, but it is also a good deal less [Pg 170] laborious, to grub up the forest trees than it is to get rid of a very dense growth of smaller undergrowth, such as there was to deal with at Le Touquet, in France, for instance. Then the soil in all this pine forest country, such as we see about Woking and Byfleet, is very light and sandy, as the inland soils go, so that it was fine natural material for golf when once the trees had gone. The latest construction of the kind is at St. George's Hill, near Weybridge, where the trees had been much better cared for for generations and in consequence were far larger and more difficult of up-rooting than at New Zealand. There they had to blast the boles of the trees with dynamite before they could get them out of the ground. But of course the bigger timber was of greater value and helped to pay the labour bill.

These forest courses have done another thing for us, they have taught us the value of a tree as a golfing hazard. Our forefathers would have scoffed at the idea of a tree on a golf links, although there was for many a long year opportunity for the golfer to find trouble in the trees which came out threatening the course at a certain point at North Berwick. But then they did not have their actual roots in the soil of the links itself. They were outside it, over the boundary wall. But as for the opportunities which the tree hazard gives for those subtleties of slicing and pulling round, or of cutting the ball up with a very vertical rise, let those who have seen Harry Vardon on a course of this tree-beset kind bear witness. And the tree has at least this virtue: that it is permanent. It does not get trodden down and hacked out of existence by a niblick as the faint-hearted whin does. [Pg 171]

At Woking the natural trouble on the ground was heather rather than trees, and a fine course they have made of it. But of all, that at Sunningdale has always seemed to me just about the best of the inland ones—certainly the best of the earlier made ones. Then I was at Walton Heath, as a guest of Mr. Cosmo Bonsor's kindly hospitality, when that great inland green was opened. Harry Colt had by that time gone to Sunningdale, and was making improvements on the original plan of Willy Park, but Walton Heath was a monument to the skill of that other of our amateur course constructors, Herbert Fowler. He made a very good thing of it, as the wonderful success of that Club has testified since. But it soon passed out of the hands of Mr. Bonsor, and for how much the energy of Sir George Riddell, who acquired the chief interest in it, counted in its popularity it would be very hard to say. Assuredly it counted for a great deal. Then they had James Braid, importing him from Romford, and his attractive personality and great fame helped the Club. Another like him, our old friend Taylor, was by this time established at Mid-Surrey, and the Club there was a power, by reason of the goodness of its green, its numbers and the strong players belonging to it.

It would be a very dull and futile business to go into all the development of the inland golf which went on during these years. Enough has been said. But you could not draw anything like a full picture of the golf of the last fifty years without noticing this development. The inland Clubs, and especially those about London, have become a force. As their members go forth to play from the big City which is the common centre they are the better able to make their opinion felt; and their [Pg 172] word has become of importance in modern golf. It is possible that it is destined to have a larger importance yet. But I have no business with prophecy.

And also there are big inland Clubs, which have already brought weight to bear on golfing counsels, in the Midlands. They have associated themselves into a Union, as have several other clusters, and all these help in the forming and expression of opinion. But, apart from all this, the great reason why they attract members and why they are able to carry weight at all is that their courses are so good. The course constructor has been learning, and so has the greenkeeper. I had a delightful letter from Peter Lees, the famous greenkeeper to the Mid-Surrey Club. He writes: "When I find the worms too numerous, I reduce them." The worm used to be the great trouble and despair of the guardian of the inland putting green in the old days, but here we have Lees writing of dealing with them as it were by the very nod of Jove. When he finds them too numerous, he "reduces them." The mode of reduction is so well known and so easy that he does not think it worth while to waste a word of explanation on it. We have the nice story of a certain greenkeeper of the olden school being asked, "What kind of grass is this?" the inquirer referring to a sample that he had just picked up from the course. "Oh," came the puzzled reply, "there's only one sort of grass—green grass." That is a reply that is almost typical of the "green-ness" of the greenkeeper in the earliest days of the management—if that is the right word for it—of the inland greens, but the modern keeper has to "discourse in learned phrases" of such varieties as fescues and poas, and hardly thinks himself entitled to full respect unless he can fire you off all [Pg 173] the Latin names of the varieties of grasses that occur on our inland greens and courses. The keeping has really become quite a science.

And at their best, that is when the weather is treating them kindly, there is not that vast difference in quality between the best of our inland greens and the seaside greens which our forefathers have led us to suppose. The big merit of the seaside links, which the inland can never hope to match, is that it is such a good all-weather course. With its porous soil it does not become so water-logged in the wet years, nor does it become so dessicated in the dry. It is a more perpetual joy. But the days are long past when men could say that the seaside links were the only ones worth playing on, or that the seaside Clubs alone were worthy of attention.

CHAPTER XXVIII

VARIOUS CHAMPIONSHIPS AND THE WANDERING SOCIETIES

Whether on account of ill-health, or for what reasons, I do not know, I was not a very sedulous attendant at the championships in the later nineties. The consequence was that I missed seeing one or two very notable finishes. I was not at St. Andrews, for instance, that year when Leslie Balfour-Melville won, having carried each of his last three matches to the nineteenth hole, and each of his three opponents being obliging enough to plop his ball into the burn at that very crucial point of the business. What made it the more notable is that the last of these burn-ploppers was no other than Johnny Ball himself. Neither was I at Muirfield when Dr. Allan won, bicycling over each day, from a considerable distance, to the course, and playing without a nail in his boot—surely the most casual and unconcerned of champions. And I missed, too, that great finish between Johnny Ball and Freddy Tait, at Prestwick, when they were all even at the end of thirty-six holes, after playing the ball out of water and doing all kinds of conjuring tricks at the thirty-fifth hole: and then Johnny settled the affair by getting a scarcely human three at the thirty-seventh. But I was at Sandwich a year or two before when Freddy Tait did win the championship, beating Harold Hilton in the final. I was even one of his victims on that occasion. He was playing well, but he gave me a chance or two going out and I was two up at the turn. Then, at the tenth hole I had a bit of bad luck: I lay, off the tee shot, in the middle of the course, right in a deep divot-cut left by a never identified but never to be sufficiently execrated sinner. So Freddy won that hole, and he out-played me soundly on the long holes coming in. I remember that I had a great fight the day before with that very gallant golfer, who never did himself full justice in the big fights, Arnold Blyth. We halved the round and I only beat him at the twenty-second hole.

Amateur Championship, St. Andrews, 1901.
J.L. Low (driving) and H.H. Hilton.

Amateur Championship, St. Andrews, 1895.
John Ball. F.G. Tait (studying his putt).

I was at St. Andrews, too, in 1901 and saw the finish between Harold Hilton and Johnny Low, one of the best that ever has been played. Here, too, I was the victim of the ultimate winner; and I do not know that I had any need to be beaten by him, for though Hilton won this championship, he has said himself in his memoirs that he was not playing as he should, at the time. I believe the truth to have been, as he himself suggests, that we were all a little frightened of him. I remember we started in pouring rain, and he won the first three holes off me. Then the weather improved and so did I, so that I wore off these three holes and got one up with five to play. At this fatal point I pulled my tee shot into one of those pernicious little bunkers on the Elysian Fields called the Beardies, and the final holes Hilton played more strongly than I did and won by two and one to play. It is a curious thing that the only other time of my meeting him in the amateur championship, which was at Hoylake in the year that Johnny Ball won from Aylmer in the final, the match was almost a replica of this former one. Again he won the first three holes, again I wore him down and got one up with five to play, and again I chucked away the advantage, and it looked almost sure that he would again win by two and one. But I holed a good putt at the seventeenth to save that hole. He gave me no chance of winning the last, and so again he beat me. These are the only two meetings we have had in the championship, and neither, from my point of view, is very glorious in the telling. [Pg 175] [Pg 176]

The year 1900 was a very unhappy one in the history of golf. In that year a Boer bullet ended the life of one of the most gay and gallant-hearted fellows that ever took up a club, Freddy Tait, and incidentally took a good deal of the interest out of the golf of our generation. That year, and also the next, Johnny Ball was out at the war, and did not take part in the championship; and I think that these are actually the only two occasions since the institution of the amateur championship that he has not had a hand in it. He is very capable of taking a master hand still.

I have said little of the open championship during these years, for the reason that it has never had anything like the same attraction for me, either to play in or as a spectacle, as the amateur, in which golfers are brought together in matches, and there is the clash of temperaments, the man to man contest, the one bringing out (or driving in, as the case may be) all that is best in the other. I cannot see that any scoring competition ever competes, in the human and psychological interest, with such duels as these.

But the story of the open championship for very many a year now—that is to say, from 1899 right away to 1913—is the story of the repeated triumphs of three men, Taylor, Vardon, Braid, one or other accounting for the championship in no less than fifteen of these years, and for the rest allowing a win each to Harold Hilton, to Herd, to White, to Massy and to Ray—a wonderful record, but one which shows a certain monotony. Of the championship of 1902, both amateur and open, the story has its peculiar interest, because this was the year of the introduction of the indiarubber-cored—then called Haskell—balls, about which many fables are to be narrated. And I am going to cut the story of these championships rather short, at this point, because I seem to have so much to say both about the first Haskell ball championship and also about the amateur championships of 1903 and 1904, that either one of them cries aloud for the dignity of a chapter all to itself. [Pg 177]

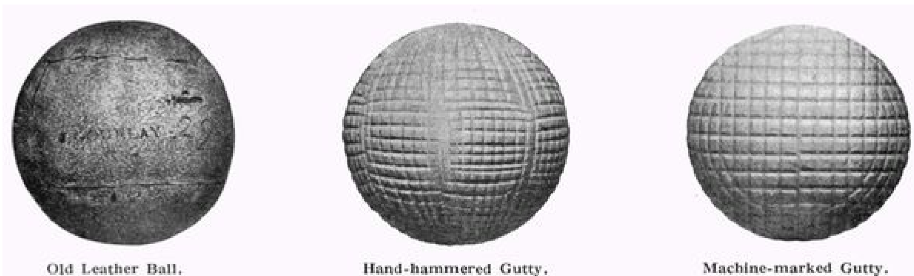
These, or just about these, were the years of the formation of the wandering teams, notably of the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society, formed on the model of the wandering cricket clubs, such as the I. Zingari and the Free Foresters. These admirable institutions had no club-house, no green, only a corporate existence, and they said to the various Clubs, "Now, you give us the free run of your course and a free luncheon and other entertainment, and if you do this we'll be so good as to come down and play a team match against your members and probably give them a jolly good beating." That was the kind of proposal which they made to the Clubs, and the pleasant sign of the times and of good sportsmanship and feeling is that the Clubs were so very ready to entertain it—both the proposals and the societies. There were the Bar Golfing Society, the

Solicitors', the Army—every self-respecting profession had to have its Golfing Society. The Oxford and Cambridge, of which I had the honour to be first president, being succeeded in that honourable post by Mr. Arthur Balfour, went on pilgrimage actually as far as the United States; and very well they did there, under the leadership of Johnny Low and with Johnny Bramston, the Hunter brothers and other fine golfers assisting. But as for the most part of these golfing enterprises of the wanderers, who, generally speaking, had their headquarters in the great metropolis, it is evident that they had to find their happy hunting grounds somewhere round about London, within reasonable reach, and that was only possible by virtue of the rise of all those inland greens within a short distance of the big town, which has had the further effect of drawing down into what we call the "Southern Section" the very big majority of the best professional players. This geographical golfing phrase of "Southern Section" is one that has arisen only out of the conditions created by that great tournament for the professionals promoted by the *News of the World* newspaper; and that competition itself is a witness to the growing recognition by the English world of the importance of golf and of its financial meaning. Golf was of use in the way of big advertisement. Also, the largest proprietors of the *News of the World* were, and are, very good golfers and sportsmen, and doubtless appreciate all the good sport that this tournament provides. But, at the same time, we should, I think, wrong their commercial instincts if we did not realize that they see good advertisement in it besides. Men's motives are mixed. How well that team of Oxford and Cambridge graduates that went to America performed, we hardly realized at the time. We had a tendency to under-rate the American ability for golf, and the very fact that these pilgrims did so well inclined us all the more to make light of the American prowess. We are now, in course of the story, within sight of the year when Mr. Walter Travis, coming over here, was to give us a very different idea of the American capacity. We then began, perhaps, to go to the other extreme and to over-rate what they could do. They seemed to have "established a funk," to put it in homely phrase, which only Harold Hilton, going to America as our amateur champion and coming back with all the glory of the American amateur championship about him too, could altogether dissipate. But before that happened a lot of water had to run under the bridges.

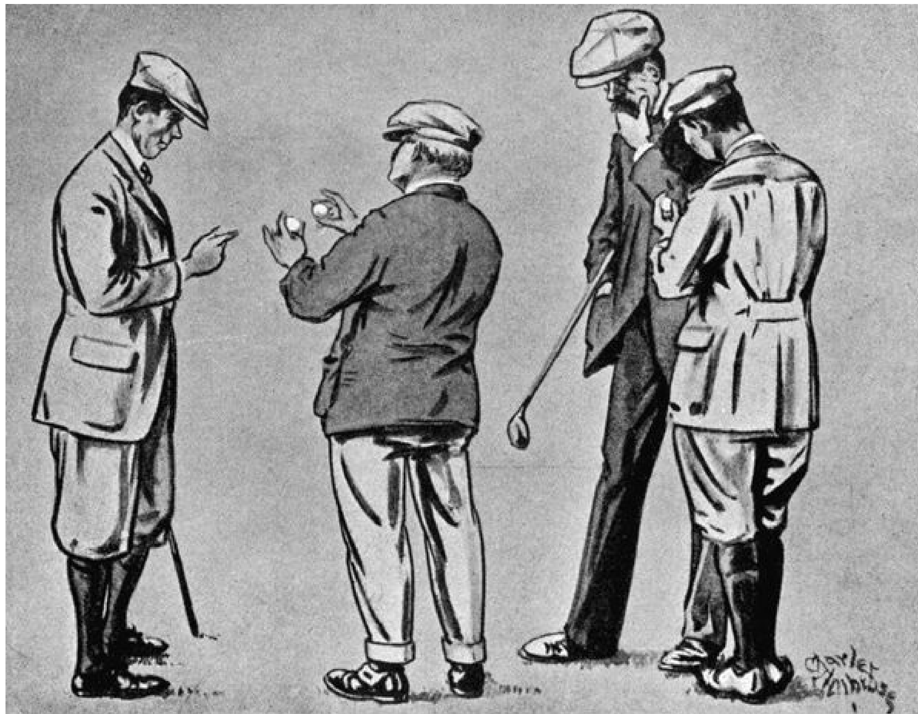
CHAPTER XXIX

THE COMIC COMING OF THE HASKELL BALL

In 1891 my brother-in-law, returning from a visit to America, came down to stay and to play golf with me at Ashdown Forest, and brought with him a dozen or two of a new kind of ball which, he said, had lately been invented in the United States and was the best ball in the world. The balls were called, as he told me, Haskells. We went out to play with them. He, as it happened, played very badly, and in a very short time he was perfectly ready to go into any court of law and take his oath that they were the worst balls in the world. I had formed my own opinion of them, much more in accord with the verdict with which he had first introduced them to me than with that condemnatory one which he passed on them after two days of being off his game; but I refrained from expressing my opinion too emphatically, with the result that when he went away he said that, as for the remnant of the balls, he was not going to be bothered "to take the beastly things away," so that I found myself the possessor of a couple of dozen or so of excellent Haskell balls—being, as he had said, in the first instance, the best balls in the world—at a time when no one else in Great Britain had such a ball at all!



Old Leather Ball. Hand-hammered Gutty. Machine-marked Gutty.



Duncan. Taylor. Braid. Vardon.
Gutty v. Rubber Core.

It is quite true that some months previously, at North Berwick, I had been given to try, by a professional who had just returned from the States, a ball which I now recognized to be the same, in some of its essentials, as these Haskells which my brother-in-law brought over. It was the same, except for one external but extremely important essential—its nicks were ridiculously too light and slight, not nearly enough indented. So I tried that ball and found it wanting—it would not fly at all. But what I did not realize at the time was the reason why it did not fly; or, if I did realize, as one could not fail to do, that the nicks were not emphatic enough, I had not a suspicion of the merit of its interior qualities. I had not appreciated that it was an amazingly good ball if only this slight matter of its exterior marking had been attended to. I had taken no more thought or notice of it. [Pg 181]

Armed with these new weapons I prepared to go out to Biarritz, where the annual foursome match against Pau was just impending. My partner was to be Evy Martin Smith, and as soon as I arrived I told him that we must use these new balls for the match. He strongly objected, being a firm Conservative, tried the balls, with every intention of disliking them, and disliked them accordingly. The fact is that I was, at this moment, just the last man in the world to appear on any scene as an advocate of a new ball. Only a year or two before I had taken an unfortunate interest in a patent substance called "Maponite," of which, in addition to a thousand and one other things for which gutta-percha and indiarubber are used, golf balls were to be made. And wherein exactly was the weak point about the stuff as a material for golf balls I never knew, for the trial balls that they made for us were excellent—I remember that I won an open tournament at Brancaster with them—but as soon as ever they began to turn them out in numbers they were useful for one end only—for the good of the club-makers—for they were hard stony things which broke up the wooden clubs as if one had used the clubs as stone hammers. [Pg 182]

So I was not a good apostle of a new ball—rather discredited in fact—but I did induce Evy Smith to play with the ball finally, under deep protest, and we justified its use by winning. Meanwhile the balls were beginning to filter from America into England. It was difficult indeed to get people to appreciate their merits: the balls were not numerous, and were still hard to obtain. At Johnny Low's request I sent him one for trial. He was writing at that time in the *Athletic News*. He wrote a most amusing article about the ball—said that he had tried a stroke or two with it in his room, and had found it so resilient that it went bounding about the room like a fives ball in a squash court and finally disappeared up the chimney and was never seen again.

In fine, he gave the ball his banning, "not because it was an expensive ball"—it is to be remembered that it was rather a shock to be asked to pay two and sixpence for a golf ball, whereas before we had paid a shilling as the normal price—"but because it was a bad ball," meaning a ball "singularly ill-adapted for the purpose" of golf. So difficult is it for even a clever man and wise in the royal and ancient wisdom, as Johnny Low undoubtedly is, to keep an unprejudiced judgment about any new thing.

Expensive as the ball was in the beginning, it was soon found that it was far more economical than the solid "gutty"; both because it lasted in playable condition far longer and also because it did not knock about the wooden club to anything like the same extent. But within a very short while there came such a demand for those balls, so greatly in excess of the supply, that there was a time when as much as a guinea apiece was paid for them, and numbers changed hands at ten shillings. That was round and about the time of the championships, both open and amateur being held that year at Hoylake, and both these championships were won with the Haskell balls. [Pg 183]

I am calling these balls Haskells, because that is the name by which they were known and spoken of, after their American inventor, at this time. The reluctance of players to use them, and the gradual overcoming of that reluctance, had many comic incidents associated with it.

The amateur championship that year was full of wonders. It was won by Charles Hutchings, he being then a grandfather and fifty-two years of age. He knocked me out, among other better men, beating me at the last hole. And then he beat that brilliant and greatly to be regretted young golfer, Johnny Bramston. In the final he had to play Fry, and established a very big lead on him in the first round. He had about six holes in hand with only nine to play, and then Fry began to do conjuring tricks, holing putts from the edge of the green, and so on. In the event Charles Hutchings just won by a single hole after one of the most remarkable final matches in the whole story of that championship. And it is to be noted that these two finalists, who proved themselves better able than most others to adapt themselves to the new touch of these livelier balls—for nearly all the competitors used the Haskells—were extremely good billiard players. Fry had won [Pg 184] the amateur championship of billiards more than once, and Hutchings was quite capable of such atrocities as a three-figure break. I think the sensitive fingers of these billiard players helped them to get the touch of these livelier balls which were so "kittle" for the approach and putting.

After the amateur came the open, in which I did not take a hand, but I heard a great deal of the preliminary discussions about it. Of course, if the amateurs were difficult to convince about the merits of the new balls, the professionals, who had their vested interest in the old, and did not know how these were to be affected by the coming of the new, were harder still to convince. However, the balls were too good to be denied. Andrew Kirkaldy, a shrewd man, and one, besides, who had no interest in the sale of balls, solid or rubber cored, was one of the first and most enthusiastic converts. "The puggy," he declared, "is a great ba'." He called it "puggy," which is Scottish for monkey, because it jumped about so. "Ye canna' tak' eighty strokes to the roun' wi' a puggy—the puggy will na' gae roun' in eighty strokes." However, on the morrow of making that brave statement, he contrived, even with the "puggy," to take several strokes more than eighty to go round the Hoylake course for the championship. Alec Herd was one of the most uncompromising opponents of the new ball until the very day of the championship. He had declared that he hoped everybody else would play with the Haskell, but that for his own part he meant to stick to his old friend. And then, on the day of the play, behold Herd, who had said these things, teeing up a Haskell himself on the first tee, and continuing play with it until he had won [Pg 185] the championship! It was a bit of luck for him, hitting on the truth about the merits of the ball just at the right moment. I do not think he would ever have won the championship save for the Haskell ball. At the same time it is only fair to him to say this, that he was—at least I think so—quite unlucky not to win the championship two years previously. It was the year that Taylor won at St. Andrews, and at that date, and for some little while before the championship, Herd had certainly been playing the best golf of anybody. Then the weather changed, just on the eve of the championship. There came abundance of rain, which put the greens into just the condition that Taylor liked. He won that championship, and Herd, I think, was a little unfortunate not to win. But fortune restored the balance of her favours by giving him this win at Hoylake with the new ball long after we had ceased to think him a likely champion. Thus once again, "justice has been done." Therewith the Haskell ball made its reputation and came to stay. There was a talk of ruling it out, by the Rules of Golf Committee, but Hall Blyth, then chairman, agreed with me and others that it had won its way too far into popularity to be made illegal, and the idea of legislating it out was dropped. [Pg 186]

CHAPTER XXX

AN HISTORIC MATCH AND AN HISTORIC TYPE

Willy Park, always a man of some practical ingenuity, as well as a magnificent golfer, had lately invented and patented a peculiar type of putter. He had also invented, by way of an advertisement of this crooked-necked club of his, the dictum that "the man who can putt is a match for anybody."

Now Park, besides his other fine qualities, was a very gallant golfer. It had been his way for some years, as soon as some man—be it Douglas Rolland, or any other—had come to the top of the golfing tree, so that everybody was talking about him and saying what a fine fellow he was, to challenge this fine top bird of the roost, and back his challenge with a £50 or £100 stake. There may have been a tinge of advertisement about it, for Park was a good man of business and the first of the professionals to realize what money there was in establishing golf shops, but chiefly, I think, he played these matches for the pure sport of the thing.

So now, Harry Vardon, being beyond dispute, at the tree top, Park must issue a challenge to play him for a money stake, a home and home match, two rounds at North Berwick and two at Ganton. Now you have to realize that in those days Harry Vardon was so great a man, there was so much keenness to see him play, that when he went out the gallery followed him, they watched his every stroke, and they paid no more attention than if he had no existence at all to the poor wretch who chanced to be partnered with him. They would trample on this unfortunate creature's ball without the slightest remorse: he was rather lucky if he were not thrown down and trampled to death himself by the throng.

The Amateur Side at Sandwich in 1894.
Standing (from left to right): A. Stuart, S. Mure Fergusson, John Ball, F.G. Tait. Sitting: H.G. Hutchinson, Charles Hutchings, A.D. Blyth, H.H. Hilton.

The Professional Side at Sandwich in 1894.
Standing (from left to right): Willie Park, A. Simpson, A. Kirkcaldy, W. Auchterlonie. Sitting: J.H. Taylor, A. Herd, D. Rolland, W. Fernie.

"Fiery"—Willie Park's Caddie.

Willy Park was a shrewd Scot. He was not going to have any of this nonsense when "the man who could putt" set out to prove, for money, that he was a match for anyone, even for Harry Vardon at his best. The match opened, therefore, at its very second shot, on the note of comedy. Park had gone a little further off the tee than Harry Vardon, toward the bunker guarding Point Garry Hill. That meant that Harry Vardon had to play first, and after his play of the second shot the gallery made a start to dash in, in their accustomed manner, quite regardless of the other partner to the match. Park proceeded to teach them their lesson at the outset. He did not hurry, like a guilty thing, to play his shot, as most of the others who played with Vardon used to do: instead, he left his ball altogether, with "Fiery," his faithful caddie, standing guard over it. The people crowded forward as far as Fiery, but they were not at all likely to go beyond him, most faithful henchman, and rather truculent watch-dog, with round Scotch bonnet and streamers floating behind, the clubs loose held, out of the bag, beneath his arm—I rather think he would have called it his "oxter"—because he had for years carried clubs before bags came into use, and the fine smoothness and polish of the club handles was apt to be spoilt by dragging them in and out of the bag. I never heard nor cared what other name he had than Fiery, of which the propriety was written in flaming colours on his face. So he stood, facing and keeping back the crowd from the ball—a subject not unworthy of an historical picture and by no means to be disregarded as a point in the golfing story of the last fifty years, because he was a type, and nearly the last, of the old Scottish caddies, and because this match was among the last of those of the old style. Park's school was really a generation behind that to which belonged the modern triumvirate.

So Park walked on, having left his ball; he walked on to the foot of Point Garry Hill; then he ascended it, with great leisure, quite regardless that the people raged together, and he looked at the flag, which he did not in the least desire to see. All he did desire was to teach the gallery their lesson, that he, Park, meant to count for something in this match, that Harry Vardon was not the only player; and when he had thus taught the lesson, which it were better that the people should learn first than last, he came back leisurely to his ball again and played it.

They took their lesson well—a Scottish crowd is not slow at the up-take and has its sense of humour. Moreover, Park was their man, being a Scot. They liked to see him taking himself seriously, and they did not crowd on him inconveniently again.

And it was a most amusing match to watch, though just a little pathetic too. Willy Park was most emphatically "the man who could putt." He told me that he had been practising putting for that match to the tune of from six to eight hours a day. It sounds terribly dull work; but certainly Park was rewarded for it, for I never saw such putting, day in and day out, as he was doing about the time of that match. And in the match he putted extraordinarily. I speak only of the first portion, at North Berwick. I did not see the latter end of it at Ganton; but I think the result, if there ever could be, from the start, a moment's doubt about it, was virtually all settled on the first thirty-six holes. Park putted extraordinarily, but he still had to prove his dictum that the man who could putt was a match for anybody. Vardon as surely could not putt; but then he played all the rest of the game to a beautiful perfection, whereas poor Park could not drive. He developed, at its worst,

that tendency to hook his drives which has always been a danger to him. He arrived on the greens one stroke, or even two, behind Vardon. But then he put the putt in, whereas Vardon often neglected the simple precaution of laying it dead. So it went on, Park saving himself again and again by this marvellous putting, and at last, after he had holed one of fifteen yards right across the green, a crusty old Scot in the gallery was heard grumbling to himself in his beard: "The on'y raisonable putt I've seen the day." What he had come out expecting, an all-knowing Providence alone can say.

But the strain of those repeated saves of holes apparently lost was too severe to last. Vardon put a useful balance of holes to his credit even at North Berwick. The final half of the match was to be played on his own course of Ganton. There was only one possible conclusion to it. At the end of the North Berwick contest I suggested to Park that he would have to re-edit his dictum so that it should run "the man who can putt is a match for anybody—except Harry Vardon," and he confessed, with a melancholy grin, that he believed he would have to accept that emendation. [Pg 190]

With the disappearance of the old Scottish caddie, of whom Fiery might very well stand for the prototype, there passed much of the old order of golf, making way for the new. These old caddies themselves counted for very much more in the play of the game than our modern club-carriers, who are usually beasts of burden (and little beasts at that, just passed out of their Board School standards) and nothing more. They know the names of the clubs, so as to give you what you ask for, and that is about as much as is expected of them. Sometimes they take a keen interest, and identify themselves with their master's interests; but such fidelity and keenness are rather exceptional. The ancient caddie was a grown man: he was not, perhaps, an ensample of all the virtues, and if he turned up on a Monday morning without a certain redness of the nose and possibly a blackness of the eye, indicating a rather stormy Saturday night, of which the intervening day of rest had not wholly removed the damages, you might admire and be thankful.

But his zeal for your matches was unfailing. He made it a point of honour to do all that the law allowed him, and all that it did not allow him, so long as he was not found out, to aid and abet your inefficiency. He expected that you should consult him about the club that you should take, about the line on which you should play and about the gradients of a putt. He was a profound student of human nature, discovered the weaknesses of your opponent and urged you by counsel and example to take advantage of them. [Pg 191] In my early days at St. Andrews, when I was playing a match with David Lamb, I was surprised, and more than a little shocked, by the counsel that one of these sapient caddies gave me: "Let us walk oot pretty smartly after the ba', sir. Mr. Lamb canna' bear to be hurried." That was the proposal—that just because Mr. Lamb had a dislike to playing in a hurry, we should hasten on after the ball so as to induce him, by the power of suggestion, to hurry also, and so put him off his game. Needless to say, as soon as my innocence had succeeded in comprehending the inward meaning of the counsel, I repudiated it with scorn and rebuked the caddie bitterly for suggesting it; and, equally needless to say, he thought me both a thankless person and a very particular species of Sassenach fool for so rejecting it. I have often thought that had Bret Harte known the old Scottish caddie he would not have needed to go to the Orient and to the Yellow Race for the type of mind that he has sketched in his *Heathen Chinee*. Nevertheless there was very much that was attractive and likeable in these henchmen of a fervid loyalty and few moral attributes besides, and their extermination, with that of other strange *feræ naturæ*, is to be regretted. [Pg 192]

CHAPTER XXXI

THE INTERNATIONAL MATCH

Certainly the Royal Liverpool Club has deserved well of the golfing community. It started the amateur championship, and in 1891 or 1892 the idea occurred to some enterprising genius at Hoylake of the International Match. What though interest rather waned in it, and it has been abandoned now, during the years that it was played it was an interest to many, both of those who played in it and of those who merely looked on. They called me into their counsels and we roughed out some such scheme as was ultimately adopted. There was much talk as to whether it were better to score by match only, or by aggregate of holes won and lost only, or by a combination of the two. I favoured the combination, but lost, and "matches only" has always been the scoring adopted.

It is not to be denied that we of England received a very grievous shock when we learned that Jack Graham was not going to play on our side, but intended to throw in his golfing lot with Scotland, the country of his origin. Of course he had a perfect right to do so. He is a Scot,[7] I believe on both sides, but then the idea had been, in the institution of this match, trial of the golf learnt in England against the golf of Scotland, and if Jack Graham himself was pure Scot, his golf was pure Sassenach, every stroke of it learnt on that Hoylake where he lived. [Pg 193] It is not too much to say that that decision of Jack Graham upset the balance of forces very materially, for this match was always (save for one occasion) played before the amateur championship tournament, and Jack was, and is, a terrible player in the early stages of any meeting. It is apparently his constitutional misfortune that he is not able to last through a long sustained trial. Twice certainly, and I think three times, I have taken one of the bronze medals of the championship while he has had the other: that is to say, that both of us have survived to the semi-final heat. But

further than that, Jack has never been able to last, and has been beaten at that point by men to whom he could give three strokes comfortably in ordinary circumstances and in the earlier stages of the tournament. He has been a terrible disappointment to us all, in this way, for a more brilliant amateur golfer never played. It is his health that has knocked him out every time—a lack of robust nerves.

This going over of Jack Graham to the enemy, as we regarded it, introduced another small trouble into the International Match. It was always said (with what basis of fact I hardly know) that it would cause too much "feeling" in Hoylake if he were pitted against either Johnny Ball or Harold Hilton in this match. So the sides had to be so arranged that this terrible thing should not happen—it was all rather farcical. As it was, I had to play Jack Graham in the first International Match, which was at Hoylake, and took a sound beating from him. That first fight was the occasion of a battle royal between Johnny Ball and Bobby Maxwell, the former only winning, though it was on his own green, by a single hole on the thirty-six. During these years Bobby was rather regarded as the champion of the Scottish amateurs, and the International Match would be notable, if for nothing else, for the Homeric contests between these two. The most fantastic of them happened in the year when exceptionally, as I have noted above, the match was played before, not after, the amateur championship. It was at Muirfield, in 1903, when I got into the final, only to be beaten handsomely there by Bobby Maxwell. We played the International Match the next day, and I had to fight Fred Mackenzie, who afterwards went as a professional to America and is now at home again and playing very good golf at St. Andrews. He did not play very good golf that day, however, though it was good enough to beat me; for I found myself not tired exactly, but utterly indifferent, after all the strain of the championship, which I had had to endure up to the final round, and could not tune myself up to concert pitch at all. But on Bobby it was very clear that the strain had not told in anything like the same way. He played extraordinarily. I do not believe that Johnny Ball played badly at all, yet he was beaten, I think, by more holes than any other man ever has lost in the International Match. Whenever he did a hole in a stroke over the right number, Bobby Maxwell did it in the right number; and whenever Johnny did it in the right number, Bobby performed a miracle and did it in one less.

[Pg 194]

One of the most amusing matches I ever did play was with Gordon Simpson, a few years later, in the International when again it was at Muirfield. On the first round I was four up at the fourteenth hole; and then I let him win all the last four holes, so that we came in to luncheon all even. Then, in the next round, he was four up at the fourteenth, and, exactly as I had done in the morning, so he, in the afternoon, let me win all the last four holes. He got a good three at the thirty-seventh—the hole was in a very "kittle" place and the green was mighty keen, so that the three was hard to get—and so won the match. But in the course of that match I did a thing that I never have done before or since. He laid me a stimy, with his ball so near the hole that the only chance was to pitch my own ball right into the hole. By a bit of good luck I did it, but by a bit of unconscionable bad luck, the ball, after rattling about against the tin inside, came out again and stood on the lip of the hole. As the match was played, it just made the difference; but even had I won, it would not have made the difference in the whole team match. Scotland, as usual, were too good for us and had a match to spare.

[Pg 195]

I had played Gordon Simpson once, many years before, in the amateur championship, when he was a student at St. Andrews' University, and the circumstances had been amusing. He was the champion of the University, and when we set forth from the first tee we were accompanied by a gallery which appeared to me as if it must include all the youth of that venerable seat of learning. They behaved wonderfully well, with a great deal of sportsmanlike consideration for my feelings, but at the same time were naturally so dead keen on their own man that they would have been something more than human, or older than undergraduates, had they been able to refrain from a little baring back of the teeth, and just the murmur of a growl, when I happened to hole a good putt. Unfortunately things went rather badly for their hero at the start. I contrived to get a lead of some four holes on him, and hung on to them till the match was finished. Of course I did my best to win, but I never in my life won a match which gave me less satisfaction. It was so hard on the University champion, surrounded by all his best friends. However, he had his revenge, as said, at Muirfield. But as for this stimy loft, into the hole and out again, it is quite sure that there was something not just right about the tins in use in the Muirfield holes at that time, for it happened to Bernard Darwin to play precisely the same stroke with precisely the same result in the championship. The fact is that if the flooring of the tin is set at a certain angle this chucking out again of a ball lofted in becomes a dynamical certainty. The makers of the tins ought to see to it that the floor is not set at this angle. If it is set nearly horizontal the thing does not happen, and it is when set too vertically that it is almost bound to occur. But, except for this case of my own ball and that of Bernard Darwin's, I have never heard of another instance of the kind, though probably golfing history can furnish many.

[Pg 196]

The last occasion, before its death of inanition, on which the International Match was played, it was played in foursomes. I do not think that was an experiment likely to prolong its life. With all respect in the world for the foursome as a very pleasant pastime, I cannot believe in it as anything like the test of golf that a single provides. To me it is an infinitely more easy form of the game, though I am well aware there are good judges and good players who think otherwise. I can only say that for my own part it has always been easier for me to play well in a foursome than in a single. It is not, I believe, the common experience.

[Pg 197]

I am inclined to think it is a pity that the International Match is dead. There are many who would like it revived. It gave useful practice to the young players coming on, who thus had a chance,

apart from the championship, of showing what they could do in good company. That was its value, more than as a spectacle of the two countries set in array against each other. Scotland nearly always had the better of us. For one thing they have always seemed to lunch more wisely or more well than we of England. Perhaps their digestion is more powerful. At all events it has happened again and again that we have been leading finely at luncheon, only to be beaten decisively in the end. But if we had had Jack Graham on our side even this lack of the gastric juices would not, I think, have turned the day so often against us. [Pg 198]

FOOTNOTES:

[7] Alas, if writing to-day, in 1919, it is in the past tense that this and some following passages would need to be phrased. He was gallant in volunteering, joined a Scottish regiment, and met a soldier's death.

CHAPTER XXXII

HOW MR. JUSTICE BUCKLEY KEPT HIS EYE ON THE HASKELL BALL

One night I was going North by one of the sleeping trains and, having business late in the afternoon in Holborn, did not return to the civilized parts of the town, but dined at the Inns of Court Hotel. There are little tables for two, and at mine was dining also a man with whom I got into conversation. He told me he came from Glasgow and was in town on a business which he dared say I should think a very curious one—a big lawsuit pending about such a small matter as a ball used in the playing of the game of golf. Did I play golf? I said, "A little." I also said that in all the history of coincidences this was just about the most singular, for that I, too, had been engaged as a witness in the very same case. It was the case that the manufacturers of the Haskell ball were bringing against the manufacturers of the Kite ball. The point was to prove the Haskell patent good for their protection in a monopoly of making rubber-cored balls. The Haskell people had asked me to give evidence, because I was the first man to play with these balls in England, and because I considered them, and *pace* the law, still consider them, an absolutely new departure in golf-ball manufacture.

[Pg 199] It would be ungrateful not to think that providence designed this meeting at the Inns of Court Hotel, for my new friend was able to tell me what the right fee was for me to charge as an expert witness. He told me that that was what I was—an expert witness. I did not know it before, although I knew, without his telling me, the ancient divisions of the species "liar," into "liar," "d——d liar," and "expert witness." I was prepared to play my part, especially when I heard, with pleased surprise, the large fees paid for witnesses of this expert and unimpeachable character.

So, in due course of time, I was summoned up to London to attend the trial. I suppose other trials are sometimes as humorous, but I could not have believed it possible that there could be such good entertainment as I found in that Court, where I sat with much enjoyment calculating, between the acts, the sum to which my expert witness fees were mounting up as I waited. The Judge, Mr. Justice Buckley, if I remember right, was not a golfer; yet the way in which he kept his eye on the ball during the three days or so of that trial was above all praise. And the ball took a deal of keeping of the eye on itself, for there were many balls of different sorts brought into Court, and they were constantly running off the judge's desk, and tumbling and jumping about in the body of the Court, where learned gentlemen knocked their wigs together as they bent down to search for them. There was an old lady who said she had made balls which were practically identical with these Haskells all her life—balls for boys to play with. So she was commanded to go away and to come back with all her apparatus and to show in Court how the balls were made. [Pg 200] She returned, and it appeared that, after some winding of thread about a core, the next proceeding was to dip the balls into a molten solution of some boiling stuff which smelt abominably. She cooked this up in Court, and the whole business was very suggestive of the making of the hell-broth of the witches in "Macbeth," only that perhaps the Court of Law did not give a striking representation of the "blasted heath." The balls were apt to escape from the old lady when they were half cooked and to go running about the Court where the barristers, retrieving them, got their fingers into the most awfully sticky state and their wigs seemed to be the appropriate places on which to rub the stickiness off.

Willie Fernie was there, enjoying himself hugely too. He, it seems, had long ago made a ball resembling the Haskell. There, too, was Commander Stewart, whom I had known in the early eighties at St. Andrews. He was the maker of the "Stewart patent" balls, which had a vogue for a time, though they had not the least resemblance to the Haskell balls. They were of some composition, quite solid, and with iron filings in them. Nevertheless, Commander Stewart, as it appeared, had made a ball similar to the Haskell, though it could not have been the one known as his patent. All these were testimony to what the lawyers call "previous user."

Then an old gentleman was called who said that he had played at ball as a boy with another old gentleman whose name he gave, with a ball similar in all its essentials to the Haskell golf ball. The other old gentleman was called then, and he was asked whether his memory corroborated this, and whether it was in essentials the same ball. To which he answered, to the delight of the

Court, that it was not the same ball at all. "What then," asked the Counsel, in a profoundly shocked voice, "do you mean to say that you think your old friend is a liar?" "No," he replied quite readily, "I don't think so, I know it." I looked out to see these two old friends going out of Court, to discover whether they were quite as good friends as they had been before, but I could not see them. [Pg 201]

I do not remember much about my own testimony. I think what I said was true, but I am nearly sure that it was quite unimportant. The present Lord Moulton, I remember, examined, or cross-examined me, but he did not turn me inside out very badly, and I believe I left the Court "without a stain on my character," according to the stereotyped phrase. At all events the conclusion of the whole matter was that we lost our case very handsomely. The Judge, considering the evidence of the old lady, of Commander Stewart, of Willie Fernie and so on, said that he thought there were sufficient witnesses to "previous user," and no doubt "Messrs. Hutchison, Maine and Co."—I think this was the name of the firm opposing us—fought a good fight in the best interests of the golfer, for it would have been a bad job for us all if there had been a monopoly in the hands of one firm of the manufacture of the rubber-cored balls. They put the prices up against us fairly high as it was, without that. Had there been a monopoly of manufacture we might now be paying five shillings each perhaps, instead of half-a-crown, for the balls—a very solemn thought. They carried this case to the Court of Appeal, but that Court only confirmed the finding of the Court below, and thereto added this further comment, that whether there were "previous users" or no, they did not think that the invention in itself had sufficient novelty for the patent to be good. So that "put the lid on," to use homely phrase. [Pg 202]

A while afterwards I met the American manager of a big athletic outfitting house, and he told me that in his opinion, looking at the thing with the commercial eye of the manufacturer, if the Kite people had been "real cute," they would not have driven this fight to a finish. Instead, they would have come to the Haskell people, when the case seemed likely to go in favour of the defendants, and come to a compromise with them. They would then have abandoned the case, as if despairing of success, under a secret agreement with the Haskell folk to allow them to make balls on certain agreed terms. The effect of that would have been that the abandoning of the case would have frightened other companies out of ever bringing the like case against the Haskell Company, and the two might have gone on merrily working their monopoly, at the expense of the ball-buyers, "till the cows came home." That, as my friend the manager said, would have been "real smart," but I think we have to congratulate ourselves that this real smartness did not commend itself to the Scottish firm that fought and won this historic battle. We pay enough for our golf balls even now, even under the relatively blessed conditions of competition.

Surely it is not for me, who went no further in study of the law than to eat, though indifferently to digest, those singular dinners at the singular hour of six o'clock at the Inner Temple, to criticise the high findings of the law, but it does seem to my uninstructed wisdom that if ever there were a substantially new invention, making a new departure, it was this of these that we then called Haskells and now call indiarubber-cored balls. Nobody, before Haskell, had ever given them to us as reasonable things with which to play the game of golf. He gave them to us as the best balls hitherto invented. They spoilt the game in a sense, it is true. The ability to hit the ball absolutely exactly has not the same value now as in the days of the solid gutty ball; nor does forceful hitting count for as much. On the other hand, the greater resiliency of the ball makes the game more pleasant, especially for weak muscles. But that, the quality of the ball, is another story. The story the Court had to sit in judgment on was woven round about the question whether substantially the ball was a novelty. They found that it was not, and we all should be very thankful that they did find so; but at the same time it is quite possible that we may think it a queer finding. [Pg 203] [Pg 204]

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP OF 1903

In the twentieth century I was no longer regarding myself with great seriousness as a likely champion, and it is very certain that I should not have troubled to go to Muirfield for the amateur championship of 1903 had it not been for a kindly invitation from David Kinloch to stay with him for it at his place Gilmerton, about nine miles from the course. I was salmon fishing on the Wye at the time, and the river was in good order, so it was a wrench.

I remember that there was staying also at Gilmerton on that occasion poor Harold Finch-Hatton, most humorous of good companions. We used to drive the nine miles in a high dog-cart, the horse generally taking fright at the railway crossing at Drem each morning; so the excitement of the day began long before we came to the links.

I only arrived the day before the fight began, and I remember my first tee-shot in that championship as if it were yesterday. I was playing Mr. Frank Booth, affectionately known as "Father Booth" to men of Sandwich. The spectators were drawn up in a line parallel with the line of play to the first hole, and I hit my tee-shot on the extreme tip of the toe of the club, so that it went out to cover point and right away to the right of the spectators altogether. I had to play back over their heads, up to the hole. [Pg 205]

After that promising start I played quite steadily and beat Booth comfortably. Then I went along uneventfully till I met A.M. Ross. A.M. Ross was already something of a veteran, but he gave me some extremely tough work. The match had its element of humour. We had not, at that time, the rule that all putts should be holed out, and very early in the match he did not give a putt which I thought to be stony dead. Therefore at the next hole, where he had a putt still more stony, I did not give that to him. He repaid me again by making me perform a still more ridiculous task of holing out; and so I him again, until at the end of that match we were scrupulously, but without a smile or a word said on either side, holing out putts of two inches with the solemnity of a religious rite. But it was all with quite good temper on both sides: I think both of us were too old stagers to take offence. In the last eight I beat Dick, playing very steadily, and then I met Angus Macdonald. I had never played him before. He was, no doubt, an immensely strong man. He was so strong and big that he seemed unable to swing round his body, as it were. He was the shortest driver for a player of his ability I ever met; but he was also the longest putter. Time and again, when I thought I had the hole, having arrived on the green a stroke before him, he upset calculations by holing a gigantic putt. He smoked all the time, a long meerschaum pipe, and had all the air of a man playing the game for pleasure—which is not at all a common aspect for a man to wear when he is playing a championship heat. And after he had been holing these prodigious putts time after time, and I had been following them up by holing humble little things of a yard and a half or so, he fairly petrified me with astonishment by remarking, in a tone of almost pained surprise, "You're putting very well!" I looked at him to see whether he was chaffing, but his face did not show the twinkle of a smile, and I had to assume that it was simple honest comment, and that he was accustomed, that he expected, to hole these gigantic putts, but that he did not expect his opponent to hole the little ones after him. Perhaps that explains how, being so short a driver, he was yet so good a golfer. But eventually I defeated him, and thus came into the final.

In the other semi-final tie a terrific battle had been raging between Bobby Maxwell and Herman de Zoete. Of course I did not see it, being very fully occupied with Macdonald, but I heard all about it, and what I heard was that Herman de Zoete was driving tremendous balls, very seldom on the course, and following up these huge erratic efforts by wonderful recoveries and putting, so that, as they said, if he had beaten Bobby, who was playing a sound steady game down the middle of the course, it would have been a crying iniquity. But it was an iniquity that was as nearly as possible perpetrated: he had Bobby, as a matter of fact, stone cold. This was at the nineteenth hole, which they had to go out to play, having halved the round; and at that hole I believe that Bobby's first shot was in the neighbourhood of the wall and the second still some little way from the hole. Herman's first was short of the green, but not very short. It looked as if he had but to do that hole in four to win the match, and it did not look as if he could fail to do it in four. But then, as he told me afterwards, for the first time in the whole match nerves got hold of him, and having hold of him they seem to have taken their hold very hard. He was unable, he said, to see the ball with any distinctness. It looked all in fog; and, playing at it through this obscuring atmosphere, he sent it about a foot. The end of the hole was that Bobby, by holing a very missable putt, did get a four, and Herman took five and lost the hole. The tale, as told me, was peculiarly painful to listen to, for though Bobby Maxwell is a very pleasant fellow to play with, still, for the final round of a championship, especially over Muirfield, I would rather have had to play Herman de Zoete.

However, there it was. And then an unfortunate thing, for me, happened. On the next day we found the wind exactly opposite in its direction to what it had been all the week before. Of course that did not make any difference to Bobby, to whom every grass-blade on Muirfield was a personal friend and every distance known to a foot, no matter in what trend or force of wind. But to me, who had been painfully learning the distances all these days, the right about face of the wind put a very changed aspect on the business. Not that I believe for a moment that the ultimate result was affected by it. I have no delusion that in the year 1903, or possibly in any other, I could make a match with Bobby over Muirfield. Elsewhere it might be another story. As it was, I did make a very good match with him for fourteen holes, for at that point we were all even. But then I made the fatal error of letting him win the last four holes of that round. I hardly know how it happened, for I do not remember that I played these holes extraordinarily badly, but I do know that I did not have nearly as good an appetite, when we went in for luncheon, as I should have had if the break had come at the end of fourteen, instead of eighteen, holes. To start out, as I had to, afterwards, to give Bobby four holes up, was rather a large order, and I found it a good deal too large for me to fill.

I did not play badly. I had a vision of bringing him down to quite a reasonable number of holes up, and making a close match of it, at one point on the way out, but there—it was the hole before the windmill—he made a great recovery out of the rough and won the hole which I had looked forward to winning. I took three on the green and he only took one. That was the final touch. He played the rest of the round, as far as we had to take it, far better than I did—drove much farther, for one thing, which is always useful—and finally hammered me out by the tune of seven and six to play. He deserved to win by quite that margin; but I still cannot help rather regretting that attack of nerves which seized Herman de Zoete so unfortunately at the approach to the nineteenth hole the day before. One thing, however, that championship taught me, that if I was to live with some of these younger golfers and harder hitters I must do something to add yards to my driving. And the way I tried was by adding, as soon as I went South, inches—to the number of six—to my wooden clubs, both driver and brassey. And it had its effect. The extra length was useful at all angles of the wind, but especially against the wind, and for some years these long clubs did me very good service. Of course, the longer the club the lighter you must have the head. That has to be understood, for otherwise you get a weaver's beam that is quite unlike the

club of the balance that is familiar to your hand. But if you reduce the head-weight judiciously you can lengthen the shaft unbelievably without making accurate hitting any harder. And with the longer shaft it seems, according to my experience, that you get a longer ball. [Pg 209] [Pg 210]

CHAPTER XXXIV

TRAVIS'S YEAR

In 1904, the amateur championship being that year at Sandwich, Frank Penn[8] entertained me for it at Bifrons, near Canterbury, about fifteen miles from the arena of action. He used to motor me in each day, and the driving of a big motor through the streets of Sandwich town appears a very cork-screwy business. Nevertheless he accomplished it perfectly and never once bunkered us by the way.

I came across a lot of old friends and enemies at that meeting—first Johnny Laidlay in the International Match, then Mure Ferguson, if I remember right, in the first round of the championship; I forget whom then, but I know that a few more heats brought me up against Johnny Ball. All these adventures, even that last and worst, I succeeded in getting through with success, and then I had to meet Bobby Maxwell on the last day but one of the play. I was playing fairly well, being much helped by the longer clubs I had taken to since the Muirfield championship, where Bobby beat me in the final.

Walter Travis.

Charles B. MacDonald. From a portrait in plaster by Prince Paul Troubetzkoy, presented to the National Golf Links of America of which Mr. Macdonald is the founder.

Staying, as I was, with Penn fifteen miles away, I did not hear much of the gossip going on at this championship, but from time to time I did find one man or the other coming to me and saying, "Have you seen that American who is putting with an extraordinary thing like a croquet mallet? He's putting most extraordinarily well with it." Of course I had not seen him: I had been too busy myself, putting by no means extraordinarily well. That sort of thing was said, now and then, but no one thought any more about it. It was known that some Americans had come over and had entered for the championship, but if anybody had prophesied that one of them was likely to give trouble or to get into the final heats he would have been looked on as a lunatic. The truth is, that we much under-rated the American amateur at that time. Partly, I suppose, this was our "d——d insular insolence," but partly, too, it was due to the very successful tour in the States, a year or two before, of a team of the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society. They won their matches so consistently as to give us the idea that the Americans could not play golf. The man with the mallet putter was in process of teaching us better, though even yet we did not realize it. Mr. Harold Reade, the Irishman, ought to have beaten him, for he was two up and either two or three to play, but the American played the final holes very finely and just won. So he survived, until in the heath before the semi-final, wherein I had to meet Bobby, he had Hilton to play. But Hilton was in no sort of form and Travis beat him as he pleased. Meanwhile I beat Bobby and had revenge for the year before, in the Muirfield final, but it was by no means as I pleased.

I started badly and let Bobby win the first three holes. Then I steadied down and he gave me chances. It is always a different thing playing Bobby anywhere else than at Muirfield. Had he gained this start there I should never have seen the way he went. But he let me get hole after hole back until on the eighteenth green we were all even, we had played three apiece, I was stone dead and my ball laid him a dead stymie. It was not a stymie at all difficult to loft. There was nice room to pitch the ball and let it run on into the hole. Still, at that crisis of the match, it was a fine piece of work on Bobby's part to play it perfectly as he did. Then I holed my unimportant little putt and we had to start out to play extra holes.

My second shot to the first (or nineteenth) hole, I put carefully into the bunker guarding the green. Bobby, I suppose, determined to be over, seeing that I was in, rather over-ran the green. A bunker near the hole never had the terrors for me that it has for some people: we were too familiar with them at Westward Ho! Tom Vardon said to me afterwards, respecting the stroke which I played out of that bunker: "That was a plucky shot of yours, to go straight for the hole like that." Of course it is always pleasant to be told one is a hero, but really there was nothing very heroic about this. If the sand were taken at the right point behind the ball there was no trouble about the stroke. If you hit differently from your intention there was bound to be trouble,

but that is the case with most golfing strokes.

What happened in this case was that I howked the ball out fairly near the hole, about a couple of yards off, perhaps, and Bobby, playing from the far end of the green, put his just inside it. But whereas I had a straight up-hill putt to the hole, he had to come along the curve of the slope, so that my putt was far the easier. I holed it all right. Bobby allowed a little too much for the slope and that was the end of that business. "Now see, Horace," he said, as we walked back to the club- [Pg 213] house, "that you don't get beaten by that American."

I started out in the afternoon without the smallest idea in life that I was to be beaten by "that American"; but I had not played two shots before I knew that all the best of the fight had been taken out of me by that stiff morning match. As Andrew Kirkaldy said to me afterwards: "That," pointing to Bobby, "that was your murderer." He had, in truth, done most of the killing, and Travis had but to finish it. He did not really play very well. Still, he was one up on me going to the thirteenth hole, and there gave me every chance of winning it and squaring the match, but I played a very bad shot, and followed it with another indifferent one, and so let him win that hole which I ought to have won. He gave me no further chances, and beat me by, I think, three and two. But I reckoned things up afterwards and found, by the score of the holes, that if I had played as well as I did in any of the previous matches, I should have been up on him, instead of down, at the point where he beat me. That, however, is what makes an amateur champion—that, amongst other things—the ability to "stay" through a long fight and not to suffer reaction after a hard match.

In the final, Travis had to meet Ted Blackwell, and I never had great hopes for England as to the result of that encounter. I say this, with all respect for Ted Blackwell's great game as he developed it almost immediately afterwards; but he was not his great self then. At that time he was still putting with a thin-bladed little cleek which must have been forged about the date that Tubal Cain was in active work as a smith. Very shortly afterwards someone, who deserves to [Pg 214] suffer lingering death at the hands of all Ted Blackwell's later opponents, induced him to take to an aluminium putter. The difference it made in his game was nearer a third than four strokes, as I reckon it. From a really bad putter he became all at once a very good putter indeed. I knew all about it, for I had been playing him and beating him comfortably in several matches at St. Andrews, in course of a little party which Lord Dudley took up there. I met him again in an international match at Hoylake only a little later, when he had exchanged the tinkling cleek for the aluminium putter, and he beat me—not by length of driving, but by length of putting.

As for this final at Sandwich, which was played in his pre-aluminium days, Travis has put it on record that he felt confident of winning from the start; and he looked like a winner all through. With the black cigar and the deliberate methods, including the practice swing before each stroke, he was perhaps rather a hard man to play against, but at the same time, and although I have said that he did not play very well when I met him, I think those critics make a great mistake who say that he was not a first-class golfer. He was, and is, a wonderful putter. I know that, not only by the wonderful week of putting that he put in over here at that time, but by what Jim Whigham and others who have played a great deal with him in America have told me. Whigham said that you were grateful, thinking that you had a lucky escape, if you were his opponent and he did not hole the ball from fifteen yards. This was at Garden City, where he knows the greens better than his drawing-room carpet. Indeed, all Travis's record disproves the statement that "he was not fit [Pg 215] to win the championship." That he was "lucky to win" we must think. Unless a man is a head and shoulders above his field, he has to have luck if he is to live through a tournament such as our amateur championship; and Travis had no such head and shoulders advantage as this. But put him down at a hundred and eighty or any less number of yards from the hole, and there was no player, amateur or professional, better than he. Perhaps there was no amateur as good. His weakness was out of bunkers and rough ground, but that was a weakness which troubled him little because he very seldom got into these difficulties. I hardly know whether he would have won our championship if Ted Blackwell and the aluminium putter had been introduced to each other a few years earlier; but it is no use arguing about "ifs." As soon as he had won that final, the price of Schenectady putters went up a hundred per cent., and Bobby Maxwell, by way of insult, made me a present of one of them, with which I often putted till our legislation banned them. [Pg 216]

FOOTNOTES:

[8] Again I have to append the sad note, so often written, that in the interval between the telling of this tale and its publication, he, too, has been taken from the world of living men.

CHAPTER XXXV

HOW GOLF HAS GRIPPED AMERICA

The difference in the golfing condition of the America which I had last visited in the early nineties and that to which I went again in 1910, was striking, and not a little amusing. On that former

visit I had given an exhibition of golf to a few indifferent spectators at the Meadowbrook Club on Long Island, on which they had reported that it "might be a good game for Sunday"—conveying thereby a studied and profane insult both to the game and to the day. On my return in 1910 I found an America even more completely in the throes of golf than any portion of our native islands. But on this visit my approach to the American courses was made in an unconventional manner that is worth a word of notice.

Lord Brassey had asked my wife and myself to come with him, on the *Sunbeam*, to Iceland, across the Atlantic to Newfoundland, and up the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The first golfing place at which we put in, after joining the yacht in the Cromarty Firth, was Dornoch, where is as glorious a natural links as the soul of the golfer can desire or his most industrious inquiry discover. The conformation of Iceland, chiefly mountain, or plain strewn with lava-blocks, hardly seems to lend itself kindly to golf; but on arrival, after many days, during some of them rather storm-tossed, at [Pg 217] St. John's, Newfoundland, we found there a golf course, still a little in the rough, carved out of primeval pine forest, of undulating surface, astonishingly good considering how new it was, and promising to give really amusing and good golf of the inland type in the future. Neil Shannon, a Troon man, is the professional, and I astonished both myself and him by beating him.

The next point at which we touched golf was Tadousac, a watering-place at the mouth of the famed Saguenay River which runs into the St. Lawrence. It is the oldest fur-trading station in Canada. Here is a short course, much *accidenté*, at two points traversing a deep ravine which has real sand in it. There is a more elaborate and carefully kept course at Murray Bay, a little further along the north shore of the St. Lawrence.

At Quebec, on the Heights of Abraham, in a magnificent situation, is one of the oldest courses in North America. I was beaten by a putt by the better ball of two of the native golfers, Mr. Ash and Mr. McGreevy.

Noble hospitality was shown us, both in Canada and in the States. Scarcely could one be permitted so much as to pay for one's own caddie, and any question of green fees was dismissed as quite out of the picture.

We sailed up to Montreal on the night of August 12th, and on the 15th I find the following note in my diary: "Mr. Huntley Drummond took me around in his car, after luncheon, to the Bank of Montreal, where we picked up Mr. W. Clouston, and went out to the Beaconsfield course—not at all a bad green, of the inland type, flat in general, but with the club-house set on a hill from which most of the course is overlooked. They do themselves very well in the matter of club-houses in [Pg 218] this country—most commodious, with bathrooms and all kinds of luxuries." On the following day I played on the Dixie course, also quite near Montreal, "a really good one—inland in its type, as all are over here, but interesting and varied and very pretty at a certain corner where much use is made of a stream, with weeping willows, and so on. There is one respect in which the architects of the course might have been more clever, for they have so ordained things that all the hazards are on the left, all the penalty is for the pulled ball, and a man may slice and slice to his heart's full content, and never suffer. The turf and the greens are very good, and the butterflies and grasshoppers very numerous, and large and splendid of hue."

At Montreal we said good-bye, with many tears, to the *Sunbeam* and her host, and made our next stop at Toronto, where are two excellent courses. On August 19th I find in my diary that "self and A.E. Austin beat Lyon and Breckenridge on the Lambton course." This Lyon is that Mr. George Lyon whom we have seen over here competing in our amateur championship. He has not done himself justice on this side, for he is a very fine player. He has won the Canadian championship often—precisely how often, I forget. "Lambton Golf Club very comfortable," my notes record, "piano set out on balcony, lawn tennis court and all 'amenities.' Beautiful view of course from house—natural sand in bunkers—very pretty, with woodland, water and undulating open country. The course is laid on several big levels in terraces. You play across a stream again and again—it is no course for non-floating balls. Some of the greens are irrigated by sub-surface pipes from the [Pg 219] stream, leading to porous tiles, from which the hot sun sucks up the water to the surface. I saw a thing this day that I never saw before—played a ball up to a hole that had the flag standing in it; the ball jumped up, wrapped itself up in the flag, and stayed there swaddled up in the flag. Query—what is the rule that meets the case?"

The next day I played with Mr. Edgar on the Toronto Club's course, but this is being given up to the builders, and the Club is moving to a course further out along the lake. There is a third course, also, for the Toronto folk—Rosedale—which is well spoken of. On the whole I was very much struck with the quality of these Canadian courses of which we hear but little over here. Among inland courses they take a very high place.

Thence we went on by night, a sixteen hours' journey to Boston, where Charlie Macdonald, the creator of the National Golf Links of America, met us. Immediately on arrival we started out for the Myopia Club, where Macdonald and I beat T. Stephenson and Leeds. The last is the constructor of the Myopia course, and for its construction deserves no little credit. From what I have seen of American courses I put the National Golf Links first and this Myopia second, a very good second. The National is that much-talked-of course of which it was said that it was to be composed of replicas of the eighteen best holes that its creator could anywhere discover, and he journeyed over all the courses in Europe discovering them. My notes on Myopia course run: "fine inland course—rather many blind shots" (but some of these, I know, have been eliminated), "steeply undulating, sloping greens, no trees—good test of golf, long and trying. Record in [Pg 220] competition 75."

My next golfing note touches the Brookline course. "Went out in Willett's car to Brookline, the County Club. This is a tree-y course, like New Zealand, really good, good greens, well bunkered, a trifle on the short side, but full of interest. At all the American Clubs great care is taken in bunkering the courses." This last note is worth attention, because I see it is a comment of Vardon, after his visit in which he and Ray had to lower the British flag to Mr. Ouimet, that the bunkers on the American courses were not severe enough. But he did not see the National Links. That would have satisfied even his passion for bunkers.

My notes continue: "Lunched at Brookline, then motored thirty miles to Essex Club, where Charlie MacDonald and I again beat, as we had already beaten in the morning at Brookline, T. Stephenson and Willett. The course tree-y, like Brookline, with great hills here and there. Natural sand in the bunkers—a fine course. Rather in transition state, as I saw it, but with all the making of a good thing."

I see that I was at Myopia again on the 23rd, when Charlie MacDonald and I again beat Stephenson and Leeds. In the afternoon we went to see Mr. Fricks' grand collection of pictures at his house on North Shore—a fine sight, though "not golf." But there was little rest from golf when we arrived, at 3 p.m. on the 24th, in New York, very hot and dusty. Macdonald motored us out to his house at Rosslyn and then took me for a round at Garden City in the evening, where I beat him in a single. "Course very brown and baked," according to my diary, "but quite long, and putting greens good. Rather ugly surroundings, but fine test of golf. No trees as hazards, except a line of them on right of the 17th, which is a very good hole. The finish is to a short hole over a pond. Doubtless a good course, but not very inspiring." [Pg 221]

On the 25th I see that "Charles Macdonald and self played F. Herreshoff and L. Livingstone, at Garden City, in morning, but lost by a hole, and in the afternoon Herreshoff and self played our better ball against the best ball of C. Macdonald, L. Livingstone and R. Watson, but lost by a hole again." I have a note appended to this day's golf: "Never played worse—eyes bad with heat and motoring."

I may break off here to give a hint to the British golfer visiting the States. I doubtless got a little "touch of the sun" on this day at Garden City, and it is a thing that the Briton coming fresh to American golf has to be very carefully on his guard against. He is menaced, really, by three dangers—the blaze and glare of the sun, the abounding energy of the native golfers and their abounding hospitality. Between the three he is in much peril of being overdone, as I quickly was. I played golf on various courses afterwards—on the Shinnecock Hills, finely undulating, but too short and with too many blind shots, where natural advantages have not been turned to the best possible account; at Easthampton, where, for two holes, you actually find yourself among real seaside sand dunes (unhappily this blessed dispensation does not last); on the National Links, of which I have already noted my high appreciation; at Baltusrol, very tree-y and very hilly, but a good, interesting course, and others too many to name.

[Pg 222] Their witness suffices. It suffices to show the zeal and kindness of your American hosts in taking you vast distances to play on many courses. It shows the vengeance that golf has taken on them for that comment on it of a quarter of a century ago when I exhibited to them some feeble sample of it and they said that it might do "for Sundays." There are men in America now who will play golf even on a week-day. In fact golf is, with many, the real interest of their lives. They do a bit of work, no doubt, urged by the painful necessity of earning a livelihood, but there are many whom their work does not grip. A quarter of a century ago the business men of New York talked dollars: to-day they talk golf. It is a very sanitary change. And not only will they talk golf, but they will spend money on it. The care that they take of their putting greens would hardly be credited, without being seen. It is not enough for them that the turf shall all be of grass, with no blend of weeds: it is demanded that it shall be all of one variety of grass, and that variety the finest. The National Golf Links has not only every green watered; it is watered all through the green, from extensive sprinklers kept going all night long in the dry weather. [Pg 223]

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE END OF THE ROUND

I did not see the finish of the amateur championship of 1905 when Gordon Barry beat Osmond Scott, but I understand what the moral of that match was—that indiarubber handles are not good things for a soaking wet day. We have had one or two terrible soakers for the finish of the amateur championship, and for the open championship too, in the last few years. The worst that ever I saw was that in which Johnny Ball beat Palmer in 1907 at St. Andrews. Almost the whole links was water-logged, it had been raining during most of the week. Johnny Laidlay prophesied that the man who would win the championship would be the man that had most changes of clothes, for one got wet through every round. I do not know how many changes Johnny Ball had, but I do know that he looked dead beat both in the semi-final and in the anti-penultimate heats, and that anybody else would have been beaten. It was only his wonderful match-play ability that took him through. He was not playing at all well, in spite of his win. In the final it never looked for a moment as if he could fail to win, and his greater power, in weather like that, gave Palmer,

who was his opponent, mighty little chance with him. After that, to commemorate his sixth amateur championship, the Royal and Ancient Club did itself honour by electing him an honorary member. But he was far from having finished with the championship even then; and I much doubt whether he has finished even now. [Pg 224]

One of the interesting features of recent golfing story is the rise of fine players of the working-men class in England, as well as in Scotland, and at Ashdown Forest, where I lived for some years, the Cantelupe Club, and especially the great golfing family of Mitchell, has become famous. They became famous even before one of the family, Abe, rather took a big share of fame to himself. I had a cousin, Tom Mitchell, in my garden, who was nearly as good as Abe, and when I had a golfing guest staying with me and did not want to play golf myself, I used to say, "There's a boy in the garden will give you something of a game, if you do not mind playing with him." That guest always came back from his game in a very chastened frame of mind. Abe Mitchell chiefly made good his name by fine play in the amateur championship, and most of all in that of 1912, when the tournament was played for the first time at Westward Ho! That is the last of its kind that I attended, and I had to go to that because it was on my own old home course. I drew Denys Scott to start with, and I am afraid neither of us played very faultless golf. But he redeemed the match by some very fine runs up with his aluminium putter, and beat me.

One of the episodes of the match was that the poor "Old Mole" came out to watch it, bringing with him a small pack of whippet dogs which danced about us as we played, to the exasperation of tried nerves. I have already paid due honour to the great work that he did in early days for English golf, and it is only while these pages were in course of writing that his death happened, where so much of his life had been passed, at Westward Ho! [Pg 225]

Johnny Ball won his eighth championship at this Westward Ho! meeting, and his final opponent was Abe Mitchell. I was referee and saw the whole of that match. Johnny had only escaped by the skin of his teeth, and by his imperturbable match-playing ability, from the hands of Mr. Bond, in an earlier heat. Mr. Bond had been five up, no less, and eight to play. And then he drank a bottle of ginger-beer, and never did a hole in the right number afterwards. But it is all to Johnny Ball's credit, and just like him, that even when his fortunes were thus apparently desperate he never did despair. He, for his part, went on doing the holes in the right number (which was more than he had done on the way out, when he lost five holes), and won at the nineteenth after a halved round.

Abe Mitchell was not hitting the ball at his hardest in the match with Johnny, but both played well. In the afternoon it came on to pelt with rain, which suited Johnny, but Abe did not mind it either. The match stood all square with three to play and Abe laid Johnny what looked like a very dead stymie at the sixteenth, but Johnny somehow got round it. Abe won the seventeenth, thus making himself dormy, and both were on the last green with two shots each. Johnny holed out in two putts, Abe just failed to do so. Then they halved the thirty-seventh hole—not with quite blameless golf on either side—and at the thirty-eighth Abe topped his tee shot heavily, and that was the end of it.

I regret to say that I did not go to Muirfield in 1909; for they had one of the finest finishes there of any championship. Cecil Hutchison was a hole up and two to play in the final against Bobby Maxwell: he did the last two holes in four and five, and the last on that day was very hard to reach in two. We may almost say that he did both in the right number. Yet he lost both, and therewith the championship, to Bobby, who did them in three and four. The three was scarcely human. [Pg 226]

It is not very easy to find a man who, all through his golfing time, has delighted more in the storms and the rain than Johnny Ball, but I believe there is one—that same who came as a little flaxen-haired boy to our house at Northam—J.H. Taylor. He is open champion, for the fifth time, as I write, and he won that championship at Hoylake in weather as villainous, especially on the second day, as any that has generally been served out to us for the finals of the amateur championship. One cannot say worse of it. He had a stroke or so in hand, of the whole of his field, at the start of that second day, but the curious thing is that when the rest of the professors saw what kind of day it was, they never doubted that Taylor would win. He has a mastery over the ball in these circumstances, both in the drive and in his low and heavily cut approaches, that none other can rival—not even Vardon nor Braid themselves.

In respect of these more recent years I find that my reminiscences begin to deal more and more with things I have seen and less with things I have done—which is as much as to say that they must begin to lose the vivid personal touch. In 1908 the Royal and Ancient Club did me the high honour to elect me, first of Englishmen, as their Captain. As one of my wife's relations was good enough to say—"I'm glad they've made Horace that—it will look so well in his obituary notice." So it will; but I hope not yet. I had great ambitions to win the medal on the day that I struck off the ball whereby I played myself in as Captain, but though I contrived to hit that ball, and actually to hit it into the air, I was not well enough to take part in the medal play. In the winter of 1909 a little party of us—Tony Fairlie, Charles Hutchings and myself had been at Westward Ho! I had not seen the course for seven years, and it struck us all, with one accord, as the finest thing in golf (did we make reservation in St. Andrews' favour? I hardly think so) that we had ever seen. And during that visit I had played better than I had played for years and years before. I was in great delight and really had visions of a renewed youth and of having "got it back." And then returning home, I caught the worst go of influenza that I ever have had, which is a great deal to say, and never played golf properly again. [Pg 227]

At the moment of writing it is most unlikely, according to all the doctors say, that I shall ever play, properly or improperly, again; but it would not do for me to grumble. I have had a very full and pleasant golfing day—much interrupted, it is true, by illness, but still as extensive as a reasonable man could ask. And if all active part in the game is to be denied in the future, at all events I can still take interest undiminished in the work and play of others. Golf is not only the best of games to play: it is also, in many respects, the best to look on at. You cannot sit still, it is true, in the comfort of the pavilion, nor are aeroplanes as yet fitted with silencers so efficient that a match can be watched from them without discomposure of the golfer's nerves, but in the very fact that you must walk, and even run, if you are to see much of the game—such a meteor as Duncan is not to be caught without much sprinting—there are compensations. Watching a modern golf match means a good deal of healthful exercise and produces a more hearty appetite than sitting in the pavilion at Lords. As for the rival merits of the games, I need not raise so vexatious a question now at the very finish of the long round which the reader may have been patient enough to endure with me. Let it suffice to say that, whatever other games may be, golf is good enough. If golf, taken sanely and considered in all its various aspects, fails to satisfy us, we must be hard to please; and I will ask you to note, as one of the aspects worth considering, the very striking growth of the game in favour during the half-century over which this record runs. [Pg 228]

So the last stroke is played.

Or is it, of a certainty, the last stroke after all?

That is a question which at once is raised—not fancifully, but in all seriousness—if we are to place any credence whatever on such revelations as, for instance, Sir Oliver Lodge gives us in *Raymond*, as we have in *Claud's Book*—Claud actually states that he has been golfing—or as Sir Conan Doyle strenuously affirms to be proven true to his satisfaction. If any one of these even so much as approximate to the fact, in regard to that world to which we go after death, it must then be evident that it is a world so like that in which we live and labour and play golf for our relaxation now, that it is impossible but to think that there must be something of the nature of the same pastime in that "beyond." Such revelations, if we attach value to them at all, inevitably carry the inference that we shall there find golf, together with other conditions not widely different from those that we have known on earth—not any "fancy" golf on illimitable Elysian Fields, with never a bad lie on the whole immense, monotonous expanse, but real golf, difficult golf, golf with bunkers and all incidental troubles to be overcome—not without vexation of spirit —golf in which (for we cannot presume an infinity of halved matches), one or other player will be beaten. [Pg 229]

So it may be. It needs at least equal boldness to deny it as to affirm it. And, if it be so, arises then the further question: "Will those who are champions now, be champions then? Are we to carry on, into that beyond, any portion of the skill acquired so painfully here below? Will Harry Vardon still be, golfily speaking, Harry Vardon there?"

It scarcely seems an equitable prospect. Have we not more reason, and even some high authority, to suppose that the blessed law of compensation will be in operation: that the first here will be the last there, and the eighteen-handicap man, now the scratch player, or better, of that bright future?

This is the vision splendid, for the many—on which they may gratefully close the page.

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