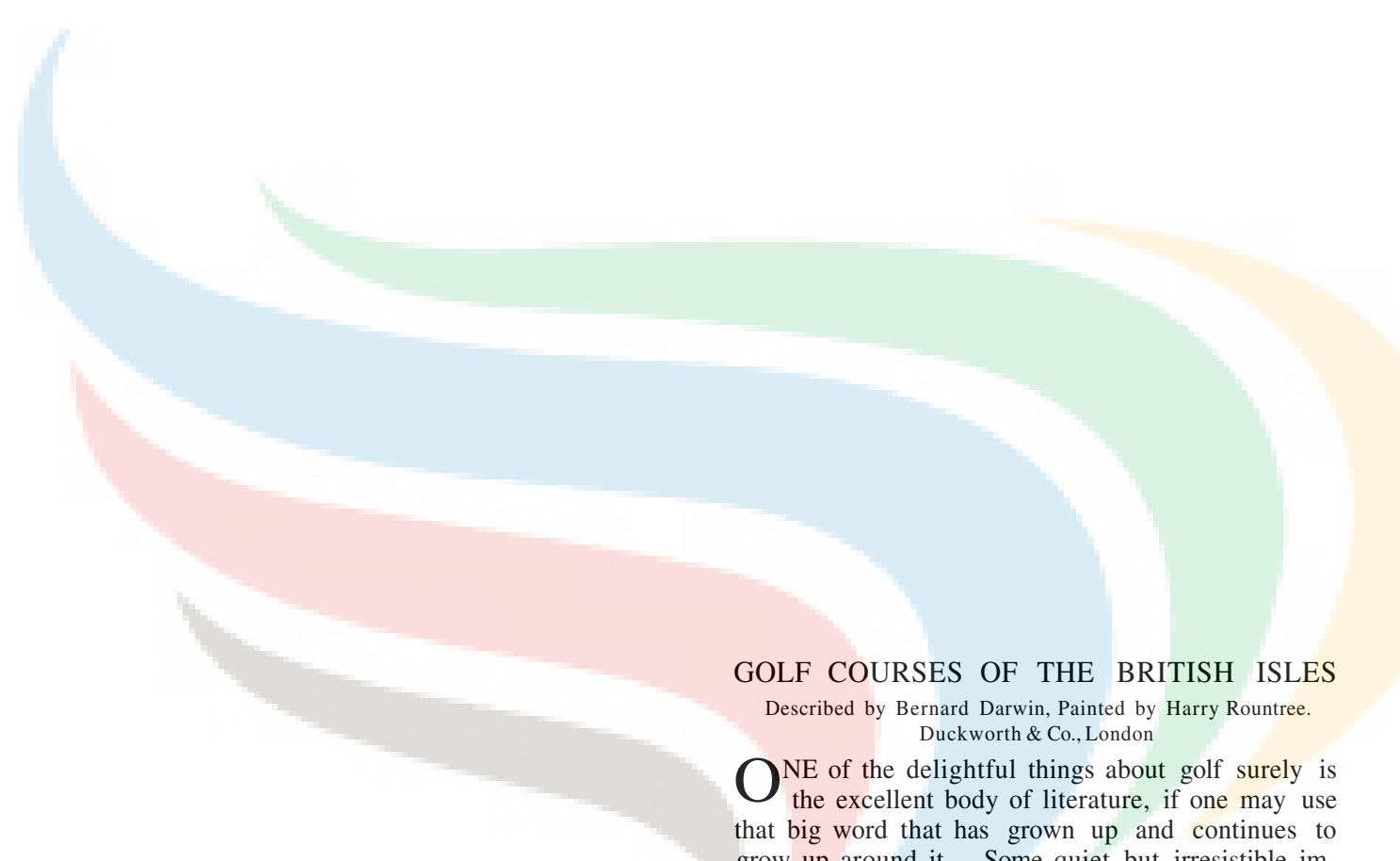




GOLF COURSES OF THE BRITISH ISLES

Described by Bernard Darwin, Painted by Harry Rountree.
Duckworth & Co., London

ONE of the delightful things about golf surely is the excellent body of literature, if one may use that big word that has grown up and continues to grow up around it. Some quiet but irresistible impulse seems to rest upon its votaries urging them either to write of its pleasures or to read what others have written. What other game, indeed, has its magazines in such number, so many manuals of instruction, so many learned books by great professors of the game, such an array of amateur essayists and letter writers; what other game has so many readers.

This writing and reading about golf is one of the conspicuous proofs of its undying charm. To analyze that charm may seem like pulling a rose to pieces to discover the secret source of its perfume but is not really so elusive as that. The charm of golf must be chiefly due to the ample fields, truly spacious and Elysian, upon which the golfer plays. No pent-up Utica confines his powers. He traverses broad acres of the green earth rejoicing in the fact that he cannot see the end of them from their beginning. He has escaped from macadam and asphalt and from the madding crowd. Unlike the votary of other sports he is not circumscribed by the narrow plot of ground that

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contains your crease, or diamond or goal-posts with their attendant throngs. Every sally-forth has the joy of an exploration. If the links be wellknown there is the pleasure of repeating this stroke or that; beating the Colonel here, equalling him there; surmounting this or that well-known hazard; enduring chastisement like a good soldier in still another. If the course be new then is the zest of the explorer even keener, for the professional or scratch man never sets out over new ground without thinking he may equal or break the record; and every barrier of a bunker but gives joy to his skill. Different pleasures are those of the less masterful golfer, but he is greatly content to test and explore the new pastures, that look so invitingly.

It must have been some such feelings as these that led Mr. Bernard Darwin to write and many readers, we hope, to purchase the sumptuous and large octavo *The Golf Courses of the British Isles* which came to us with the Christmas greetings of a well-wisher. Mr. Darwin has the pen of a ready writer and could be an unsparing if always genial critic upon occasion, but as he takes us up and down the links and courses of Great Britain and Ireland, plays each one with us, telling us with the politest consideration of the hazards to be avoided and how virtue may have its sure reward, it is remarkable that his commentaries breathe always the spirit of a deep-seated joy and a supreme content. "I never yet have seen an ugly or uninteresting golf-links," remarked an enthusiast once. Such seems to have been Mr. Darwin's happy experience; Mr. Harry Rountree is the cheerful collaborator of the textual writer, contributing three score or more illustrative gems of water-colors exquisitely reproduced. Of these some prosaic person—let us not call him golfer—may possibly say looking with lack-lustre eye upon the brown hollows of the twelfth green at St. Andrews or the vivid green of Mid-Surrey or Woking, "I have seen St. Andrews and Woking but never like that." To such a one let us, as gently as possible, say in the great Turner's words: "Don't you wish you could."

Mention of Woking reminds us of a pleasant passage in Mr. Darwin's book. It seems that a Mr. Stuart Paton had persuaded the rulers of the club to place a small but formidable bunker at the range of a good tee-shot at the fourth hole in the very center of the fair-way. If we played to the left you had a pitching shot to play, if to the right a running up shot. As might be expected there was much discussion as to the merits of this bit of architecture, and the discussion, says Mr. Darwin, usually took this form:

A. "You can't persuade me that it is right to have a bunker bang on the line to the hole, exactly where a good drive should be."

B. "If there is a bunker there, then that cannot be the line to the hole. Your drive

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was not a very good one, but a very bad one."

A. "It was not a bad one. It was a perfect shot—hit in the very middle of the club."

B. "You should use your own head as well as the club head."

After this the conversation becomes unfit for publication.

Golfers will assuredly not skim too quickly over the delightful description of Sandwich, the scene of last year's championship and of the historic one of 1904. "Sandwich," says Mr. Darwin, "has a charm that belongs to itself, and I frankly own myself under the spell. The long strip of turf on the way to the seventh hole, that stretches between the sand-hills and the sea; a fine spring day, with the larks singing as they seem to sing nowhere else; the sun shining on the waters of Pegwell Bay and lighting up the white cliffs in the distance;—this is as nearly my idea of heaven as is to be attained on any earthly links. Of course, Sandwich is capable of improvement, and will doubtless be improved; whatever happens, the larks will continue to twitter, the sun will be shining on Pegwell Bay; the charm can never be gone."

What Mr. Darwin and Mr. Rountree have done for the golfcourses of the British Isles remains to be done with pen and brush for Canada and America. It will not be easy however, to weave the spell or compare the glamour as these two have done in the delightful pages before us.

R. STANLEY WEIR