

## MR. H. H. HILTON, AN APPRECIATION

Some seven or eight years ago Mr. Hilton wrote an entertaining volume of "Recollections" in which he recounted many golfing battles of the past with modest mention and particulars of one open and two amateur championships then to his credit. Perhaps it was the autobiographical style of the book, or the long interval since his last blue ribbon, or his defeat by Mr. Travis, when that player leisurely defeated all and sundry in 1904, that gave the reader the impression that Mr. Hilton had seen his best days and was rather regretfully recording memories of them. Even the last chapter had, too modestly, the air of "Finis" about it. But it now appears that more interesting chapters than any that "Recollections" contains remain to be written.

Only two seasons ago Hilton rather astonished the world not only by winning his third British amateur championship but by coming within an ace of winning the great Open event as well. The disaster that insisted upon a five for bogey three in the latter contest must have broken many a night's sleep afterwards. Adding to these marks of prowess the capture of the American amateur event, Mr. Hilton made it abundantly clear that his hand has regained its old cunning. Now comes another triumph; with no doubtful hand, therefore we must set Harold Hilton down as among the really great golfers of all time.

It was the writer's fortune, to watch Mr. Hilton play at Dixie, Montreal, in the summer of 1912. A good deal had been said of his remarkable follow-through, amounting, according to general description, to an actual follow-on of the body in his big stroke. Everywhere one heard, "How he puts his body into it!" At the finish, twice out of thrice, his cap would be sure to fall off his head and this seemed proof of body-action.

Now it struck me, as I studied his style, that although there was in the

full strokes a fine, free follow-through with the arms, there was a decided *absence* of follow-through with the body. The marked feature of the drive was really the keeping of the head still. This stillness was maintained even after the ball was swept away, the result being that head and body received something of a shock as the arms swept through. Had the body followed through ever so little, the hat would probably have remained on the owner's head. The body turned and re-turned freely upon its axis but did not follow on. It was arm-play with a purely accommodating body-turn.

Another noticeable feature of Mr. Hilton's play was his delicate use of the right fingers at the top of the swing. This too, meant an accommodation to the circularity of swing demanded by the left hand. Where his friend Mr. John Ball would use the thumb-web of the right hand, Mr. Hilton uses forefinger and thumb, the result, in each case, being a smooth round swing which a rigid full right-hand grip prevents or makes most difficult.

I also observed that in his iron play Mr. Hilton frequently used the descending blow, but he knew when to use the upward stroke as well. His stance, inclined to be fairly wide and slightly open, was most remarkable for its exceedingly comfortable looking crouch. Some pedagogues are for standing up as straight as possible. There is a happier mean of humility of which Mr. Hilton has the secret. There is no player who holds his body at a better angle than the Hoylake player.

Finally, Mr. Hilton is a conspicuously brainy golfer, a constant student of form, of style, of winds and turf and all that can concern a golfer. Below the middle height, of only average bodily power, he is a convincing and encouraging proof that golf is chiefly a game of calculated skill. Most cordially do we offer our warmest congratulations to him as a four-times-crowned champion. Further laurels, doubtless, await him.

R. S. WEIR.