

IN THE LIBRARY

Golf (Badminton Library): Longmans, Green & Co.

By R. STANLEY WEIR

BRAVE men lived before Agamemnon, and there were books on golf before the Badminton volume issued in the year of grace 1890, but it remained for that volume, we think, to attain a distinction, authority and popularity that were unique. In three months a fresh reprint was called for, and within the year still another. In January 1895 appeared a new edition thoroughly revised and with additions; in April 1898 still another; doubtless there have been even others equally gratifying to the distinguished author Horace G. Hutchinson of fame coextensive with the world of golf and to Messrs. Longmans Green & Co. of Paternoster Row.

The book is only one of a series in what is known as the Badminton Library edited by His Grace the Duke of Beaufort, K. G., and embracing such sports as Archery, Big Game Shooting, Billiards, Boating, Cricket, Dancing, Driving, Fencing, Fishing until in due alphabetical order we come to Golf. It is related of one enthusiastic devotee of St. Andrews who gave his days to golf and his nights to dreams of golf, that, becoming fascinated with Mr. Hutchinson's book, he longed, after many perusals, for more of the same sort. Chancing upon the printed list of sports that His Grace was editing he came across "Driving" by the noble Duke himself with "65 Illustrations. Crown 8vo. 10s. 6d." In lively anticipation of a great treat and of, at the same time, improving his long game he lost no time in ordering the book. Great was his disappointment and chagrin not to say disgust on finding that by "Driving" the Duke of

Beaufort meant not the despatch of golf-balls far and sure, but the direction of equine quadrupeds along the roads and highways of Britain, with much instruction about whips and reins, tandems and tally-hos and goodness knows what.

The greatest part of the Badminton book on golf proceeds from the pen of Mr. Horace G. Hutchinson whose facile, good-humored style fits the genius of the game so well. But there are other contributors who have, besides, achieved fame in other fields: Andrew Lang and A. J. Balfour for example. Mr. Balfour writes on *The Humors of Golf* of which more, perhaps, anon; while Andrew Lang, now, alas, with the majority, gives us in the opening chapter a discursus on *The History of Golf*. Here we have the well known etymologies of the word "golf" with German, Dutch and Celtic theories as to the real origin of the word. But these may pass. It is because golf is a modern not because it is an ancient game that it absorbs us.

But Mr. Lang has preserved for us in his "history" a quaint article which he credits to the *Philadelphia Times* of Sunday, February 24, 1889, an article that might even more appropriately have found room in Mr. Balfour's contribution. We are grateful to Mr. Lang for it and will quote a few delicious morsels for the richly deserved punishment of a writer who, happily for himself, is anonymous.

"Up to this time", says the writer in the city of brotherly love, "golf has made little way in the United States. It is occasionally played in Canada. It is a

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game that demands at once the utmost physical development upon the part of the player as well as a considerable amount of skill, and it arouses the interest only of those who go into sports for the love of action."

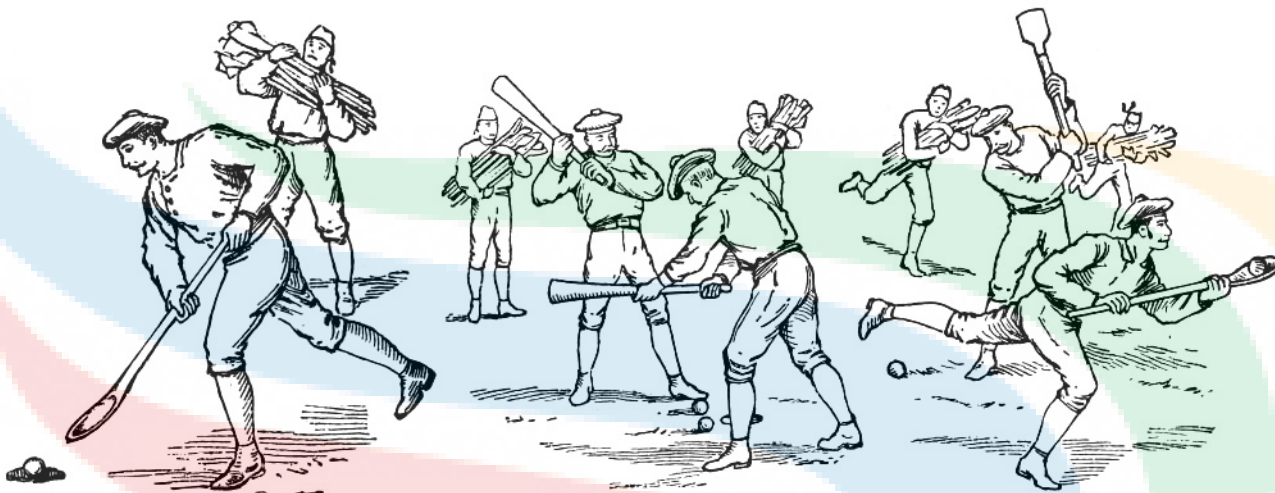
This latter sentence is rather vague and platitudinous and unpromising; but the writer does not delay to brighten and heighten his style as follows:

No man should attempt to play golf *who has not good legs to run with* and good arms to throw with, as well as a modicum of brain power to direct his play. It is also, by the nature of the game itself, a most aristocratic exercise, for no man can play at golf who has not a servant at command to assist him. It is

We offer no apology for reproducing further paragraphic gems from this bit of golfic fiction nor for emphasizing by italics some of the more striking scintillations.

There are eleven implements of the game, the most important of which is the ball. This is made of gutta-percha and is painted white. It weighs about two ounces and is just small enough to *fit comfortably into the holes* dug into the ground. *Still it should not be so large that it cannot be taken out with ease.* The other ten implements are the tools of the players.

Truly as Mr. Lang remarks: "This astonishing nonsense about a familiar game may, perhaps, suggest



THE SPOON

WAITING FOR THE WORD

PLAYING TOGETHER

These illustrations are from an article on golf which appeared in the Sunday edition of *The Philadelphia Times* of February 24, 1888.

probable that no sport exists in the world to-day or ever did exist in which the services of a paid assistant are so essential as in this national game of Scotland. The truth is that the servant is as essential to the success of the game as the player himself.

If all this be true how grossly golfers innumerable have erred in despising and, even loudly and alas at times profanely, deriding the humble caddie or servant as essential to the game as the player himself!

Golf architects will be interested in the following:

To play golf properly there is needed a very large expanse of uncultivated soil not too much broken up by hills. A few knolls and gulleys more or less really assist to make the game more interesting. Having selected a field, the first thing necessary is to dig a small hole, *perhaps one foot or two feet deep* and about four inches in diameter. Beginning with this hole a circle is devised that includes substantially the whole of the links. About once in 500 yards of this circle another hole is dug. If the grounds selected cannot include so large a circle as this, the holes may be put at as short a distance as 100 yards from each other; but the best game is played when the field is large enough to include holes at a distance of 500 yards apart. The game then may be played by two or four persons. If by four, two of them must be upon the same side.

distrust of the accounts which travelers give of savage religions!"

There are books on golf which are as cold and passionless as Euclid; nay more so, for Euclid frequently stirs us by exposing sophisms curtly, and with a touch of temper, dismissing them as "absurd." Those books of golf which give us rules without fervor, warnings without solicitude and injunctions without trace of any kind of sentiment may be disregarded as of small value. For golf is a game of emotion and thrills. The writer who discourses about the drive without betraying consciousness of the enormous hope and fear, joy and disappointment coiled up in the player's wistful heart fails wofully as a preceptor. Neither trusty guide, philosopher or friend is he who writes about putting, for instance, as if it were as emotionless a task as wielding a yardstick at a Kidderminster house. Your true golf instructor writes or talks with an enlightened sympathy; he knows that it is the least mechanical of games; that it is an intensely human occupation-replete with emotion born of the fear of failure, the anticipation of glad success, the struggle to control throbbing nerves, the manhood that must control

all this sentiment nor give it expression save at the cost of self-humiliation.

It is the unique merit of the Badminton book on golf that it breathes throughout the air of a genial and sympathetic sentiment. One feels that it is written, to use a word now seldom spoken, by gentlemen; not those of stiff and stilted order but by those endowed with bonhomie. The fine, free spirit of golf pervades the book from cover to cover. One can



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feel, as he reads, the sea-breeze blowing, can see the long stretches of unmown seaside meadows yclept links, can become familiar with whins, gorse and heather and hear the whaups and curlews crying. North Berwick and St. Andrews, Prestwick and Hoylake even if he have never beheld them with outward eye become well-known to the reader, and so Mid-Surrey and Sunningdale, Westward Ho and Deal, Sandwich, too, with its Pegwell Bay of which Mr. Darwin so lovingly writes: "Where the larks sing as they seem to sing nowhere else."

And in the Badminton book, too, he may become familiar with the young heroes of golf and behold their portraits as in the flesh they looked twenty and five and twenty years ago—not without a little pang of pathos as he observes how relentless time works his changes upon Vardons, Braids, Taylors and Herds—as they pass from youth to manhood and forecast their old age.

The Badminton writers pay their constant and cordial homage to the interpreters of the game and their genius poor Freddie Tait has here his record, and Harold Hilton his prophet. The names of Ball, Laidlay, Balfour-Melville, Mure Ferguson and their compeers are here enshrined. We read of admirable and admired players who have passed on, Henry Lamb, A. F. Macfie and Dr. Allan of brilliant memory. Among the professionals there are regretful touches

about poor Tommy Morris who passed before his prime, and there are records of pre-Agamemnon heroes such as Allan Robertson, Jamie Anderson and Bob Kirk and echoes of the days when the Dunns and Parks, Straths and Fergusons were giants. One of the quaint features of the Badminton book is the illustrations. There are witty and pretty vignettes by a clever artist, T. Hodge by name, and humorous cuts by Harry Furniss one of *Punch's* best known artists in his day. But if we were not assured that the cuts which illustrate the drive "as it should be" at the top of the swing and at the finish of the swing were reproduced by one E. L. Shute from photographs we should be tempted to regard them as caricatures. Let the reader of these lines judge for himself. Mr. Horace Hutchinson whose style of play these illustrations depict is a golfer of undoubted merit, but he is probably the last man whom the player of to-day would select for imitation if the pictures of him are true. Yet who knows whether this crisp, compact, restrained methods for which J. H. Taylor is, perhaps, chiefly responsible may not some day yield place to the loose and free Hutchinsonian style. The editor of Badminton will forgive us if we cannot look on these pictures without amusement, yet who would wish to change them?

When we come to examine Mr. Hutchinson's theory of golf and his instructions to aspirants, the theory which was dominant almost a generation ago, we shall be inclined to file exceptions, demurrers and caveats. With the practice of Taylor and practically all moderns in mind we shall strongly object and feel tempted even to deride that much elevated right elbow. How not to do it we shall say of it. And really one cannot but marvel at that exuberant style and extol the natural talent of the golfer who, in spite of it, as we must think, won two Amateur Championships and was runner-up in a third or more.

Still another error, as most moderns think (but not Aleck Herd, Alec. Smith and other eminent Scottish artists), glares at us in the following counsel:

"Now, when the club, in the course of its swing away from the ball, is beginning to rise from the ground, and is reaching the horizontal with its head pointing to the player's right, it should be allowed to turn naturally in the right hand until it is resting upon the web between the fore-finger and the thumb."

The modern practice is against this; and yet, as experiment will show, there is no easier or surer way of getting both hands well under the shaft at the top of the swing. Another little heresy (some would call it great) is the counsel to swing the arms well away from the body in the backward swing and to continue them in the line of flight as long as possible. As to the latter part of this advice no preceptor would to-day, take exception, although he would probably incline to utter the warning—not longer than is possible; but as to the first part he would say: No,

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rather take the club round the legs or body. Taylor, indeed, conceives the swing in both sections as a round-the-body affair.

The Badminton analysis of iron play, however, may be accepted as fundamentally sound and valuable; it is perhaps the most trustworthy of all its technical instruction but need not be repeated here.

Golf after all is, like religion, a personal matter and every player must work out his own salvation. That salvation is not to be accomplished by a study of rules and methods as we find them recorded in books. It is accomplished by drinking deeply (let not the figure be basely misconstrued by any depraved person) of the spirit of golf, that broods over unpent Uticas, green fields, velvet greens, hazards of various description, well-disguised antagonisms, clubs new and old, fellowships well cemented or newly formed,

the professional's workshop with its shining new clubs, the competitions for cups, the big tournaments, the Amateur and Open Championships.

It would be well worth while to cite the wisdom of Sir Walter Simpson, friend of Robert Louis Stevenson or the pleasantries of a one time Premier of Britain who both contribute chapters to the book before us. Equally entertaining to your true golfer would it be to cull from this splendid chapter on *Some Celebrated Golfers* by H. S. C. Everard whose own book on the game is one of the brightest and best.

Let me but add as a final word that no golfer can claim to a finished education in his art and pastime who has not read golf in the Badminton Library many times—nay the true education of such a one has yet to begin. There is no other book from which the fine spirit of golf can be so well absorbed.