

J. H. TAYLOR: AN APPRECIATION

BY HON. R. S. WEIR

The great victory of the famous Mid-Surrey professional is immensely popular. It was due. Vardon and Braid, the other members of the famous Triumvirate, had each won the great event five times. It was clearly Taylor's turn. But could he rise to the great occasion? He has done so and proved beyond cavil that he is on a level with the very highest and possibly now a notch or two higher. For has he not to his credit eight open championships—the five British, two French and one German? Add points to this record for the times he has been runner-up and it will be found that he is the Caesar of the Triumvirate.

The victory will be popular for another reason. Taylor is very human. He has not the imperturbability of Braid or the sangfroid of Vardon. He bears misfortune, bravely and manfully, but not with equanimity. He suffers when things go wrong and does not pretend to conceal chagrin; and he is as happy as a boy when his golfing virtues have their reward.

The game of golf owes much to John Henry Taylor. He was the first of the Big Three to write a book; and it is clear that every chapter was his own. He is the great exemplar of the flat swing; for Braid and Vardon demonstrate the vertical style. He has analyzed and popularized the mashie as no one else has done. He has given us the clearest and simplest explanation of such mysteries as the push, the pull, the slice and the run-up. His conception of proper niblick play from sand is unique. His conception indeed of the swing in golf differs radically from any other authoritative exposition that can be read; although it has been rather ignored by many who have accordingly suffered. What is Taylor's idea of the swing? It is that of a swing, not up

and down the line of flight, but round the body. Imagine a good-sized hoop slightly above your shoulders (not your neck), the other end touching the ground where the ball lies, and you will roughly visualize the Taylor swing. It is not an ellipse but a circle. The swing itself is short, crisp, compact. The body is kept out of it, or is only secondarily contributive.

The Taylor style has been criticized because certain portraits show the finish of a full swing with hands tucked in, as Mr. B. Darwin says, "in playful exaggeration," somewhere close to the pit of his stomach. But the great pro does not play all his tee-shots after this fashion. With an adverse wind he will play you a downward blow off the right, probably giving the right hand the command, and finishing in an apparently restricted manner. This is the explanation of the breast-pocket or pit-of-the-stomach snap-shots which the casual reader has seen. But under normal conditions his style is perfectly orthodox. The flat-swingers of the land are probably a minority; they will, accordingly, add a little extra fervor to their congratulations. Like Mr. Hilton, Taylor has come back. He has proved again the soundness of his style with its round-the-body swing, his crisp mashie work with almost automatic cut, his delicate putting off the left foot, with squared elbow. A writer in *The New Book of Golf* says of him: "When Taylor won his first championship at Sandwich his driving was so accurate that no hazards existed for him except the guide-flags, at least one of which he is said to have struck. He is without exception the most machine-like and accurate player that has yet appeared." This is high praise indeed, but probably not undeserved. The opinion of Capt. C. K. Hutchison who wrote it has, in

view of the tremendous fight at Hoylake where the flower of Britain, France and America contended, received something like confirmation.

Mr. Harold H. Hilton has an interesting article in *Outing* for July on "Physique in Golf." The amateur champion of Britain is of opinion that Samsons or Goliaths would cut a poor figure at the royal and ancient game. They do not seem to be able to relax their abnormal muscles in taking the club up, and tightening them in the downward swing only. "If there is one set of muscles in the human frame which are of no use to man in the pursuit of the game of golf, they are those which act in relation to what is usually termed the biceps." An interesting illustration is given in the case of Taylor, the present open champion, who

is an exceptionally sturdy and strongly-built man and would be confidently picked by anybody as the owner of a muscular, well-developed biceps. Queried on the point the answer from Taylor himself came, "Soft as butter, sir; just like a child's." "The ideal combination for long driving is a pair of long, sinewy arms," says Mr. Hilton, "combined with long powerful hands and fingers." There is much virtue, too, it appears, in sloping shoulders. Harry Vardon and George Duncan, particularly the former, are ideally built for golf, and a case for the man of comparatively light physique is made out by instancing Messrs. Walter Travis, Jerome D. Travers, Chick Evans and MacDermott of America. The article is one of Mr. Hilton's most interesting contributions to recent golfing gossip.

OUR BOSTON LETTER

By J. G. ANDERSON

MASSACHUSETTS golf met with a two-fold loss last month in the deaths of Ralph Cracknell, for years official handicapper of the M. G. A., and Charles D. Sias. The former was golf editor of *The Boston Globe* and one of the foremost sporting authorities in America. He had been ill eight weeks. Valvular heart trouble was the primary cause of death.

Mr. Cracknell had been with the *Globe* since 1893. He was born in London, England, May 27, 1863, and came to the United States in 1884. His newspaper career began in 1889 when he became news editor on the night staff of a Boston paper. Later he became the golf editor of *The Globe*, and was recognized all over America and in many circles in Great Britain as an authoritative and acutely intelligent writer on that sport.

Ralph Cracknell, so his associates said and wrote of him but recently, was a fine type of English-American manhood, big physically and big mentally, square and upright in his dealings with all men. Those who knew him most intimately feel most deeply his loss. He was extremely frank and outspoken, but he never with malice aforethought said anything which he knew would injure. He was a lover of all kinds of sport. Himself a splendid cricketer, he deplored the decline of that game in the Boston neighborhood, but the rise of golf in this country gave him a fresh outlet for his love and appreciation of a manly game. When golf was in its infancy here, Mr. Cracknell was one of its foremost exponents, his most notable achievement being the defeat in the state championship of Mr. Arthur G. Lockwood, at that time without a golf-