

Americans Are Rapidly Becoming Golf Enthusiasts

...O the onlooker unaccustomed with the game golf presents itself most strongly in the light of a sort of athletic loggrip. To the devotee, it is a new enthusiasm in life, born of a novel and compelling interest.

Those of the former class are at an utter loss to comprehend the animus or the fascination. Such a one said once that "golf is the placing of little balls in little holes in the most difficult manner possible." That was five years ago. The next year, influenced by the fact that his affianced was a lover of the game, this scoffer learned to play. Not a month ago he won one of the big championship events in this country.

But the definition given by the unbeliever was correct. It is difficult to imagine a much harder method of moving a small sphere some 400 yards and directing its course into a hole four inches in diameter than with the aid of long handled clubs with striking faces hardly as large as the ball itself. Of course, toothpicks might be used, but even they would prove a far easier tool for the beginner to handle.

It is perfectly true, also, that golf is an uninteresting game for any save those who understand it to watch. It is one of the few athletic diversions, in which one unversed in the subtle intricacies and difficulties can see no action, no verve, nothing worth while. Unless a spectator knows all about what he is witnessing, the game looks slow and uninteresting to him.

So it is a fact that no golfer ever took up the game because he was attracted to it as an onlooker, not in this country, at least. There is apparently too little "doing" to attract the American sportsman. Invite a base ball player or a tennis devotee out to the links to watch you go around once, and he will scoff at the whole thing. He will have no desire even to try it. Golf as a sport or a good game is to him a parade.

But once get a club into the hands of this same doubter, let him get his base

Inherent in all mankind is this love of the open air, and due to it is the popularity of outdoor sports. There is added to this in the city dweller a half-starved desire for the country for room, and lots of it. Golf outranks all games in that it feeds both appetites. You can play base ball with a high board fence around you and a brick building for a backstop, with heavy teams rumbling by on the paved streets. A tennis court can be outlined practically in any backyard. But not so golf. When the



FOYE DRIVING—SPECTATORS IN WAKE—Photo by Staff Artist.



NICHOLLS IN A BUNKER—Photo by Staff Artist.



NICHOLLS LOSES—Photo by Staff Artist.

ball eye trained on the ball, and happen by some chance to make one good stroke. He will watch the "gutter" sailing away through space, farther than he ever thought of knocking a base ball, and he will start off at a run across the meadows with that same club, determined to repeat the feat. The electric effect on strained nerves, tense muscles and intent mind of the first fair shot is indescribable. Relaxation, relief and the happiness of satisfaction surge through body and brain, and with them comes an unalterable ambition to continue the motion.

So that is how golf appeals to the man of other and more active games. He laughs it to scorn till he tries it, but having once tasted of its difficulties, he realizes that he has found a game which for demands on science, skill and steadiness surpasses all the rest, and he is an immediate convert.

However, there is another generation to account for. Half the golfers in the country today are men of 40 or over. They are not lured by fascinations of a possible future excellence, and for such they do not strive. They merely play easy, regular golf, and are nevertheless as fond of the game as the younger ones. Their devotion requires a different explanation. True, it is the only game they can play. Base ball and tennis would be far too violent. But it is not that. Their chief reason is the vital feature of it all. It is the thing that makes all golfers, good, bad and indifferent alike, swear by the game and remain faithful to it. It is the mere pleasure of being in God's out-of-doors.

city man leaves his desk and hies to the links he is really in the country, away from all sound of town, sometimes actually out of sight of any living human and every habitation. He is close to nature, and that is the need which of all others he feels most strongly, for it influences every department of his being, physical, mental and spiritual.

For him who lives all summer at his golf club, of course, this glamour wears away. He is there for the sport, and for none of its mere ideal concomitants. But the average player comes from town each time, where he eagerly awaits the coming of 3 o'clock, the hour that sets him free. He hurries to his club, exchanges the stiff and form fitting clothes of conventionality for those of perfect leisure and freedom and carelessness, puts on his shoes with rubber-spiked soles that never slip, grabs a bunch of golf clubs and a handful of balls and is off. As he swings away at the first tee he gets the first fresh breath of the day. When his arms go up with the stroke his lungs expand all they know and whether he makes a fizzle or a fancy shot he feels a real king as he chases off after his ball.

Generally considered an aristocratic and expensive game, the growth and spread of golf in this country, despite that fact, is most interesting. Though divers proofs have been offered to the contrary, it is probable that the sport is of Scotch origin. Englishmen insist that it began in their country, but the very words "caddy," "tee," "mashie" and others are redolent of Scotland.

Be that as it may, since golf was first played, when all clubs were wooden and the balls were horsehide, stuffed tight with feathers, its growth has been constant and far more rapid than its extreme expense at first would seem to warrant. Now the time when every golf player was a Scotchman and made his own clubs has passed and the game is becoming more and more general. Indeed, there are only a few of the old type left. You see them now and then in America, such as old Robert Braid and his brother Frank, which names stamped on the heads of golf clubs are proudly exhibited by the few amateurs who have grown sufficiently close to the little, long-whiskered, oddly-dressed, horny-handed Scotchmen to receive the hand-made sticks as a memento of their instructors.

Golf was originally a seashore game, played on the sands and among the dunes along the coast. But when it came to this country it was soon revolutionized, or rather Americanized. For a year or two all links were along the coast, but the Yankees were quick to discover that the inland country offered far more preferable localities. Hazards of a riskiness and difficulty that could never be duplicated on a beach were possible and a mere rolling country attainable. So the courses scattered inland and since that time ingenuity has been taxed to its utmost to make them what they should be in every particular.

American golfers are extremists. They are not satisfied to stop with what they learned from their foreign teachers, the Scotch. They carry things further. Hazards must be more difficult, bunkers more frequent and more perilous to the game. Play is harder and fiercer. That is why an American can become expert at golf in such a comparatively short time. On the course of the Country club at Baltimore is one hazard alone which cannot be duplicated in all Great Britain. Seventy-five yards from one tee is a stone aqueduct twenty feet high. That is an appalling proposition. Any drive failing to cover it (which is no easy feat) will strike it and drop to the ground close by, and then to loft the ball over almost straight up is a trick of great difficulty. There is every inducement to clear the aqueduct on the drive.

The spread of the game to the west has been sudden. It was not many years ago when people west of New York considered golf the unattainable, and now these people can play it in no matter what city of any size they chance to visit. Nebraska furnishes a good example of this growth. Three years ago there was not a golf club in the state. Now there are eight. And when it gets to such a pass that the small towns can support a golf course, who can cry "aristocrat" and say that it is not almost as much a game for the masses as tennis ever was?

A great point in favor of golf is that it does not take a lifetime to learn it, and that one can become proficient beginning at almost any time of life previous to the vane. A star base ball player is one who was in the game on the commons as a child and who followed it constantly through the public schools and perhaps college. No boy even as young as 15 years of age can begin then to play base ball and get good at the game. It takes a life time of application. The same is largely true of tennis, though to a less extent.

But any idea that a youth spent in caddying and subsequent life on the links is necessary for good golfing is an error. William Holabird, jr., of the Glenview club in Chicago is 17 years of age and has played two years. He is cham-

ion of his club and has won high honors in championship matches in both the east and west. Walter E. Egan, runner up in the recent national championship tournament won by Mr. Travis, is 20 years of age and has played but three years.

A striking example of what can be done with golf in a short time by vigorous application can be found in Omaha. W. J. Foye is not a youth, but is in the prime of life. Last year he began to play golf. He was constant to the game and practiced

fat-hfully. This year he qualified at Chicago in the Western amateur championship, being one of sixteen out of 109 entered to do so. Since then he, together with Harry Lawrie, played Bernard Nicholls of Boston an eighteen-hole match at the Country club. The two Omahans won, and Foye's individual score was only one down on that of the visitor. Nicholls, too, is one of the few men who have defeated Harry Vardon, champion of the world.

So golf is not an impossibility for anyone, as far as proficiency in the game goes. Perfect form is not resultant only upon twenty years spent on the links, as many of the so-called golf guide books would have people believe. Nor is the game so difficult to master. It is very hard at first, and naturally so. A tennis player has a square foot of stringing to lay against his ball. At least fifteen inches of a base ball player's bat will do the work for him. But in golf the striking face of the club is not more than an inch or two square, and all experts play bulgers, which means a curved face, so that there is just one point on that section of a sphere which must hit the ball in order to get the player direction and distance.

But nothing is stronger than the encouragement a golfer gets when it does come. It is the one game in which a player seems to "get the hang" all at once. After weeks and months of struggling after form and "eye" and numerous other essentials

he suddenly begins to hit the ball, and hit it right, and from that time on his improvement is marvellously rapid. Care and persistent practice are all that are necessary then.

A Tactful Retreat

Colonel Frank D. Baldwin, Fourth United States infantry, now serving in our island possessions in the far Pacific, and doing splendid service, too, tells in the Detroit Free Press a good story of a young Mormon girl's presence of mind.

Some few years ago, it will be recalled, Colonel Cody invited a number of foreign officers to visit him at his western ranch and go on a jaunt of a thousand miles in the saddle through the wonderland of the border.

Among those who accepted the invitation were, then Colonel, now General McKinnon and Major Sir St. John Midway of the British Grenadier guards.

Colonel Baldwin, above referred to, was the escort sent by General Miles to the foreign officers.

It was when nearing the end of the thousand miles' trail and at a pretty Mormon village in Utah, that a dance was given to Colonel Cody and his guests.

Pretty girls galore were there in the school house, where the dance was held, and the beaux were the members of the Cody party, from the chief and his honored guests to the "horse wranglers" and a Mormon bishop.

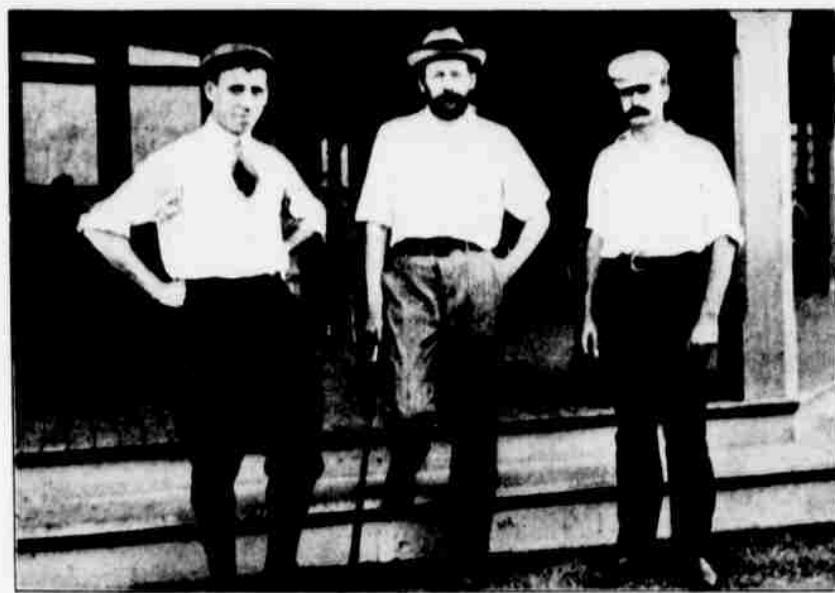
The music was a melodeon, accordion, bugle and violin, and it was playing with a vim that made the feet hustle, while the "corners were swung" in a way that caused the feminine dry goods to fly high.

"In one set," Colonel Baldwin said, "were Cody, the officers of the Grenadier guards, a Mormon president of a 'stake,' or county, a sedate elder and a cowboy."

"Sir St. John Midway was dancing with a pretty girl over near the door, while a few



FOYE AND LAWRIE WATCH NICHOLLS DRIVE—Photo by Staff Artist.



NICHOLLS, LAWRIE, FOYE—Photo by Staff Artist.



FOYE MAKES THE WINNING SHOT—Photo by Staff Artist.