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Of Course You've Heard of the Seagull Links and of Edgerley Moore. He's the Golfer Who--But That Would Be Revealing the Secret!

I CANNOT tell the story of Edgerley Moore without telling also the story of our golf club, for one is complementary to the other. The Seagull links is only five years old, yet it has become after a fashion famous, as has also Edgerley Moore, and their sporting immortalities go together. Times and fashions change, but the royal and ancient game has reached a point, I suppose, where it changes not.

A hundred years from now people will doubtless be playing it with the same implements, the same rules, the same profanity, the same alternating currents of triumph and self-pity. And a hundred years from now some resident of Case Harbor, tooling a house guest over to the links in his molecular power monoplane runabout, will remark as he drops it vertically to the landing plane behind the club house where we now park our gasoline power automobiles:

"Sporty little links—all natural hazards. Here's where Edgerley Moore was developed. You've heard

all at once, do we? Bonds and loans and assessments and things—we'll scarcely notice them."

I wasn't really enthusiastic then. But I'd found by experience that it was no use opposing Madge Bavin in her creative and executive mood. Too often I'd tried that and seen the measure which I had discouraged in the beginning turn out an unqualified success. "If the rest are willing to plunge, I am," I said at the end of the chapter. Mrs. Bavin, I learned afterward, got a dozen others out to the Cowan place in the course of the next 10 days. All came to about the same terms with her efficiency as I had done—they would if the rest would. We held a meeting—and it was all done but the assessments. Another week and the architect was at work. By autumn we were playing on a rough fairway, with ground rules about lifting from holes and hoof marks; by the middle of the next season that fairway had begun to look really like a lawn. And our third hole, since famous, was attracting attention.

Then Mrs. Bavin seemed to feel that her chicken was grown up and needed no more brooding; she left us to struggle for ourselves, while she plunged into a community circus. But not before she had conducted a membership drive of her own. She, and Case Harbor in general, went at this matter of membership in characteristic fashion. Local traditions are curiously persistent. Now our town—away back in the 17th century, when it was just a row of log cabins in a howling wilderness, it was famous for its tolerance. It still is; neither the perma-

wanted to play, and that he owed it to the community. Moved by that argument, Mr. Moore joined and even promised to look in on the links some day.

It was a different matter with John B. Gillespie. In a more choosy community I doubt whether he would have been asked to join at all. He had blown into that town about a year before, built a new house, bright and varnished, over on the hills beyond the Cowan place, and started immediately to get himself solid with the town-people and with us. He was a bachelor—at least I never heard of any Mrs. Gillespie—and there arose scandalous whispers about some of his house parties.

Six months later his purpose was revealed. He had bought three old and nearly useless farms on the hills surrounding his new house and was marketing lots in Gillespie's addition—"a high class residence district," as his advertising expressed it. We even heard rumors that he intended to put up a modern country hotel. This proceeding did not tend to make him popular; we had always feared the day when Case Harbor would become semi-fashionable and you'd no longer feel like going over to the postoffice in your sweater. Gillespie, I suppose, knew that, and it set him to work all the harder at the job of gathering popularity.

He was a tall man in his late 40s, with something theatrically distinguished in his general makeup. His black hair was turning gray at the temples. His firm and slightly jowly cheeks seemed always, even when he was newly shaved, to be peppered with the powder marks of



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of him. The golfer who—" But I withhold the end of that quotation lest I betray my story.

Hitherto only four people have known the whole truth about Mr. Moore's career, however much the public thought it knew—Dr. Carrington, Mrs. Bavin, John B. Gillespie and I. And last week an inconspicuous item in the sporting page announced the death of "John B. Gillespie—the trainer who—" but here I must again stop. Edgerley Moore is already dead. And Mrs. Bavin and Dr. Carrington say there's no reason they know of why I should not make public the inside of this remarkable episode in amateur sport.

The Seagull links really owes its existence to the fact that we were getting too old for tennis. We all reached that stage within a year or so of each other. None of us admitted it publicly, but the Seagull links was our private admission. Mrs. Bavin first had the idea; she generates most of the bright thoughts in our town. Madge Bavin is one of the benevolently restless of her sex. Her husband, Bob, has some job in the management of a string of banks. Most of the summer he is traveling; he gets to Case Harbor only for a week-end now and then. Bringing up her three children doesn't employ a third of her splendid energies; she works off the rest in public service.

Mrs. Bavin found that the old Cowan place was for sale. It embraced 90 acres of hardscrabble hill land, a large and decaying farm house, some disintegrating stone fences and a patch of pear and apple orchard so long neglected that the trees had flattened out like Japanese shrubs and bore mainly thorns. I first heard of Mrs. Bavin's idea when she invited me mysteriously on a drive, commanded me to dismount beside the Cowan house, and bade me view the landscape.

"It's very pretty," said I, rolling my eye over the Japanese effects of beach plum bushes, sumac and gnarled apple trees. "It's very pretty," I repeated, "but—"

"But don't you see," said Mrs. Bavin in her quick, nervous way, "what it was made for?" She didn't wait for my reply; she seemed too afraid lest I guess wrong. "A golf links. A perfect nine-hole course. Look—a short hole over there on the knoll—wonderfully sporty—there's your fairway—the pasture there—ain't it perfect? And the brook for a water hazard."

"Looks good to me," said I. "But of course if a real golf course architect looked it over—"

"He has," said Mrs. Bavin, "and he's wild about it. He's a young fellow just from Scotland. He says golf was played originally on this kind of ground—hill country beside the sea. He says this is just like St. Andrews—St. Andrews!" Mrs. Bavin repeated impressively. "He says he'll need scarcely an artificial hazard—it will be much more interesting that way—and we can swing the whole thing—the purchase and his estimate and making the house livable for—" Here Mrs. Bavin came down with a figure which made me gasp and whistle.

"Well," said Mrs. Bavin, "we don't have to pay for it

nent inhabitants nor yet the summer people—who owe their villas, have been coming there all their lives, and consider themselves as citizens—have ever troubled themselves a great deal about social distinctions.

At Goreham, a dozen miles or so up the coast, it's done differently. The old crowd—"our set"—has had an 18-hole links for the last 30 years. Most of the members were born before golf was known in America, but they were born to the Goreham Golf club just the same. Some of the more antique fossils of Goreham never attend the county tournament when it is played on their course, because that might involve meeting persons whom one doesn't know socially.

But everyone in Case Harbor with the price and the desire was eligible for our club. That is how our membership came to include persons so diverse in origin and circumstance as Edgerley Moore and John B. Gillespie. Edgerley Moore would have been eligible even under the standards of Goreham. The money behind him had ripened for three generations, which implies aristocracy in this democratic land. In his 20s he had inherited some two or three hundred thousand dollars from his father and invested most of it conservatively in a business with a by product. The by product suddenly boomed through no merit of Edgerley Moore. In a few years he doubled his money and more. After which he put the whole thing into an annuity and retired, planted himself and went to seed. He didn't work at anything except a good deal of dull and useless reading; he didn't play at anything except pottering with his gardener about the roses on his place. Of winters he and the perfectly colorless Mrs. Moore used to go to Florida, or California, or Europe, where the vegetating process flourished on alien soil.

I never knew a man who brought less back from foreign travel than Edgerley Moore. When, about five years before we started the Seagull links, his wife died, I suspect that he experienced the first emotion which had gone deeper than his skin in a quarter of a century. But by a fortnight later he had resumed his routine of reading and rose gardening. If he hadn't vegetated physically, as he had mentally, it was because of that same work in the garden.

He was now 59 years old and looked older. His hair and his sea lion mustache were as glistening white as granulated sugar; he was rather tall, but decidedly spare; his shoulders drooped and he seemed to favor his back when he walked. For the rest, he dressed rather youthfully in rough English tweeds, voted regular in politics, and was given socially to long spells of silence between long monologues on books he had just read, wherein he made a dull subject duller.

Edgerley Moore, when Mrs. Bavin called on him concerning the golf club, announced flatly that he'd never seen anything in the game and had never tried it. He started a dissertation to prove that a similar game had been played in ancient Egypt, which Mrs. Bavin had to interrupt to remind him that other people in Case Harbor

his stiff, black beard. Yet, after all, the first thing you noticed about his countenance was a pair of searching, direct, light brown eyes with lighter edges round the rims of the iris.

If you looked his clothes over in detail you realized they were as quiet as anyone's; yet he always gave somehow the effect of loud dressing. The women called him, in their confidential moments, a little vulgar—why, they could never explain. It was an effect as subtle and indefinable as that apparent loudness of his clothes. With the men he was amusing enough, but the best things he said gave always the impression of set pieces, as though he had them card catalogued in his mind to spring on the proper occasion.

As might have been expected, Mr. Gillespie leaped at the proposal for a country club. Everyone understood his motive—it was a great selling point for Gillespie's addition. He took up golf at once; was playing a moderately good duffer's game before the links were much better than rough hill and meadow.

I was privileged to be present at a much more important event on our links, one of those little, unconsidered moments which one recognizes as the beginning of history. I saw Edgerley Moore make his first attempt. It was Billy Meas, one of our golf fiends, who lured him away from his garden, tempted him, and put a driver into his hands. I was waiting at the first tee for a partner when, after a few minutes of instruction about not trying to hit too hard and keeping his eye on the ball, he made his first swing. Of course, he sent it straight down the fairway, without a suggestion of slice or hook, for a good 150 yards. Something like that always happens when you first try golf. It is a device of Satan, I think, to lead you on toward profanity and Sabbath breaking.

I met him in the club house afterward, more excited than I had ever seen him before.

"There's something in the game," he said. "Billy Meas says—"

"Eighty-five for the nine holes—that's all!" put in Billy. "I ask you if that isn't good for the first time he ever touched a club."

We congratulated Mr. Moore hypocritically—we'd all been through that stage of the triumphant, initial round—and dodged away to escape a dissertation which he was beginning on the game among the early kings of Scotland.

I noted him a few days later, going around with Jock Ransome, our pro. That night Jock was wrapping my driver and indulging in shop talk, and he touched on Mr. Moore.

"Pity he wasn't caught young," said Jock. "Course he can't do anything much now—started too old. But he's got natural form—I can't teach him anything about swinging. And he's a nut on the game." From his tone, Jock was mentioning this last fact not in the spirit of criticism but of warm approval. But you, Mr. Langford, with that natural eyes of yours—" Edgerley Moore drifted out