

ROUND AND ABOUT OUR GOLF GREENS.

BY MAX PEMBERTON.



HAVE often thought that the excellent singer of old time who referred to the hills skipping and hopping must have been at heart a golfer.

He must have been thinking of the way in which the humble aspirant to the honours of golf shifts whole ranges of peaceable mountains, to say nothing of minor eminences. It is just in this season of sweet

doubtedly, as Mr. Horace Hutchinson has said well, April and September are almost ideal months for the golfer. If he be not troubled with long grass and east winds, he will find March and November possible months; but—and this is a purely personal point of view—those who play in London must be eaten up with the “violent fires” of enthusiasm if they can follow the game with any pleasure during December, January and—under



W. Park.

Tom Morris, junr.

Tom Morris.

A REMINISCENCE OF THE PAST: GOLF TOURNAMENT BY PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS ON LEITH LINKS, MAY 17, 1867.

days and roses that you will see the finest achievements in the saltatory antics aforesaid. The hills, under the influence of the lofting-iron, the sheep stimulated by the low-driven ball, are in a state of furious activity. Yet even great players like Kirkcaldy are not ashamed when their club carries away a good square piece of turf; nor is the budding golfer guilty of the unpardonable sin when clean-cut sods of the veldt stand sentinels in his path.

One of the questions put most frequently by the man who does not play golf to the man who thinks that he does, is a question of season: Can you really play the game all the year round? Do you get any fun out of it in winter? Which is the best month of the year to face the music of the caddie? I have read many answers to this admirable catechism, but few which satisfy. Un-

normal conditions—February. I do not forget that Mr. Hutchinson has waxed eloquent upon the delights of a game in the snow, red balls being substituted for white; but all things are forgiven to the man who edited the “Badminton,” even those long hours of agony in clayey fields to which his ardour invites. If you play golf during the winter in London, you must add a shovel to the number of your clubs. It is not the mere objection to wading, or to bearing a heavy load of clay upon your boots, which forbids, it is the impossibility of contriving a game which bears the remotest resemblance to golf. Not only does the ball refuse to travel a yard over the sticky soil, but the greens become like mud-heaps, the lies are too atrocious for words. You think of Mr. Balfour’s little caddie who was sent out to look after an admiral of great importance,



(From a photo by Robinson & Thompson, Birkenhead.)
TOM MORRIS.

and who exclaimed testily at the third bad shot: "Come, come, old gentleman, this *will not do.*" You are fortunate indeed if you can so restrain yourself that no more pronounced opinion falls from your lips.

I remember well, some two months ago, playing with a man who was very keen on getting a game in the frost. Like the Rev. Dr. Alexander Carlyle, of Musselburgh memory, my friend was a "mighty swiper." At the very first brasse shot the head of his club broke sharp off from the shaft and skimmed over the ground with the grace of a swallow, awaking a sheep from herbal meditation and alighting finally in the bottom of a very dirty ditch.

"How did I miss that?" said the man, feigning astonishment. "Great Scot! I believe I've broken my club. What can you do with a broken shaft, eh, caddie?"

The caddie scratched his head and reflected upon the problem. Presently he said—

"Well, sir, I have heard as they're very good boiled down for supper!"

The truth is that golf during a frost—in London at any rate—is a mere pleasantry. It is good to feel the bracing air in your lungs, good to stride over the frozen ground and to set the blood tingling in your veins;

but it is not good to strike the hard earth heavily with an iron club and then to cast aspersions upon the ancestors of that club because it stings your hands and nearly jars your arms from their sockets. Enthusiasm will do anything. I believe that even Mr. Andrew Lang, since the iron entered into his *sole*, is an advocate of golf at all times and under all conditions; but a pitiful majority will yet declare that frozen links "is vanities," and ice-bound greens a snare.

There is an impression prevailing among many, who have just bought sets of clubs, that if a man let the sun go down and have not played at least a full course he will never make a golfer. These are the men who will account themselves worthy of great blame if they lose a day of December or a possible hour of January. Disclaiming any shadow of a claim to authority, I may yet make bold to say that golfing on a very bad ground will do a young player infinitely more harm than good.

The very difficulty of scoring anything like a fair total disgusts him with the game. He ploughs the fields and scatters, he explores the nethermost depths of sandpits, he surveys all the dirtiest ditches in his environment, but his play through the green is not to be described. Should a professional with a tithe of the talents of a J. H. Taylor, a Douglas Rolland, or an Andrew Kirkcaldy, accompany him and show him how very easy it is to send a ball, which reposes in a hole, winging in graceful flight toward the green, the lesson only exasperates him. Often enough he becomes a renegade, and goes about during his destined hour declaring that golf is all rot. He took it up only to become a champion like Mr. Balfour, you know, and his first



(Photo by R. W. Thomas.)
TAYLOR, THE PROFESSIONAL CHAMPION.

disappointment was to find that Mr. Balfour is no champion, but only an average player, who is not ashamed occasionally to top the hundred. Had this man waited for the spring, practising meanwhile in his bath-room, he would have found salvation.

There is no more sublime spectacle in the world than that of an ardent golfer practising driving in his bath-room. Granted that the room is of a possible size in which to swing a club, given a tee of indiarubber and some paper balls, and here is a winter curriculum worth ten of that upon muddy greens and grassy links. A few wild swings will soon demonstrate to the player what space he has. He lifts the globe off the gas-bracket at his first attempt; very well, a plumber will soon move that bracket. He chips a statue of Cupid from a pretty wardrobe with a shocking pull; what matter, wardrobes should not be ornamented with statues of Cupid. Or does it happen that frequent hammering upon the floor brings down the drawing-room ceiling? Well no golfer's "lady" would complain because a little plaster falls into her new piano. And the value of the practice is beyond question. To swing with care and to keep the eye on the ball are the fundamentals of all long driving. You can contrive these ends as well with balls of paper as with balls of gutta-percha. Ten minutes' good work after the morning dip devoted regularly to the destruction of paper molecules—to say nothing of chairs, tables, globes and jugs—will do more for a man's driving than six winters spent upon clayey links or frozen tees.

I heard the other day a story told by a commander who is now in charge of a gun-boat on the West Coast of Africa. He was explaining that if golf be poor sport in winter, hot weather at any rate is not its enemy. He and his brother officers are such enthusiasts that they rolled greens upon the beach of the bight in which their ship was at anchor, and they found that Kaffirs made

excellent caddies. Going ashore very early in the mornings the commander discovered one of these caddies armed with a pole about 20 feet long and a piece of stone weighing something like two pounds. The man had teed the stone upon a little mound of sand and was thrashing it furiously with his pole, but every time he raised the club, he shouted "Godam!" with all his lungs. Being asked for an explanation, the Kaffir beamed sweetly and said: "Ver good—white man's game—ver good."

All things considered it is not to be doubted that spring and autumn are the seasons for the golfer. No words, not even the heroics of Mathison, may describe the delights of a May-day round when the greens are like velvet and the course is clear, and the breezes blow fresh and invigorating from the distant sea. Should I be asked if

the South will weary presently of this good thing which has come out of Scotland, I recall days at Cromer, at Sandwich, at Clifton, at Scarborough at Hayling—days which brought a joy of mere life to the layman, but a



From a photo by]

WINCHESTER GOLF LINKS.

[R. W. Thomas.

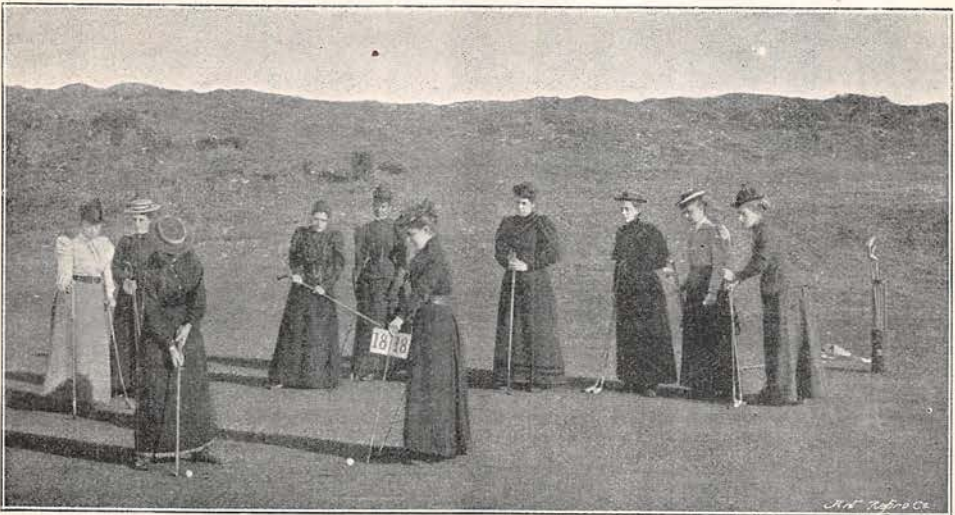
greater, fuller joy to the man with the club in his hand and the caddie at his heels. For then the heather had begun to bloom, the air was odorous with the breath of roses, the soft winds blowing freshly over the downs were like iron to the blood. And to these the golfer added the delights of attaining, or of striving to attain. The very difficulty of his pursuit adds to it a continuing charm.

"If you and I," said an old golfer one day when I had been guilty of an exceedingly strong note of despair, "if you and I could go round in eighty, we should be on the way to give up golf."

Tennis brings you to your best speedily; you know when you have played cricket for a year or two if there be any cricket in you; a man shapes, or does not shape, in a boat almost at the end of his first term; but to golf there is no such index. Your first few games breed a fine conceit. You drive a

long ball every time ; your caddie even nods approval at your puts. But how much greater is the fall when, on starting off, say upon the third morning, you succeed in nothing but the ripe flavour of your objurgations and in the undisguised scorn of your caddie. Three months come and go and you begin to tell yourself that some day—some day—you will better the hundred ; but when the year has passed you are worse than ever. You cannot do a hundred and thirty now. There are days when you miss the ball two or three times at as many holes. Your caddie steals the balls from your bag and you have not the spirit to remonstrate with him. You vow with every bad stroke to “give it up to-morrow.” But to-morrow comes and you are still playing ; you are swearing harder

more, either foster clubs or are active members of them. Mr. Balfour himself is the president of the Prince's Club and has among his fellow members, Sir W. Hart-Dyke, Bart., M.P., Mr. T. W. Legh, M.P., Col. E. H. Kennard, Sir H. Maxwell, Bart., M.P., Captain F. I. Maxse. Tennis players such as Mr. Herbert Chipp, cricketers like the Hon. A. Lyttelton, have turned to golf when years crept on and have found in it a new hope. In the world of letters we have Mr. Andrew Lang to lead us, Mr. Henry Massingham, Mr. Henry Norman, Dr. Nicoll ; and that we may make a brave display at championships, so fine a player as Mr. Horace Hutchinson. Sir George Newnes has for some years been one of the boldest of our advocates. Even stately vicars and monu-



From a photo by]

THE WINDERMERE LADIES' TOURNAMENT.

[Brunskill, Windermere.

than ever. Your caddie is examining your clubs and promising himself many a rare game when you make him a present of them.

All this proves the tenacity of golf. They tell us that the present year will see the game enjoying a popularity which even the renaissance of cycling will not shame. Already we have faithful children in nearly every walk of life. The Prince of Wales even has talked of building large links at Sandringham ; the princesses are conspicuous and most ardent golfers, and have their pretty little links not far from the Duke's cottage. To write the names of those in the House of Lords who play or support the pastime would be to fill the columns of a newspaper. Lord Zetland, Lord Granby, Lord Cowley, Lord Dudley, Lord Edward Cecil, and a hundred

ments of grace like archdeacons have stolen away pleasant hours from the performance of archidiaconal functions to hang theology upon the green. A great list, which might well fill a directory, and would make a fat volume at that.

All these people get golf wherever and whenever they can. Even London is becoming rich in her opportunities for play. Though her neighbouring links are of clay ; and trees—the *bête noir* of good golf—abound, none the less is the number of greens amazing. Of these, few would dispute the claims of Tooting Bec and of Richmond to premier places. The first-named links are the resort of those who waste their time in Parliament at Westminster, but hasten to atone for the frivolity by hours of strenuous

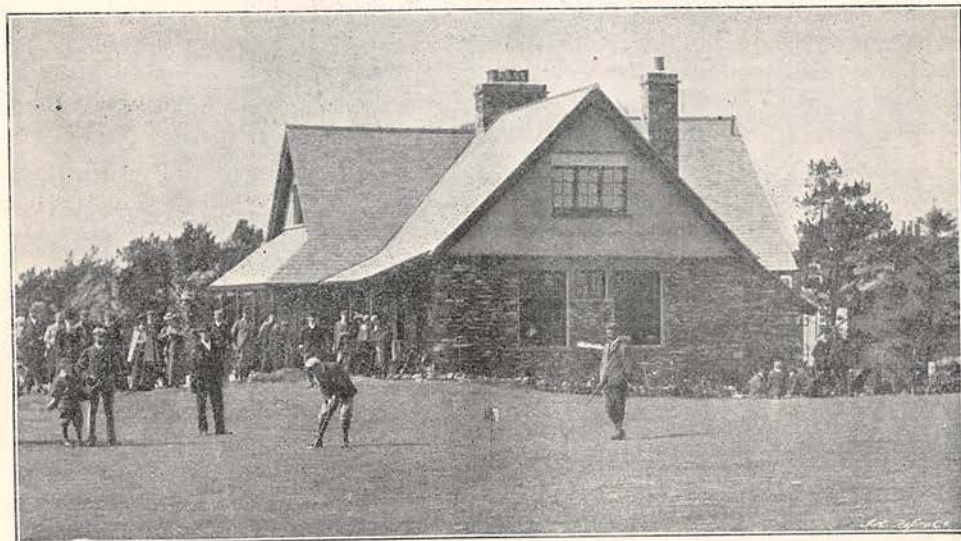
work at Tooting. Mr. Balfour plays there frequently. Mr. Henry Massingham is to be seen reaping almost every Saturday. Not only are the greens themselves to be praised, but the club-house is "replete with every comfort." In this respect it is a good second to Neasden, whose supremacy in the matter of the little luxuries is not to be questioned. Indeed both house and grounds at Neasden have called for the irony of rabid Scotchmen, who would concede nothing to the flesh even in the matter of golf. They have come out to this beautiful club and have inspected its stables, its bedrooms, its billiard-room, its old-time garden with undisguised contempt. Yet I have not observed that they hesitated to sample the ancient brands in its cellar, nor to accept a peace-offering from its skilful cook.

But we have golf clubs all round London now, and the expression of any individual preference is unjust. Men in the south can play at Dulwich, at Streatham, at Mitcham, at Clapham, at Blackheath. The doctors' links are at Norwood—a pretty course belted with woods and trees. Hampstead has just redeemed its character by laying out a ground under the shadow of "The Spaniards." Muswell Hill, Enfield, Barnes, Hanwell, Woodford, Finchley, Eltham—all these give many a pleasant hour to the victim of the City. And if he begin to weary of these more confined opportunities he has only to pack a carpet bag and run down to Cromer, or Brighton, or Hayling, or Holmwood, and gardens of



(From a photo by Robinson & Thompson, Birkenhead.)
JOHN BALL, JUNR.

delight are opened to him. Indeed many a man who had come to look upon a Saturday to Monday as the last refuge of boredom, now views any possible holiday with the feelings of a schoolboy. A whole day's golf! Old Omar himself, with his jug of wine and his miserable loaf, would have been the first to



From a photo by]

Ball.

Hilton.

[Brunskill, Windermere.

A CHAMPION'S GAME AT WINDERMERE.

mend his quatrain and to hymn so good a thing.

Nor should it be thought that golf is a man's game *pur et simple*. Many a pretty girl now wields the club prettily; many a lad is beginning to feel the fascination of driving a long ball; many an old tennis player is hiding away his racket and telling himself that, after all, the Scots are canny folk. Yet I admit readily that of every ten recruits, six are from the ranks of those who do not hide it from themselves that their seat in the saddle is not what it was; who grant that their display at the net is no longer one to win applause from the gallery. These have found a new art of life, and they are indifferent to humiliations and to difficulties if only they may pursue it.

And this reminds me. One of our most

distinguished Scotch critics went out the other day to a Northern club to play his first game of golf. Accustomed to the veneration of many, and to the obedience of not a few, this great man was delighted to find that a Scotchman acted as professional and general instructor to the club. It was my good fortune to hear the greeting which passed between the two.

"Ah," said the Professor, "I'm from Montrose, ye must know."

"Hark to that!" cried the professional; "and I'd have ye to know that I'm frae Montrose myself."

"But I never had a club in my hand," exclaimed the man of letters.

"What!" roared the player aghast, "ye niver had a clobber in yer hand! Sakes alive! ye can stand there an' tell me that, man! Ye ought to be ashamed o' yerself!"



From a photo by]

[Downie, St. Andrews.

MR. BALFOUR STARTING A GAME AT ST. ANDREWS.