



ONDON, November 10, 1911.

The autumn season of British golf, which is now drawing to an end, the players settling down to the winter conditions and the quiet winter programme, has on the whole been a very successful one, and the weather with which it has been favored has been of a kind that has been much appreciated after the great severity and dryness of the summer, although until towards the end of October there was far less rain than was desirable. Then it came all at once with storms and gales. At the end of the summer the fears that a large proportion of the courses that had suffered most would not by any means recover completely by next summer were very general, but there is after all a marvellous recuperative power in British turf, and already what were among the worst cases have quite got well again, while the greenkeepers are all saying that the unexampled drought of the hot season has taught them some very valuable lessons which they could not have learned in any other way, and which will enable them very effectually to combat such conditions should they ever occur again in such an aggravated form. Some of our best experts in this matter consider that they would now be able to make most excellent putting greens of the most velvety description anywhere round about the equator.

The autumn meetings of the clubs, which are a big feature of British golf,

these meetings for the most part being restricted to members, have all been got through and have been just as enjoyable as ever. They have been productive of few remarkable results, which after all are not expected of them. The most remarkable almost certainly has been that at the Mid-Surrey Club at Richmond near London, at which Mr. H. E. Taylor, who is constantly doing the most brilliant things (although he failed to do himself justice in either the amateur international match or the amateur championship this year) on the same day did two consecutive medal rounds of 71. Record for the course (made by himself) is 69, and a better day's golf in stroke competition has not been done in these parts for a very long time. The last autumn meeting of the season of any importance was that of the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers at Muirfield, one of the championship group of courses. A good field, including two or three of the best Scottish amateurs, always turns out for this gathering, and the winner on this occasion was Mr. Robert Maxwell, with Mr. J. E. Laidlay second. Mr. Maxwell has only taken part in club competitions this season, and his friends like to know that his game is still sound. At the autumn meeting of the Royal Liverpool Club at Hoylake Mr. John Ball won another scratch medal, bringing his total of such scratch medals won at this



High artificial "mountain" featuring the eleventh hole (a short one) at Richmond, Surrey, on the left hand side.

club up to the even hundred—a most remarkable record.

The professionals have been busy right up to the very end, chiefly with exhibition matches, Harry Vardon and James Braid having been in great demand and playing each other all the time in various parts of the country. These two certainly share the honours of the season. When playing at Muswell Hill, a very moderate kind of course in the suburbs of London, the other day with James Braid in opposition to him Vardon created something of a sensation; at least the newspapers took it in that way and gave what happened such a publicity with very large headlines as they rarely do to any golfing event. It was, however, a sensation of a kind that added nothing, to his glory, even as it certainly took nothing away from it. The simple fact was that he took nine strokes to one hole (it was a stroke competition too!), and ordinarily that was not a very difficult hole either, Braid getting it on the same occasion in four.

However, the circumstances were peculiar and explain everything. The hole was the eleventh. On the tee the champion was advised to take his brasseys so as to avoid driving into the bunker which used to be meant for catching topped seconds. Balls travel so very far in these days that really one is never safe, and such precautions as this have to be constantly taken. He played with the brasseys, but even that was too much and his ball was caught. With his recovery shot he went into a grassy bunker beyond the green. His ball was in a deep crack, and he claimed that he could lift it without penalty and drop it in the hazard under a local rule that a ball could be lifted from cracks in the ground. The question, however, was decided against him, and he dropped behind the hazard under penalty of one stroke.

This was beginning to be interesting, and it was more so when Vardon again played into the same crack from which he had just lifted, and conse-

quently had to lift and lose a stroke a second time. Playing his sixth he was short, but he was on the green with his seventh, and then his troubles were over, two putts being taken and the hole polished off at last in nine. Vardon says that he has never taken so many as nine to a hole, in any circumstance for thirteen years, the last occasion being the Musselburgh tournament in 1898, when he took that many to a short hole, but for all that won the first prize in the tournament. He once, however, since he became established as a first-class player, took ten strokes to a hole, but that was one of great difficulty, and though subsequently he did it in four in a match with Taylor, he nevertheless declares that it is the most difficult hole that he has ever played, although some of its terrors may have been banished by the far-flying balls that we play with now. It is the famous hole that goes by the name of Mount Zion on the links of Islay on the west coast of Scotland.

A couple of months ago I mentioned the very large way in which they were

conducting their golf enterprises, particularly in the way of championships, at Baden Baden in Germany, and certain difficulties in which the club at that place was finding itself in relation to the German Golf Association. In more recent times these troubles have become more acute, and it begins to appear that Germany is to be the scene of the first civil war in consequence of the difficulty of solving to the satisfaction of all concerned the various problems of the government of the game. The position is that the Baden Baden club and the Baden Baden people have come to the wise and proper conclusion that there is much money to be made out of the English-speaking foreigners by doing their golf on a grand scale, having a fine course, and holding big tournaments with valuable prizes attached thereto. The professional tournament being by far the biggest thing of its kind held in Germany, if not on the whole continent of Europe, the local authorities desire to call it the Open Championship of Germany, and when the German



Deep grassy hollow and artificial hills on the right of the sixth green at Richmond.



Rough country (artificial but not looking it) near a putting green, at Richmond. There is a sand pot on the left.

Golf Association, wishing their own chief tournament to go by that name, objected, the Baden Badenites, after first of all half yielding, stiffened their backs, determined to adhere to their championship title, and practically told the higher authority that it might go to any place that it pleased. Now it is stated that a special general meeting of the German G. A. has been called to take place at Hamburg in a few days from now, at which the whole Baden Baden affair will be brought up for discussion, and a resolution passed on the proposition made that all members of clubs affiliated to the said G. G. A. who are also members of the Baden Baden club be asked to resign their membership of this club. The situation may therefore be said to be distinctly interesting and golf in Germany is getting started under somewhat stormy conditions. There has been a little of it there for some years, but latterly there have been clear signs of the beginning of a golf boom in the country, just as there have been in nearly every country in Europe.

The papers on this side still continue with much golf gossip about the recent American amateur championship at Apawamis, all that it means and all that it may result in, and there is a general feeling of gratification about the excellent sporting spirit displayed by the golfers of the United States throughout and particularly in face of the ultimate issue of the tournament, while the prospect of a large contingent of American players visiting this country for our amateur championship meeting next year is regarded with the utmost interest, and you may take it that the very warmest welcome will be given to all who do so come. Down in Devonshire, where the course of the Royal North Devon Club at Westward Ho!, where this next championship meeting will take place, is situated, great preparations are now afoot for the reception of the gathering that will be held there for the first time. The golfers who are attached to the place, who are many and influential, feel that the credit of the club and course are at stake, and

I know enough about them to feel sure that the whole affair will be done as well there as it is possible for it to be, and the result of his matches apart, I am sure that no visitor to that meeting will go away in the smallest measure disappointed. Westward Ho! is in one of the most beautiful parts of England, the coast and pastoral scenery being of the richest and finest possible description, while the history and traditions of the place are deeply interesting. The journey is made comfortably in less than five hours from London by express train.

Of the course it is enough to say at the present moment (I hope to give you some full particulars concerning it in due season) that it is an exceedingly fine one. There are parts of it which are very undulating and it is of full seaside qualities and characteristics; but, generally speaking, it is rather on the flat side and there is not a single blind shot upon it. I have previously mentioned that they have just made a new short hole upon it, the fifth, bringing the number of short

holes up to four, all of them very good indeed, especially the new one. There is a possibility also that a new putting green may be employed for the championship instead of the existing seventh. This, however, is only a minor alteration, and I am not aware that any others of any kind are contemplated. The course is long, but not too long. When a man is playing his best it seems very easy and he gets the very utmost satisfaction from his game, but if he is a little off he will come to understand that real golf must be played at Westward Ho!

Without anticipating to any further extent what I shall have to say in the future I must mention here that one of the very strong points of this place, which American golfers will most appreciate, is its turf. It is without any doubt the very finest golfing turf in England, and there is only one other place in the whole of Britain where the turf can rival it and that is old Gullane in the East Lothian district of Scotland, where it is generally accounted better than anywhere else.



The putting green at the new short hole (the fifth) at Westward-Ho!, looking from the left. The sixth tee is seen above.



Deep grassy hollow and little hills on left of the sixth green at Richmond.

Here at Westward Ho! it is of the most beautiful velvety softness and texture throughout, and yet is firm enough for anything. Nowhere can you get better lies, and nowhere is it such a luxury to walk upon grass as it is here.

The winter season is, of course, the one in which the greenkeepers' schemes and activities are most manifested, and there are abundant signs already in this country of great enterprises being projected and undertaken. There seems to be no settlement of conviction as to what is the best and most proper thing in regard to many important points of architecture, both on inland and seaside courses, but chiefly the former, and probably there will not be for some years yet, especially until the restlessness caused by the increasing length obtained by the rubber-cored ball is got rid of, if it ever is. Just at present another new ball is all the rage, and they are saying that they can get further than ever with it. It is marked in a new and peculiar way, having very large hol-

low depressions, about twice the size of any others with which we have become familiar, with small pimples rising up from the middle of those depressions. There can be no question about the travelling capacity of these balls.

As to the course architecture enormous interest has been renewed in the experiment which is in progress at the Mid-Surrey Club's course at Richmond which is now on the point of completion. This course, the leading one of the inner London group, and an exceedingly fine one in all other respects, has probably been the flattest and plainest in the whole country. Last autumn, following upon an experiment at one or two holes, the club resolved upon a gigantic scheme of transformation involving an expenditure of thousands of dollars. On one or two courses in this country, and as I am told also in America—Garden City has been quoted to me—the idea has been tried of substituting grassy pits and little hills instead of ordinary sand bunkers. That was the basis of

the idea adopted by the Mid-Surrey Club, but nowhere else can the idea possibly have been carried out to anything like the same extent. Except during the hot months of summer forty or fifty men have been working away at the constructions all the time, and only three or four more holes now remain to be treated in the manner decided upon. All the work has been carried out under the superintendence of ex-Open Champion J. H. Taylor, the professional to the club, in the capacity of chief architect, and of Peter Lees, the greenkeeper, acknowledged to be the cleverest man in his profession that we have, in the capacity of chief constructor, the club, having full confidence in these two, having given them *carte blanche* to do whatever they liked, such a freedom of commission as has never been given before by any club of importance but the wisdom of which is being fully demonstrated. At every hole great earthworks have been made in the utmost variety, four or five different systems of bunkering being brought into the general scheme.

For one thing there are plain round grassy pits some fifteen or twenty feet wide, with plain grass floors. These are for the most part intended for only light punishment of balls of fair length that are only a little off the line. It is easy enough to get out of them, and they are not much employed in the general scheme. Then there are shallower grassy hollows, only some eighteen inches or two feet deep, laid across the course here and there which cause still less trouble, but which are there chiefly to remind the man to drive a little further next time and give himself smoother ground to begin his approaching from. Similar depressions are placed at the back of greens at holes of medium and full length, the

theory of the constructors being that sand bunkers just behind such greens are too severe a punishment for balls that may be only the veriest trifle too strong. Next there are ranges of hills, and valleys adjoining them, across the course, not generally to be carried from the tee but frequently to be got over with the second shots and almost invariably guarding the greens. These are very irregular formations, looking very natural, with jagged outlines and bases and peaks of different heights. The latter in some cases are as much as twelve feet high, and, as there is sometimes a grassy hollow or valley six feet deep right in front, the change to this from the plainness and flatness that previously existed is enormous. Here and there among the hills there are little sand pots, but sand has almost entirely disappeared from the course now, though it is laid out on it.

In several cases, along with the big hills that confront and flank the greens there are deep and wide hollows stretching right across in front. Thus in front of the sixth green the hollow is forty or fifty feet across and some five or six feet deep. The effect is to give the green something of the plateau feature and to give a full view of it and the flag as was not to be had before when the guard consisted merely of the plain, old-fashioned bank about three or four feet high, with a layer of sand in front of it. At the two ends of this big hollow there are ranges of the miniature mountains. This hole is a long one, needing two good shots to reach the green, and the hollow stops a short second just as effectually as the old bank did, or even more so, for a ball that would run over the latter will not get through the hollow. Apart from this, however, a special point is made by the



Artificial hills and dales surrounding the eighth hole at Richmond.

advocates of this system that the player has never to play a chance kind of shot as he has often to do when playing from a sand bunker. He plays then merely to get out, and has sometimes not very much idea whether he will get five or fifty yards out. He gives a big clumsy smack at the sand with his niblick and there is an end of it. But in playing from the grassy hills and hollows—they are all turfed with strong rough grass—while full difficulty is retained, it is maintained that it is more legitimate and scientific and that the player has every time full opportunity of exercising his skill and that he will make excellence of recovery in proportion to that skill. Chance and luck, it is asserted, have less to do with his stroke than ever before and the punishment meted out is graduated according to the extent of the fault that was committed, the very bad shot getting worse treated than the one that was not quite so bad. Thus these hill formations are used in long chains for side bunkering, and while they are

highest when nearest to the tee and consequently farthest off the line, and then have often sand pots attached to them, they diminish much in size as they go further on and the ball that reaches them then must evidently have had some good in it, while towards the end of a long range, two hundred or more yards from the tee, the hills fade away to nothing but a little rough grass.

The whole scheme is very beautifully carried out, and the object of the promoters to make their course look more interesting and to make the punishment fit the crime has been amply realized. The transformation effected at the short holes is especially wonderful. I fear that within the limits of these notes it is not possible to give a full description of this business, which I am sure must have a powerful influence upon inland course architecture in the future, not only in Britain, but abroad. The photographs which I send with these notes may give some faint idea of what is being done at

some of the holes, but photographs in themselves cannot convey an adequate impression of the system.

A certain officer in the British army, who is a keen golfer, as most officers are, has come by a most extraordinary and very serious misfortune in the pursuit of his favorite pastime. He was playing one day a little while since on a course in the vicinity of London, when he had the bad luck to get wet through. Having no change of clothes in the clubhouse he borrowed a pair of shoes from one of the attendants, and, unfortunately for him as it turned out, wore these without any stockings. It is not known whether he had a slight abrasion or cut on one of his feet, but at all events blood poisoning set in shortly afterwards, and it became necessary to have the foot amputated to save the entire limb. The surgeon who carried out the operation expressed the opinion that the poison had been introduced by microbes which had infested the old shoes, and it is now stated that these are a common source of danger, and the warning is being given that golfers should examine their lockers and get rid of any old boots or shoes that may

be found therein, lest by using them in an emergency they should bring upon themselves some serious trouble afterwards.

The frequency with which clever young golfers of the artisan class are going over to professionalism in these days is very noticeable. Another brilliant young player who has come into prominence of late years in T. E. Grant of Dornoch, has just made this change, having been appointed to the post of professional at Tenby in Wales where there is a course which some good authorities are saying is going to turn out to be one of the finest in the country. It was this Grant who two or three seasons ago first rose to fame by defeating Mr. John Ball at the beginning of the amateur championship. He drives an exceptionally long ball, and it is a curious fact that though he is a very powerful young man, with strong forearms and wrists, he did not properly develop his length until, by an accident, he lost the thumb of his left hand at the second joint. By trade he has become a baker hitherto, Alexander Herd having been the same before he became a professional golfer.

