



THE AMATEUR DEFINITION

It perhaps appears a strange time for the revival of the discussion regarding the professional definition, but the subject has rather been forced upon us by an agitation which is going on across the Atlantic, where there seems to be at least a possibility of the definition being made so strict as to exclude from the amateur ranks those who make money by writing articles about the game or by the laying out of golf courses. Why those two professionals should be singled out for attack we do not quite understand, though it is possible that there may be something in the politics of the game in the States which seems to make such a restriction advisable. On the other hand, in none of the golf articles in the American papers—the writers of which, needless to say, are unanimous in their opposition to the suggestion—is there anything to suggest that the American case is anywise different from our own, and if it is not, then we submit that there is no reason why the golf journalist or the

golf architect should be placed on any different footing from the golf shoemaker or the builder who gets the contract for running up the club house.

Some years ago, when our own amateur definition was about to be revised, *GOLFING* expressed the opinion that the only reason for drawing any distinction between amateur and professional is to separate those who possess the advantage that in the ordinary employment by which they earn their living they are at the same time improving their skill in the game from those who do not possess that advantage but can only obtain the practice necessary for their play in their leisure time. Apart from this consideration, the distinction would be mere snobbery. At the time when we put forward this principle the deduction we wished to draw was that the golf clubmakers—who under the then existing conditions were counted professionals—should not be excluded by the new definition, inasmuch as a

maker of golf clubs, as such, has no more opportunity of acquiring skill at the game than the maker of Indian clubs, or the butcher, baker or candlestick-maker. And it seems that this way of looking at the problem was also that finally taken by the amateur championship authorities, for the definition which they framed does not exclude the ball-maker or club-maker as such for competing in the amateur event. And these same arguments apply with no less force to the position of the journalist or the architect. The average golf journalist—as we know to our cost—does not have any more leisure time for playing golf than any other kind of journalist, nor the golf architect than any other kind of architect. Besides, if the argument against the golf writer and the constructor of golf courses is to be admitted, where are we going to stop? Salaried secretaries of golf clubs are equally or even more open to criticism, and surely it would be fair to argue that the proprietor of a hotel on the edge of a golf links should be placed in the same condemnation with the editor of a golf journal and the designer of a golf course, and that Mr. John Ball should be rejected equally with Mr. H. S. Colt and Mr. H. H. Hilton. We mention these concrete examples only for the sake of emphasizing the futility of the American argument, at least from the point of

view of British conditions. And even if Britain is not quite in the same case as America, our position in the matter is none the less to the point, because in those days of international golf any serious difference in the two definitions would be a source of continual misunderstanding.

We think that the American agitation has its basis upon a certain confusion of thought. It confounds the case of the man whose method of earning his living gives him a better chance of becoming a first-class golfer and the case of the man who because he is a first-class golfer has a better chance of earning his living. It is quite true that the better player a man is, the better—other things being equal—is he likely to write about the game, and the higher remuneration is his work likely to command. For that matter of it, however, an artist who won the amateur championship would probably be able to command a better price for his pictures. It would be illogical to debar the amateur golfer from the many professions in which the sweet uses of advertisement help towards success. It does not cease to be illogical in the particular professions of golf journalism and golf architecture merely because in these two cases the effect of the advertisement gained by golfing success is more obvious and more considerable. —*Golfing*, London.

