

IN THE BAG

BY A. W. TILLINGHAST

"BY SAINT ANDREW'S! It's dark in the Bag today, with that beastly hood down over us," observed the cleek.

"Right you are C," growled the niblick, who, in the jargon of the Bag, was known as Digger. "He hasn't taken me out once during the match and we must be at the Turn by this. I'm fair starving for a maw of bunker sand or a good deep bite of muck. I he Master must be in luck or playing them mighty safe. I wish I could see a bit of it. What's the hood down for? Is it raining, Nip? You were out last and you don't seem to be very moist."

"No, it's not raining exactly," the mid-iron answered, "but it's misting, and Reddy, who's carrying for the Master, is fearful of getting us wet. It's the Final you know and we've got to give all we've got today for it's hammer and tongs out there, and 'the Devil take the hindmost.' I saw some of it just now, going to Nine. There wasn't much to choose after the drives but the Master had to play the odd. I felt every fibre of my shaft get into the stroke as I bit and squeezed into a cuppy, and from the finish, well out, I laughed as I saw our ball find the green;—but the other followed, inside us. I saw it all as He held me in his hand, watching, and I felt his fingers tighten around my shaft in tense grip, and then feebly relax, as a streak of Enemy's white tore out high and straight for the flag; struck true on the wet green, and after two dying hops, stopped dead to the cup. All this I saw before He put me back and took out the Kid. What did you do, boy?" the iron added savagely.

There was no answer and Nip glared at a very bright faced putting-cleek, which was trying to hide away behind Digger and J. H., a solemn, deep faced mashie. As Reddy shifted the bag to ease his shoulder, the little, blushing putter was rattled forth to face the frowns of the others. He was an immaculate little dandy, with a gleaming shaft topped off by an unsoiled leather grip, to which several particles of red wrapping paper still adhered, and his face shone like a baby's among the scarred, sullen visages of the veterans. A timorous, piping voice faltered in reply to Nip's harsh "Well? Come now, speak out."

"I don't rightly know," he quavered. "You see it's my-my first round, but I fear I was not successful, for I heard Reddy, as you call him, say "Damn" to himself when that white thing—"

"The ball—yes, yes, what happened you idiot? Go on." snarled Digger.

"Well, I—I did not send the ball quite into the hole," wailed the little fellow. "Please, Oh please, don't look at me that way, gentlemen. I did my very best, but,—forgive me for saying this,— the Master's hand trembled as he tapped with me, and I prayed so hard for strength, but he would not give me enough."

"Short, were you? You sniveling brat" and the Nipper rattled over ominously. "You—"

"Stop!" The deep, bass voice, with all its dignity, carried menace in its tone, and a silence came over the Bag. The speaker, Old Trusty, was the dean of the clubs for he had lived not only in this Bag of the Master's, but many

others of his. The aged wooden putter, made by Willie Park, himself, had seen many, many years of service. At Musselburgh, Old Trusty had learned his trade, and as a mere apprentice he knew every throw on the greens of Prestwick, St. Andrews and Troon. Twenty years before he had passed into the service of his present master, and now he was the sole survivor of hundreds of sticks, each purchased with the enthusiastic conviction that it would prove to be marvelously fine, and each, in turn, thrown aside with blighted hope. True, some of them had survived longer than others, but of them all, Old Trusty alone remained in the Bag with the new generation of modern golf.

The patriarch had known the feel of the feather ball, guttie and rubber-core, one after the other, as the years rolled by, and could one live as long as he without knowing men as well as the game? When first he fell into the hands of the Master, the honest wooden heart was almost broken. Where was the delicate, caressing touch of "Auld Wullie?" This "gawky coof" had a grasp of iron, and his stiff-armed shove was wont to send the ball now short, now over, now wide, but seldom sure. Old Trusty had survived those evil days of mortification and after a while he thrilled as he felt the light touch of fingers and flex wrist develop.

Together Old Trusty and The Master had gone from 20 to Scratch, and on to Plus: and so it was small wonder that there was silence in the Bag when his thunderous "Stop" boomed out.

"Losh Laddie" and the veteran turned a kindly face to the cringing novice; "dinna ye min' th' koes ava. They're a guid lot o' buddies gin ye

ken them. Cheer up ma wee bairn, ye needna be feart." Then turning to the others, Old Trusty continued;—"An' noo lads, nae doot ye're thinkin' it's verra strange th' Maister hasna tak'n *me* oot o' th' Bag th' dee, an' I wudna want tae gi'e th' impression I'm no wantin' tae gang; but th' morn He tak's me oot fur a wee bit o' practice and we didna get along verra weel. Th' greens are heavy th' dee, an' He's a' thinkin' a bit o' loft micht be best, d'ye see? Ah weel, He gets him th' wee laddie here, an' nae doot it's a' fur th' best." The old fellow spoke with wistful sadness.

When he had heard Nip tell of that second inside the Master's on the Ninth, he sensed that the putt for the half would be a trying one to hole, particularly with a new and unfamiliar club. The thought that this upstart had been chosen rather than himself had pained him, but Old Trusty showed not his wound by any word. "Nae doot it's a' fur th' best," he whispered to himself—"He kens."

Now in the Bag were several others that have not been mentioned in this chronicle,—the driver Whistler; Bing, a brassey, and a happy-go-lucky jigger, familiarly called Jigs. The latter was a light hearted chatter-box and the source of constant annoyance to the ponderous, pessimistic niblick, Digger. But on this particular day there was one other stranger in the Bag,—a rusty headed nondescript, whose warped shaft was wrapped with whipping, which doubtless covered an old wound. His grip was old and dirty, and altogether this vagrant was the most disreputable stick that the Bag had ever seen. At the last moment he had been dumped unceremoniously among the dapper inhabitants of the Bag, and when they re-

covered from the first shock that his appearance had occasioned, they promptly snubbed him. The Hobo smiled pleasantly as he came catapulting in with a cheerful "Hellow Fellows!" Then he sighed contentedly as he quietly found a place close by Old Trusty, and not only did he attempt no conversation, but he actually seemed insensible of the pointed and, sarcastic remarks which were directed at him. The old putter appeared to be glad to see him for he nodded cordially to the stranger, but that was Old Trusty's fashion.

"Great Bogey!" exclaimed Nip. "Who in hell turned that loose?"

"Don't know," grumbled Digger, "but he's just as welcome as stymie on the Nineteenth."

"Oh La la," Jigs chortled, and with mock courtesy, preceded to deliver an address of welcome for the Bag,— "Sire, you do us great honor. Had we but known of your Majesty's intent we—"

"Ye puir parrot ye," sharply interrupted Old Trusty, "Are ye daft? Dinna ye ken—," but the old fellow stopped abruptly and smiled grimly to himself as the flash of anger passed. Then he added more quietly, "Ye shouldna let yer gab rair sae muckle. Ye needa skirl, Yon's as deaf as a stane."

However, the start of the match put an end to the baiting of the derelict and it must be confessed that when the Turn was reached, with the Master two down, a deep gloom had settled over the Bag. "Why damme," exclaimed Whistler as he came in under the hood after the drive for the Tenth, "I got that one squarely on the nose for a good two-fifty, but that fellow,—Ludlow's his name, passed us by ten yards. It's up to you, Nip,

to get home, and it's a wallop over that bunker."

At this the Digger turned expectantly and eagerly watched for Nip's return. "Did you catch the bunker?" he cried in his excitement, but the happy face of the iron blasted his hopes.

"Boys, it was a corker," shouted the beaming Nip. "We were lying none too well, but He gave me all there was. The carry to the sand was a hundred and seventy at least, but we got over nicely and ran to the green,—and the best is yet to come. Ludlow hashed his and is buried in the pit. You can't lose this one, Kid. I think that you'll have at least two for it from only thirty feet."

"Number Eleven's the short one, isn't it?" inquired J. H. and a moment later he made his exit through the hood.

"It's the short one right enough, and to my way of thinking, the best one on the course, bar none. There's the water hazard in front and fourteen pits on the sides and flank. Beautiful!"

"Oh Shut up Digger, will you?" cried Jigs. "You're a rotten croaker and with about as much sympathy as an undertaker;—always waiting for one of us to make a mess of things so you may get in your punch. Of course we could not get along very well without you in times of trouble, but for pity's sake, don't wish them on us. Your dismal face gets on the nerves sometimes and we fall all over a cinch shot, and Plop—into the pit for you to thump it out again,—maybe. You great big stiff, you make me sick."

But Digger was paying but scant attention to the tirade for J. H. was returning to the Bag and the niblick

rattled over to his side with his ghoul-
ish "Did you get one?"

The mashie regarded the Kill-joy with supreme contempt and as the little putting cleek disappeared through the hood, J. H. replied with great dignity. "I certainly did *not* get one, you shovel faced disturber,—it will scarcely interest you to know that our ball is lying close to the cup,—it's too dead to skin."

"All square" muttered Old Trusty, while at his side the Hobo dozed, with the contented smile still playing over his battered face.

"Now for the long one," said Whistler to Bing, the brasse. Here's where we both must get busy," but when he reappeared, he came with a vicious bang which indicated that Reddy was in no amiable frame of mind. The others waited for him to speak and sadly he faced them. "It was a rotter," he confessed, "but it wasn't my fault or the Master's either," he flared. Just as He was starting me down, some blamed old fool in the gallery walked out almost on top of us. Of course, He couldn't stop me and I got the ground good and plenty,—Blooy! The ball didn't get away over one-fifty, and it's a good two-eighty from the 'cross bunker. It's no go, Bing; He won't try you for this one. I heard him tell Reddy so. He's forced to play it safe with Nip, and trust to C to get him home with the third. Ludlow got away a screamer and his second ought take him close enough for a short pitch. It looks bad, particularly at this stage of the game. Reddy's as mad as the Devil and is glaring at the poor old man in the gallery like he could kill him."

"One down," groaned the cleek a few minutes later. "He played it too safe with his second and should have

taken Bing for the long shot home, but He tried to land it with me. I knew what would happen when the Master was addressing. I felt his right tighten up and my head turned in as we went into it with the last ounce back of the stroke. We hooked so far out of bounds, that they'll never find the ball,—then He resigned the hole."

"Go to it," the Bag implored Whistler as he went out and when he returned he was smiling broadly.

"I guess He was good and mad when He lit into that one. It was a beauty,—sweet and low against the wind and I turned over into it, giving just enough pull to run it a good seventy after it struck. The Master is talking with Reddy about the second. It will either be Jigs or J. H., but it seems to be puzzling them."

The driver had spoken truly. First the hand of the Master half pulled J. H. out; hesitated; thrust him back, and then slowly withdrew with the Giggling Jigs.

"There's a pit beyond and maybe they'll catch it if that fool Jigs don't hold for him. It's got to come sooner or later," argued the niblick to himself. "Sooner or later they all have to call for the Digger,"—and so it was. The frivolous Jigs was sober enough as he came again to the Bag.

"Sewered" was his only comment, and they all turned beseechingly to the niblick.

"Get him out, Old Boy, get him out." In this time of trouble the deceit of the niblick was forgotten. He was one of them now, fighting for the cause, and it must be said for him, that he was determined to do his utmost. It was no gentle hand that jerked forth, but that was nothing unusual. Digger, the despised, was used

to abuse and the rough fellow minded it not a bit,—it was his portion.

The Master found his footing with great care, for the ball had found a cruel lie close to the bunker's wall, over which it had just managed to trickle. Straight up and down, like an axe, the Digger was carried; then with a mighty blow, the iron head cut in well back of the ball, which 'rose almost vertically in the cloud of sand, and stopped on the green, not a dozen feet from the cup.

Digger returned to the Bag with just a bit of swagger, and related the success of his effort with pardonable pride, but the Fates were not kind. The little, new putting cleek failed in the crisis and the ball slipped by the cup with Reddy almost dislocating his back in a vain effort to steer it in.

Two down at the Fourteenth. Sadly the Bag admitted the desperate situation, but what was it Old Trusty was murmuring to himself? "Twa up an' five canna win at gowf."

The thought of the old Scotch superstition brought some comfort with it, but the practical Bag would much rather take chances with two up and five to play with legend against, than with the shoe on the other foot.

Just as the Whistler attempted to speak, he was turned violently up-side-down and found himself on the ground with his fellows from the Bag. The clouds were breaking and Reddy had decided that the hood could safely be dispensed with.

A sweet faced woman was exchanging a few hasty words with the caddie.

"Things ain't breakin' any too good, ma'am, and Mr. Strong ain't playin' none too confident neither, but we'll get this guy yet, although he sure is goin' great."

"Yes, Reddy, I know,—but we must win today. Mr. Strong always has just missed in this championship, but this year his friends at home are banking on him; and I want him to win, too, very much indeed. Brace him up as much as you can, Reddy."

"Did you hear that, boys?" whispered the Nipper, when they were all in the Bag again. "It's got to be done,—somehow. You heard what the Missus said, and then don't forget the jollying those Ludlow sticks will give us in the locker room, if we fail."

Old Trusty was looking wistfully over the rim of the Bag to the putting green. The Hobo smiled contentedly and said not a word, but Bing was gazing intently at the back of the stranger's head. Slowly he turned to the others, with a look of awe on his face.

"Say, you pipe-backed collection of Stewarts, do you know what's on that bum's head? I didn't get it until we got in the light and it's pretty well rubbed and rusted out. You don't know, do you? Well, let me tell you something;—it's a rose."

"Well, what of it?" demanded Jigs.

The brassey gave him a glance of scorn. "Why, you poor clown, that rose was Condie's old trade mark, just as the pipe on your back shows you to be a Stewart. Condie don't forge heads now-a-days, and I heard Old Trusty say that the Master once had an old Condie iron, that he could use better than any club he ever had in his hands, and Old Trusty ought to know. Years ago that Condie was lost and never turned up." Bing turned to the old putter and whispered "Say Trusty, is that—*the* Condie?"

"Aye," quietly replied the patriarch. "There's twa o' us He's forgot th' dee."

The Master came over to the Bag after his drive on the Fourteenth. "Reddy, give me the old wooden putter on the next green. By George! What's this? My old Condie iron. I remember now; it turned up just before I came away, and I stuck it in this morning. I think I'll use it for my second here."

The Hobo's rusty smile broadened as he left the Bag. "At last He wants me again," he muttered. "I won't fail him, and He knows it. I wonder if He remembers that day when we won the medal on the very last hole, and by a single stroke? Two hundred yards, if it was an inch, and stoney dead. I wonder if He's thinkin' of that match with Humbert, when from two-twenty we got inside from a cuppy to the green on the extra hole that decided the championship? I'll bet He's not forgotten, and He's a thinkin' of it right now."

Old Trusty did not have much of a putt to make on the Fourteenth green, after Condie had dropped it there, nor again on the Seventeenth where the match was squared. The Master had found himself and was playing confidently and making no mistakes.

The Home hole is history;—a very long two-shotter, with both drives well away. Ludlow found the green with a terrific brasse, with Bing only twenty yards short. The green is particularly tricky and undulating, but Ludlow's par 4 was certain.

The great gallery stood sphinx-like and breathlessly awaited the stroke which must mean defeat or a new lease of life. If Strong could only get close enough for the half they must go to extra holes, but getting it dead on this green and from this distance was odds

against. Reddy moved nervously over with the Bag from which Strong was to select his club.

The Master regarded the kit for a fleeting moment and then without hesitation, put out his hand. "I'm going to run it up with my Condie iron," and as his hand grasped his old friend, his jaw set hard.

"For God's sake get it dead, Boss," implored Reddy, as he started for the flag, taking Old Trusty out of the Bag.

"Have no fear, Reddy," was the calm reply,—"that hole looks as big as a bucket to me now."

The stroke was played crisply and courageously. Every eye followed the ball as it started away, well to the right, with just enough speed to mount the first roll and take the throw to the left. If it took the other slope too fast, it must surely gather speed and finish yards beyond. The ball seemed almost to stop before reaching the top, but very gently it trickled over in a beautiful curve to the very edge of the hole,—and then the roar of the gallery told of its disappearance over the edge of the cup.

Reddy still was shaking like a leaf when Strong came to him nearly an hour later. "Well, we pulled it out, my boy, didn't we? Clean the clubs, Reddy,—all except the Condie iron. Leave the old boy just as he is."

"And to think of the way we talked to the bum!" gasped Jigs. "It's a blessing he couldn't hear," and the inhabitants of the Bag shook their heads wisely, but proudly, as they looked at Old Trusty and Condie, side by side; the Hobo smiling serenely, contentedly; and Old Trusty murmuring, "Ah weel—It's a' fur th' best."