



ONDON, January, 1919.

WITH THE OPENING of the new year the future is being considered in a definite and practical way such as was scarcely possible during the few weeks of last year that remained after the armistice was signed and the war was to some extent done with. In other days, before the great turmoil through which the Allies have so successfully passed, it was the custom at this wintry season to prepare the fixture list, and by the end of January it had swollen out to extensive proportions. It will not be for a few more weeks that a fixture list for 1919 in this country will take any shape at all, but one or two items are already making their appearance on it. Most of the organizations concerned with championships and tournaments are hesitating until they have a better appreciation and understanding of the social conditions that are likely to reign during the summer months; and it may be said that in general there is a feeling that there will be too much unsettlement and distraction during the early months of summer to justify the holding of any really representative and important events such as championships. All the men who are eligible to take part in them will still by then not have been set at liberty from military and other national duties, and even those who have been

liberated will have so many other things to do and think about, and will be so widely scattered and so little disposed to detach themselves so soon from their friends and relatives and the old occupations that they will have resumed, that it is felt that championships would lose most of their value and nearly all their interest.

But later in the season it will not be the same, and there is an impression that various first-class events may take place then. It is almost certain that the Irish Amateur Open Championship, which in the old days was scheduled for September and was a most popular holiday affair, will take place at its customary time; so perhaps the Welsh and some others. An announcement concerning the French amateur championship may be expected shortly; it will probably be held early in the season if at all. There is still much doubt about the Amateur and Open Championships of this country, and as I have previously suggested, there is a strong feeling in many quarters that they ought not to be held this year at all, and that before they are resumed there should be a thorough reorganization of the management and the system by which they are carried through. The fear for the moment is that the old authorities, who understand quite well doubts that exist about them in

the minds of the community, may try to rush things before the said community has had the time and opportunity to reflect upon the situation and come to some decision concerning it, and indeed the fear is justified for certain tentative announcements are already being made. It was stated soon after the signing of the armistice that one of the big events would be held at the usual time; but there has apparently been some withdrawal from that position since then, and recently the following semi-official announcement was circulated—"It is understood that the general opinion among the clubs concerned is that it would be inopportune to hold the golf championships in May and June, owing to the number of young golfers, amateur and professional, with the colours, and the expected slowness of demobilization. A further expression of opinion will be taken in the spring in regard to holding the championships in the autumn."

One might add in this connection that a considerable impression has been created in various sporting circles in this country by the terms in which the New York Yacht Club declined the challenge of Sir Thomas Lipton for races for the America Cup in the forthcoming summer, declaring that the club "appreciates the cordial and friendly terms of the challenge, but must say frankly that the members are strongly of opinion, with peace un-concluded, with a long list of casualties still to be reported, with transports bringing home wounded, and conditions unsettled, this is not an appropriate or fitting time to arrange a purely sporting event of such importance as the match for the America Cup." There is both sense and feeling in this statement, and I have heard the au-

thorities in various sports declare that it might very well be taken as a guide for them in their own affairs. Opinion varies as to when it is probable that the peace treaty will be signed, but in some quarters there is an idea that it may not be until June, and it is suggested that there should be no championships until then at earliest.

AT THE SAME TIME there is, of course, no reason why other events should not take place, and several of them are being arranged. The professionals are the first with an undertaking of any consequence. The question came up for consideration before the end of last year as to whether their annual autumn tournament under the auspices of the P. G. A., for prizes presented by the newspaper, the "News of the World," should be held this year in the usual circumstances and at the usual time. But for this important tournament it is necessary to hold qualifying competitions in various parts of the country throughout the spring and summer months, the winners of these competitions then taking part in the final match-play test. Upon an examination of the case they came to the conclusion that the courses over which the qualifying competitions would be decided would not be in suitable condition so soon, having perforce had to be much neglected during the war, and that therefore the tournament should not take place this year at all. This is an important decision, as the competition ranks as about the third most important of the usual season, and in some respects it is at least as interesting as any. But it has been determined that in place of it a Victory Tournament shall be held in May on the course of the Walton Heath Club,

and for this event the proprietors of the "News of the World" have offered valuable money prizes, leaving the executive of the P. G. A. to determine exactly how the total amount shall be divided. The tournament is to be restricted to sixty professional players, who will be selected by the P. G. A., and these sixty will play two rounds on the score system, one on the old course at Walton Heath and one on the new, which many people consider to be even better than the old. As a kind of stop-gap the idea is excellent, and the tournament will probably be a great success.

AT THIS MENTION of the professionals and their affairs, reference must be made to a very serious and unhappy loss that their organization has sustained in the sudden and unexpected death of Mr. Frederick H. Brown, the secretary of the P. G. A. Mr. Brown was quite indefatigable in his efforts for the welfare of the Association, and was looking forward with enormous enthusiasm to the resumption of its full activities in the spring. He had done a full measure of service in the war, for as soon as hostilities commenced he joined up with the Honourable Artillery Company and he served six months in the trenches in the first winter. About the end of this period he was shot through the head, and the surgeons regarded his recovery as one of the most marvellous cases on record, for the bullet went in at one side of his head and came out at the other, passing within a hair's breadth of the most vital parts. As the result he was invalided out of the army, and then he resumed his work as secretary of the P. G. A. and worked hard for the benefit of the members

who were prisoners of war in Germany, collecting funds from every possible source and sending out to the men many more parcels of food and other necessities of which they stood sadly in need than they would have obtained without such special assistance. To him they will be grateful for evermore. His remains were given a semi-military funeral at Bushey, and the solemn ceremony was attended by several well-known golfers. The coffin was draped with the Union Jack and buglers of the Scots Guards sounded the "Last Post" over the grave of a good man who had done his duty and was beloved by his fellow man.

AND NOW AT THE LAST one has to record that another very fine golfer gave his life for Britain in the war. The casualty lists have become things of the past, and the continuous fears that we had for more than four years regarding them no longer exist. But at their very end they bore the name of a champion golfer, and quite the best that Ireland ever produced, Michael Moran, who died in hospital at Le Cateau from wounds received in action. Early in the war Moran joined the Irish Horse, and he had seen a good deal of service before he fell. He was only thirty years of age, and he learnt his golf at the Royal Dublin Club, Dollymount, which for the last three years has been in the possession of the military authorities. Ireland has produced two or three good professional players, but no other of anything like the quality of Moran, who rapidly possessed himself of all the chief honours for which he was eligible, winning the Irish professional championship for the first time in 1909 when the competition was decided at

Newcastle, county Down. From Dollymount he went to the Seaham Harbour Club, and thence to the war.

Had Moran lived and played again, he might have done much more for the fame of Irish golf, for he was little behind the very best professionals in this country, and the last time the Open Championship was played for at Hoylake he came very near to winning it. When two of the four rounds in the final test had been played, he was one of the leaders and was most threatening. But on the morning of the last day a veritable hurricane was blowing and Moran, who was one of the earliest starters, had all the worst of the weather. When he teed up for the beginning of his round he could hardly stand, and anybody who knows the first hole at Hoylake will realise that a more trying piece of golf in bad weather does not exist. It was too much for poor Moran on this occasion, and I believe he had used up nine strokes or more when he holed out at the first hole. From this bad start he never recovered, and there was no championship for him though he finished well up in the list.

THERE ARE REPORTS of various players of consequence getting themselves into form again. They are showing that interest in their game and the quality of it which they took in the old days before the autumn of 1914, and which they have been unable to exhibit in the period intervening between then and now. And all these reports seem to indicate that the old stagers, as one would call them, will be found as hard to beat in the future as they were in the past, and anyone who thinks that they are disposed of, and that new men must inevitably be

the champions, may find his calculations upset. From time to time it has been indicated in these notes that the old Triumvirate, as they are called, Harry Vardon, Taylor and Braid, were retaining a wonderful measure of their form, and now on the threshold of the first season of peace after the war they really seem to be playing as finely as ever. This remark applies particularly to Harry Vardon, who seems to have weathered the storm perhaps a little better than either of the others. There are some who even say that he has never played better in his life than he is doing now. A few weeks back he was taking part in a match at St. Annes for the benefit of one of the war funds, and he says himself that he has rarely played better or with more confidence and accuracy than he did then. He was not only making all the holes in par, but was making them easily and without any struggle. Braid and Taylor, until quite recently, had had very little practice for a long time, but on resumption they found that their game has suffered very little, and both they and Vardon have much confidence that in the summer they will show that they retain much if not quite all of their old supremacy.

As to other professionals of quality there are good reports of Tom Ball, that fine player who on more than one occasion has come near to winning the Open Championship, and who in 1909 captured the "News of the World" tournament. Recently he was in the Bournemouth neighbourhood, and took occasion to play a few rounds over the excellent and famous course at Broadstone, which is of full first-class quality and a fine test. His successive cards for six rounds were 72, 74, 80, 74, 73 and 79, and as the

course was rather heavy at the time, and there was a strong cross-wind blowing, which made the golf very difficult, this was most excellent golf. George Duncan has never been a lucky man, and he has some reason to complain of his bad fortune at this important juncture. He had been in the Royal Air Force since 1915, and just when he was thinking of the possibility of an early release and a resumption of golf, he met with a rather serious accident through some heavy parts of an aeroplane falling upon him and causing a badly bruised thigh and an infused knee. It may be a little while before he makes a complete recovery, and in the meantime, having been so long from the game, he is wondering whether he will be able to swing his club with the old-time speed and accuracy on his resumption.

ONE HEARS ALSO that some of the most eminent amateurs, having taken seriously to the game again, are displaying quite wonderful form. Such a one is Mr. Edward Blackwell, who has been playing at Prestwick lately and has had a few matches with Mr. Bruce Pearce, the well-known Australian left-handed player, the same who beat Mr. Chick Evans on the latter's first appearance in our championships at this same Prestwick. Mr. Pearce says Mr. Blackwell is driving the ball a very long way, and that he is quite as hard to beat as ever he was.

FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS there have been very few golf articles in the daily and other newspapers of this country. People played as of yore when they could; but there came to be a kind of understanding that the game should not be much written about

and should be kept in the background as much as possible. So the golf articles and news, which, before the war, had come to be regarded as of as much interest as the Parliamentary or foreign news, gradually disappeared. Some said they would never come back again; but they did not know what golf was who said that, nor what golfers need and must have. It was very interesting then to find practically all the newspapers, including the soberest and most serious, coming along with their golf specials, mostly by the old writers, almost immediately after the signing of the armistice, and by this they have got into full swing again, and with all the problems of form, schemes of reconstruction, and general speculations upon the future, the scribes find much that is interesting to write about.

SOME OF THE MEN who have suffered the loss of limbs in the war have adapted themselves in the most marvellous manner to the game, and have made it to appear that really they can play as well now as when they were physically complete. The tale was told some time ago of how Ernest Jones, the Chislehurst professional, who lost his right leg in Flanders came back to England and at once began to make rounds at Chislehurst in the seventies. Since then he has made further astonishing progress, and it is quite likely that when the championships come to be played again he will give a good account of himself and, if there are qualifying competitions to be negotiated, may qualify. Just recently he did a round at Chislehurst in the astonishing score of 66. A few weeks ago he was down at Littlehampton, a course at the seaside which is by no means

easy, and there, in a strong wind, he twice went round in the seventies. This is about the best one-legged golf we have ever heard of, and is better than ninety per cent of the two-legged golf of the amateurs.

One of the best amateurs in the London district before the war was Mr. W.S. Lurcott of the South Herts Club. He joined the army at the beginning and was given a commission. As the result of wounds received in 1915 he had to have one of his feet amputated. As soon as he was discharged from hospital he took to golf again and to his wonder and delight he, with perseverance, gathered much of his old form again. They say he is now playing astonishingly well.

SOME REFERENCE has previously been made in these notes to the extraordinary epidemic of burglaries at golf clubs, particularly in the London district, that has raged for a year or more. Like the influenza it seems occasionally to stop for a time, but it always starts again, and lately it has been in full swing once more. There is some deep mystery about this business, for it seems a remarkable thing that thieves should work their way into the premises of golf clubs and then content themselves with taking away a selection of the old golf balls that they find in the members' lockers. These, however, seem generally to satisfy them, and only occasionally do they patronize the kitchens and the wine cellars, in which, perhaps, they are wise for there is not much that is good in such departments in these days. But why do they not take boots and shoes that will fit them, of which there is always a good selection? These things are really valuable in these days.

One club in the London area has suffered from seven such burglaries in recent times, and it is stated that over a hundred of them have occurred in different places during the period of the war.

A theory is held in some quarters that all this kind of thing is not the work of ordinary burglars at all, but that it is all being done by a well-dressed gang of persons who pose as golfers and gain admission to the clubhouses as strangers desiring temporary membership, or on some other apparently reasonable pretence, being equipped with bags of clubs and looking the real thing. It is stated that in one case a well-dressed person made his appearance at a certain club and gave the name of a gentleman who, he said, was a member and who would serve as his introducer. The steward did not remember the name and procured the membership list to see if it could be found there; but while he was hunting through it the stranger disappeared and was never seen again. Again it is said that on one occasion recently three people drove up to the clubhouse of a golf club in Surrey in an automobile and inquired as to the terms of membership. The steward showed them round the place, and apparently left them for a time to themselves. They did not join the club and were never seen or heard of again; but on the day after their visit it was discovered that golf balls had disappeared from almost every locker on the premises. This theory is well enough in its way, and is picturesque, but why do such people make long journeys on automobiles with petrol at its present price merely to steal old golf balls? Anyhow the whole thing is mysterious.

GOLFERS who come home from the war will find that new clubs, if they need any—and what golfer was ever not in want of new clubs?—will cost them far more than they used to do. Before the war a very good driver indeed could be obtained for five or six shillings, and the very best were not more than ten shillings, but they will be fortunate men who obtain such clubs in the future for more than double those amounts. J. H. Taylor says, that in one week recently he endeavoured to buy five hundred clubs. "Two of the biggest firms in Scotland," he says, "could not look at the order. A finished hickory shaft, without the head or anything else, used to cost from sixpence to ninepence. It is now seven shillings and sixpence, which is surely a record increase in price for any article. It will pay golfers to look after their clubs carefully if they have trusted sets, for I understand we are not likely to get hickory for this purpose for a year or more."

IN VIEW OF the shortage of labour, the need for economies, and various other causes, an agitation is being started in some influential quarters with a view to making the taking of divots on a golf course in any circumstances taboo and bad form. At the Sandy Lodge Club, for instance, members are being requested as far as possible to avoid the taking of divots either accidentally or purposely. Without doubt a large proportion of divots that are cut out, especially by inexperienced players, never ought to be. The man who is young at the game often gives himself to understand that it is the correct thing when playing with irons to "take turf" with every shot, and he comes to concentrate on

taking the divot more than anything else. So long as he dislodges a slab of turf he feels that he has done the right thing, and that if the shot is not a success it is not his fault. Such persons would doubtless benefit from a strict rule that divots were not to be taken; they would learn accuracy and many other things. But, of course, the good golfer needs to take turf at times, though perhaps not so often as he thinks he does, and, if a rule is made that there must be no divots, it will be hard on him.

However he may gather comfort from what Harry Vardon has to say on the subject. Vardon says that some time in the coming spring he will play a match to show that a good round of golf can be played without taking a single divot or making any abrasion of the turf. That is all very well for Vardon, but what about humbler golfing mortals? And even the great Harry will have to deny himself the luxury of the push shot on this occasion. "But," says he, advocating the divotless play in a moment of enthusiasm—Vardon is generally enthusiastic for new ideas—"picking up the ball cleanly is far more satisfactory than the other way. The hacking out of a divot when the ball has been lying well affords conclusive evidence that some part of the stroke has been quite wrong. In the case of a good shot the scrape of the turf is so thin that it does no harm to the fairway." The Sandy Lodge Club is taking this matter so seriously that it is informing candidates for membership that it does not welcome new members who habitually take divots.

A FRIEND SUGGESTS to me that the great statesmen of the Allies who at-

tend the peace conference will surely play much golf together in their spare time, for it will be the best and most suitable recreation at their disposal, and there are good courses within easy reach, while quite a large proportion of the delegates, and those who will be hanging about outside, as it were, are players of the game. There is President Wilson for one, and in some respects he is qualified to be captain of the Peace Conference Golfing Society, if such an institution is established. If not the President, then it must assuredly be Mr. Balfour. One is almost certain that the President and Mr. Balfour will have some games together, and such games would be worth watching. One imagines that these two eminent personages regard the game in quite different ways. Mr. Balfour has the very loftiest respect for its traditions and sees very far into its mysteries; but from all that I can hear I doubt if Mr. Wilson concerns himself at all with such points, but just bangs the ball about for exercise

and finds the occupation uncommonly interesting. Mr. Bonar Law is a keen golfer, and Marshal Foch took to the game before the war and was becoming very devoted to it. I have an idea that President Poincaré plays a little. M. Clemenceau certainly does not, but, on the other hand, has some sort of scorn for such pursuits. Several others of the lesser lights of the conference are golfers, but there are no scratch men among them. If they organized a championship of their own it is practically certain that Wilson, Balfour and Foch would reach the semi-finals. At that stage Mr. Balfour might be favourite, but the President would gain much from his calm temperament and his keen persistency, while the Marshal would probably have worked himself up into fine form and would have an advantage in his superb physical condition. If the Marshal had found his game one would back him, and after him the President. A final between these two might even make the Germans forget their woes!

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