



LONDON, February, 1919

THERE HAS BEEN a very notable increase of golfing interest and enthusiasm in recent times. Men who were obliged by duties of one kind and another to take the game in very small doses during the war period, are finding time for much more of it now, making time in fact. There is life and activity about the club-houses, sales of golf materials have increased many times over despite the fact that normally this is the dead season and we have been having some very miserable weather of late and a great fillip is given to the game, especially in so far as those clubs are concerned, whose courses are on the outskirts of London, fifteen or twenty or thirty miles away by the abolition of restrictions upon automobiles. These clubs were virtually dependent upon the automobile before the war and are more than ever so now by reason of the fact that railway travelling has not only become much more expensive—which is perhaps, not a circumstance of much importance to the people belonging to these clubs—but is much slower and more troublesome. The automobile is the thing for golf now, more than ever it was, and in the future no player who takes the game very thoroughly in this country will feel that he is properly equipped without one. Now we see large collections of au-

tomobiles once again at some of the club-houses at the week ends. Except those controlled by military personages there had been practically none there for a long time until a month or so ago when the restrictions which virtually made motoring impossible, except when it was done for the benefit of the war, were at last removed.

All the signs are good. Everybody agrees—and can quote sound facts and views to support the opinion—that it is extremely likely there will be a great revival of the game in the coming season. All preparations are being made for an active spring season, and when April comes we shall see some such golf as we have not known for more than four years, well as the game has been kept going in every direction. Clubs in general are making up their fixture lists, and in many cases are restoring their monthly medal competitions, about the advisability of which there is some difference of opinion. Many people thought that these monthly competitions were a nuisance and did much to spoil the general match-playing interest of the game. However, there is a section of the golfing public that seems to be keen on them, people who can never play on a course but they begin to count their strokes for the round and worry about it all the time. As a

very different kind of thing one hears that the Royal and Ancient Club of St. Andrews has just determined to hold its spring meeting, all its competition gatherings having been suspended during the war period.

As most people are aware, the R. and A. Club events are by far the most important of all, and, with their history and the strength of the lists of competitors, they have come to have almost a national interest and importance. They have not of course, taken place since the beginning of the war, and if it is true that in the spring we shall have the famous competitions for the time-honoured medals, it will seem more like a real resumption of golfing affairs, as they used to be than anything else that could happen, even though the entries are limited to members and the general mass of golfers have nothing to do with the business. The competitions of the leading club—for such it is after the war, as it was before it—make better reading than those of any other club, or of any championship even, and that is largely due to the fact that it is always refreshing to be reminded of the features of St. Andrews and play upon it, and when we peruse the accounts of the stroke competitions that are carried through on these occasions most of us are aware of the main characteristics of the course and can in our imagination follow the player round and experience emotionally at least a little of his own excitements. Above all when he comes near to the end of the round, and we find him approaching the green at the famous Road hole, do we share a little of his anxieties.

It will be very good to be reminded of these things again. I believe also

that most of the leading clubs will have their spring meetings, such as the Royal Liverpool at Hoylake, Prestwick, and the others. They may probably in most cases take place at Easter. In many instances the object is not so much to make a speedy or formal resumption of the game—which after all will start itself, and long before that, without any assistance from competitions and committees as to give the members, the closest of friends often—who have been scattered all over the earth and in many cases are still scattered, the opportunity of meeting each other again, and talking of old times and the hard times that have happened since, and enjoying themselves for a day or two under the old conditions, the best of all. It is felt, and wisely, that club competitions will serve this purpose of the renewal of old friendship and the re-establishment of happiness better than championships and anything else, and we may be sure they are right. It will be the same in America as here.

AS TO THE main championships, meaning the Amateur and the Open, there are still certain doubts in existence. I have previously indicated that there is a strong body of opinion among golfers in general and among a section of the professionals—what one would generally regard as the wiser section—that it would be best by far not to play the Open Championship at all this year. One of the most conservative of these professionals, a man who has more than once won the Open Championship, told me while the war was still on that he believed that if the fighting stopped that minute there could be no championship till 1921. However, views change when

fighting ceases, and there is an increasing number of the younger professionals who feel that, as everybody else seems to be trying to resume the old ways and things as quickly as possible, they also would like to do so and would prefer to have the Open Championship this year to waiting through another winter for the same. Nothing is yet decided, but probably it will be settled soon. The event could not be held at the usual time (generally it was June) this year in any case, but it might be fixed up for later, say September. There would be many objections to August, one being that owing to the holiday season—which is likely to be very thorough this year—nobody would take much interest in it, and another that the holiday-making amateurs would need all their courses for themselves at that time, particularly the good ones.

The same objections, though to a slightly less extent, apply to September. October would be a good month if the days were not then becoming short, and if everybody did not feel, as they always do at that time, that they should be settling down to their winter's work with as much enthusiasm and thoroughness as possible. October is a terrible time for stern application in the British Isles, and one fancies it will be the more so this year as much of this next summer will be cut to waste, as it were, through people's own personal home-coming and other celebrations and the great national celebrations that are to take place. When October comes we shall, we hope, have done both with the war and the peace in a fuller measure than will be possible before then, and so can settle down to the real re-establishment of the normal life. This might suit the Open Championship or not. Incident-

ally I imagine it would rather suit American players who would like to come to take part. However, we shall see. The championship may be held this year, but if it is, there are obvious difficulties. Of the Amateur championship and its possibilities nothing has been heard, except that the clubs which control the event are being sounded as to their views. Nobody seems to know yet what those are. The balance of probability seems to be against the holding of the event this year. Nobody seems to want it.

THERE IS ONE special chance for both championships, and it may be taken. The present writer has several times suggested that for this first year of peace at all events if not for ever afterwards which would be much better—that old "sacred" rota, as we call it, being the settled order in which the championships are to be played on special courses, ought to be abandoned. According to the said rota the amateur championship should now be played at Muirfield and the Open at Deal. Neither of these places inspires us to the greatest memories and the keenest enthusiasms as do St. Andrews, Hoylake and Sandwich, and it has been proposed that it would be well to hold both championships at some central place such as Hoylake, which is the most convenient course for all, being practically midway between the great English and Scottish golfing centers and particularly convenient also to Irish and Welsh golfers.

But if it were thought it would be well not to have the championships at Hoylake, then it is submitted that St. Andrews would be a splendid choice for both of them, in some respects better than Hoylake. The course is in first-class order, and could probably

be made better than any of the other championship courses by the middle of the summer. The championships would do the old city a world of good and would make it feel something like itself again (it has suffered from some severe depression during the war) and, apart from the fact that every man in the south would not be anxious to make a long and expensive journey to the far north, most would be pleased to go back to the old place again, the real and hallowed headquarters of the game which never will entirely lose its sovereignty no matter what may happen. It would be almost like going to worship at the old shrine again in the way of gratitude and thanksgiving after all the turmoil and suffering of the past few years. A decision to this effect would please many and vex very few. In any case, the Open Championship cannot be held at Deal this year, as six of the holes have been in the occupation of the army authorities as a practice shooting range during the war, the military have made a great mess of the course, and it cannot be put right again this year. One hears that there is some doubt in the minds of the club down there as to whether they should attempt to mend the old holes or make six new ones.

AS TO OTHER EVENTS in the way of championships, the Irish golfers, as I foreshadowed, have quickly come to a decision to play their championships this year, all of them. A special meeting to consider the subject was held in Dublin the other day, Sir D. Plunkett presiding, and representatives of clubs from all parts being present. It was decided unanimously to revive the whole of the Union's pre-war pro-

gramme which had been suspended since the beginning of hostilities. The Irish Amateur Close Championship—that is the championship for amateurs of Irish blood and residence—was fixed to be played at Portmarnock, one of the Dublin courses, in the third week of May, subject to the approval of the Portmarnock Club, while the Irish Professional Championship will be held on the same course on the preceding Thursday and Friday. It appears then that the latter will be the first championship to take place in our isles after the war. If the Royal Portrush Club is willing, the Irish Open Amateur Championship will be held on the course of that club in the second week of September, and it is hoped that the international match, Ireland vs. Wales, will take place on the same course on the preceding Saturday. The finals of the Irish senior and junior cup competitions will, as usual, be played in connection with the meeting. It is tolerably certain that the Royal Portrush Club will be glad to have the championship meeting, and it is equally probable that this gathering will be one of the happiest of the year. The Irish championship meeting is always a delightful affair from the social point of view, while it produces golf a little inferior to the chief amateur championship and attracts many of the best competitors. This year it will be happier than ever in some ways, and there is no course in Ireland, one might almost say the world, where it will be a greater pleasure to assemble at than Portrush.

THE executive committee of the Ladies' Golf Union have already held one meeting to consider the immediate future, and are just about to hold the

annual meeting of the council and come to a definite decision upon some important matter. Among recommendations of the executive committee to be considered are the following: That the Open Championship be held this year; that the international matches shall not be played until 1920; that the English Close championships be held in 1919; and that no county matches be held until 1920. If it is decided to hold the Open Championship and the English Close Championship, the meeting will fix the greens, dates, last days for receiving entries, and the date for the draw of these competitions. The question of the status of members of clubs in abeyance, who may enter for the championship will be considered.

The L. G. U. begins the new period of its activities, which said activities are likely to be very intense this year, with a vital difference in the constitution of its management, for the meeting of the Council will be asked to receive the resignation of Mrs. T. H. Miller, the honorary secretary, who has been the life and soul of the Union ever since its inception in 1893. Fate denied her championship honours, but she was the runner-up in the first two years (being then Miss Issette Pearson) and she has the unique distinction of having played in every championship from then onwards up to the last one played at Hunstanton just before the war began. Some years ago she married the late Mr. T. H. Miller, one of the vice-presidents of the Union and one of the most active workers in connection with it. He died about two years ago. Mrs. Miller has held a peculiar position of authority in the management of the L. G. U. To fill her place and cause the work to be done in the same way and in the

same spirit and with the same authority is impossible, because there is no one else who could possibly exercise the same kind of authority; it would not be accepted from anyone else. Mrs. Miller's judgment was sound and she had great driving power in management. But the L. G. U. has a number of very capable women among those who attend to its interests, and though there will be a considerable change in the complexion of affairs it cannot be doubted that the progress of the institution will be fully maintained.

ONE OF THE FIRST, most interesting, and most important events in the London district—I imagine it will be the first, will be the Active Service tournament which is to take place at Sandy Lodge on April 8 and the three following days. The Sandy Lodge Club is always an enterprising institution, and it has the advantage of having one of the best courses in the London district. Its idea in this case is excellent, namely to hold a tournament open to all men, of whatever nationality or rank, who were members of the fighting forces on the side of the Allies. Particulars of the competitions are being circulated to all branches of the army through the Army Sport Control Board; to the Navy through the Admiralty; to the Royal Air Force through the Air Ministry; to the United States of America military, naval and aviation forces, through the headquarters staffs; and to the mercantile marine, through the secretary of the Mercantile Marine Service Association. The latter section have been taken in as an afterthought—a very good and proper one—for these men in many cases have undergone risks and sufferings in the

war no less terrible than any others, and their services have been no less valuable. There is no entrance fee to the competitions, the success of which is certain.

WRITING THUS of championships, a passing reference may be made to some of the amateur players upon whom most interest will be centered when they begin again. It may be taken that Mr. John Ball and Mr. Hilton will appear in the competitive ranks when the tournament is resumed, though Mr. Ball may need much pressing as he has pretty nearly lost his enthusiasm for these affairs, in fact he had done so before the war began. But a point of importance in this consideration is that there is no golfer in the land who will be more anxious to see all his old golfing friends than Mr. Ball, and this consideration will probably tempt him to the championship meeting, especially if it were at St. Andrews for he is one of the few honorary members of the Royal and Ancient Club. Remembering that by the rights of the rota the championship ought really to *he* held at Muirfield, and that most people hope it will not, it may be mentioned that this Muirfield is the only one of the championship courses that Mr. Ball has not won the championship on. Some say that surely by this, and with four and a half years of war interruption, Mr. Ball's championship day is done. It certainly ought to be—but then people said the same thing when he had only won half the number with which he is now credited. There is no stopping a man like this. As to Mr. Hilton, he was free by age from army service and has been playing fairly steadily for most of the time. He has played many games

during the war with Mr. Sidney Fry, once a runner-up in the amateur championship. Mr. Fry is at the moment engaged in the amateur billiard championship which he has won two or three times in the past. Not much is heard of Mr. Hilton in these days, but some say that he is playing well.

I believe that Captain Jenkins, the amateur champion (who was wounded twice in the war and one of whose brothers was killed and another wounded) is home again, and he may be expected to be heard of very soon on the links of Troon. Lieut. Robert Maxwell (I believe he is a captain now, but am not quite sure) who is one of the golfers in whom the public takes the keenest and most affectionate interest, being a fair representative of Scottish amateur golf at its very best, may not resume the game as soon as some of the others, for he was recently appointed to Sir Douglas Haig's staff. The British Commander-in-Chief, as most people are aware, is a very keen golfer, and lost no time after the conclusion of the armistice in getting into mufti and playing his favourite game. If he acquires a little of the Maxwell touch he should be a terror to other commanders-in-chief when he meets them on the links! An interesting item of news concerns that redoubtable amateur Irish golfer, Mr. Lionel Munn, certainly the best amateur player his country has ever produced. He got into the war at the beginning and after going through much fighting in the ordinary way as we may call it, developed the most remarkable skill as a bomb thrower. This attracted the attention of the authorities, who were so much impressed by it that they sent him home to train other soldiers in the art and practice of throwing these bombs. The

result justified the measure, for it is said that Mr. Munn trained a number of bombers who achieved the most amazing skill in this most useful war practice.

AS TO THE professionals, many of those who were called up are now finding their way back to their old clubs. Tom Ball, who has recently been playing some extraordinarily good golf, is back at Raynes Park, and W. L. Ritchie, who was once Braid's chief assistant and in that capacity, and afterwards as professional at Worplesdon, attained a great reputation as a wooden-club maker, is also back at Worplesdon after doing good service in the Tanks Corps. Harry Fulford, the well-known professional to the Bradford Club, and well known also as a witty writer on the game, and again as generally the most cheerful and entertaining member of any golfing party, a most popular man as well as an excellent player, is making a change. Fulford voluntarily joined the army at the beginning, and has risen as high as possible in non-commissioned rank. When the armistice was signed and, as stated, Sir Douglas Haig took to golf again, he selected Fulford for his associate in these early enterprises. I believe they were at Le Touquet, then. Well, Fulford is for the future to be the professional at Le Touquet, which as everybody knows, is a very fine inland course—on white sand—not far from Boulogne. It is a delightful place, and most popular with the golfers of France and England. Fulford is to be congratulated on securing one of the plums of all professional billets. He is worth it anyhow, and is an ideal man for Le Touquet. J. B. Batley, who has for long been professional to the Bushey

Hall Club, and has been most intimately connected with southern golf, is changing to the Dunstable Golf Club in Bedfordshire.

MOST OF THE golf writers are now set going again, and there are a few new ones at the business, some of whom are writing the most appalling rubbish. Here is a long paragraph from one of the leading newspapers of the day, as to which it need only be said that the suggestion of a sudden super-enthusiasm by the male players of this country is utterly ridiculous: "During the war thousands of golf widows were married again to their former husbands and foolishly hoped to live happily ever afterwards. The re-married golf widows are again bereaved. Their late lamented husbands have once more departed for the happy hunting grounds—of the little white ball. The corporeal shapes of their husbands, indeed, appear in their homes to eat and sleep (with a new heaviness), or to practice putting on the drawing room carpet in frost bound weather. But they are only phantom husbands. Their only mundane interests are the golf articles in the daily papers. Sometimes they bring other women's ghost husbands home to dinner, and then they talk golf. Golf widows are so literally grass widows that some of them declare that husbands who live on the turf are as lost as though they were under the turf. One golf widow persists to her ghost-husband's annoyance, in calling his golf course the 'cemetery'. All the golf widows are bitter against golf writers, whom they accuse of having reinoculated the golf disease in their late husbands after four years' apparent cure. There are lonely women in British homes who

declare that the golfing correspondent of the should stand in the dock with the Kaiser." It is possible that the writer was merely trying to be funny and does not expect to be taken seriously on the side of fact. If so, he needs instruction in humour. In the more responsible quarters there is an effort being made to prevent the vulgar exploitation of golf in the way that it was exploited before the war and of which there are signs of a renewal.

THERE WERE strange golf courses established in many places by the ubiquitous soldier and sailor golfers during the war which now alas! when the game is reviving, come themselves to be abandoned. Members of the American Fleet that formed the Sixth Battle Squadron of the Grand Fleet, and was with it on the east coast of Scotland and elsewhere, will be able to tell their friends in America of one of them at a bleak northern station, high up among the Orkney Islands. The world heard much in recent times of a place it had never heard of before, Scapa Flow, a great basin amid the Orkney Islands where the Grand Fleet spent much of its time when it was not in the Firth of Forth, waiting and watching, and here the German navy on its surrender was conducted. It may be a very long time before the American Navy has any occasion to visit Scapa Flow again, and the British navy will not need to spend any time there. Officers and men of the battleships will not suffer from want of exercise and recreation as they did up to the time of the armistice, and so in these lonely parts, by Scapa Flow, there will be one course the less.

Up there on a little island the Navy golfers landed, and laid out their own

course. They had done that kind of thing before in other places; they are adept at it. There were certain natural advantages about the land they chose, Such artificial hazards as were necessary were added, and the greens were carefully cultivated. They really made a very fair course of it, and on it the naval golfers enjoyed many games, conducted competitions, won each other's money, for which they had no particular use in those parts, and, as it is asserted, reduced their handicaps. The putting greens, I am told, were wonderfully good, and they had an excellent system of maintaining them in condition and continually improving them, in that a separate ship of the fleet was made responsible for one particular green, and there was some rivalry among the various ships as to which should produce the best. Most of the battleships had their golf tournaments from time to time, and they progressed best when they were up in the Scapa Flow region, the other attractions while there being so few, and, with the Germans always timid, time was apt to hang somewhat heavily upon their hands, despite all the alertness that was for every second maintained at the full. In the case of these tournaments there was, of course, no stipulation as to courses, and when the Grand Fleet moved away as to the Firth of Forth, they were continued on the courses round Edinburgh.

Nine-holes courses or sometimes ten, of a rough and ready sort, which, however, amply fulfilled the purpose for which they were made, were laid out at various places on the Western fighting front. In consequence of the movements of the army they had sometimes to be abandoned very soon after being constructed. Then in the

eastern theatre of war, round about Salonika, in Mesopotamia, and other Oriental regions, the golfers, when opportunity arose, left their mark upon the land they occupied. Shortly after the British forces occupied Bagdad, a course was laid out, and when it was completed thoughts were soon turned to contemplation of the first golf championship of Bagdad. A competition was duly organized, and the news of it spread for miles and miles over the surrounding country where the British golfers were, and it is related that one of them, Hardman his name was, who before the war was professional to a ladies' club in England, heard of it and that a silver cup was being given for the first prize. He was a gunner and had not

handled a club since he went into the army, but when he heard of this competition the old enthusiasm was aroused, and he determined that if it were possible he would compete. Bagdad, however, was far away, and it was difficult to get there. But golfers, as we all know, have always laughed at distance, just as lovers laugh at locksmiths, and Hardman resolved that he would be there. It took him three full days of travelling, and for a part of the time he had to get along on the top of an open wagon. However, he duly reached Bagdad, teed up in the competition, and achieved his heart's delight, for he won with a score of seventy. Such is a little romance of the war and golf.



LA84
Foundation