

PLAIN TRUTHS

BY "SAM SOLOMON"

SOME OF US have been wondering if it is indeed distantly possible that our golf legislators in their transcendent knowledge and wisdom may have anything to learn from the great statesmen of the world in regard to the conduct of affairs. Many would desire hastily to assume that they have not. It would not be meet that the golfing autocracies, which are as the most unbending of the world, should consider the proceedings at Paris and their general tendency, which is not only democratic but strongly bent towards the creation of universal and uniform order in the world, a common agreement, an arrangement for two hemispheres.

Peoples may preserve their individualities and their domestic arrangements; they may pursue their fate as they may desire. To do this they have the freemen's right. But when their work and affairs, their enterprises and ambitions, impinge upon those of other peoples and affect them, their absolute liberty of action, their freedom of arrangement and system cease. They must consider the others; for their own good and for the convenience, the health, and the progress and happiness of the world, some uniform working agreement must be found. That is the basic principle of the greatest conference of men that has ever been held. Clearly it is a strongly democratic principle. The League of Nations is a democratic idea. The world moves irresistibly towards democracy.

Golf itself, as we have seen, inclines that way and has always done, for it is a people's game despite the luxury which has attended it in many places in recent years, and the suggestion that it is above all things the pastime for the rich and for those whose blood is better than that of other people and of a somewhat different shade of red. There is after all a great measure of strength in the fine conservatism of golf which preserves the game in its utmost dignity; but this good conservatism is not the same thing as blind autocracy, as so many people foolishly imagine it to be. We would have the conservatism to stay with us, but the autocracy we would sweep away.

One of the reasons why we would banish it is that we feel that those golf legislators who are of the autocratic kind—they are not all like that—in the United States, in Britain and elsewhere, feel in their hearts that the business of Paris is mostly nonsense, and that in so far as applying principles and tendencies to their own affairs they have nothing to learn. But the conference in the capital of France is not merely a conference for the settlement of frontiers, the compromising of interests and ambitions between the nations and the settlement of a vast universal scheme of international politics, though that is the first and ostensible object of the assembly.

This conference stands for a change in the world and in the lives and systems and attitudes of all of us, and its principles may in a greater or a lesser measure be applied to all our affairs. Particularly may they be applied when those affairs are in any way of an international kind, and the

international bulks heavily in the general scheme of golf in these days. Perhaps some of the autocrats of golf—in all countries—might learn a little from the conference of Paris, a little about the inexorable demands of democracy, a little about the closing up of the world and the abandonment of old prejudices, a little about common sense and the deriving of the best good and happiness from this short life of ours. But it is likely the autocrats do not think so. Thus while there may be a League of Nations, an international court for the smoothing and the improving and the enlarging of the international arrangements of mankind, increasing daily as they are, the golfing lords would go their way in much independence, and the countries would be laws unto themselves even when their affairs should intertwine.

BUT IT IS submitted that the time has come for all those who are connected with the management of golf to take more broadly international view of things. It is necessary for the good and advancement of the game; it is even necessary for the convenience of individuals. There is no sport in the world that by its nature and its practice is so entirely international as is golf. We need not go over the old arguments again; they are well known to all of us. In its elements and essentials the game is the simplest thing imaginable and appeals to all men, white, red, yellow or black, whether they are rich or poor, busy or lazy, married or single. But above all it appeals to those who are white and speak the English language—and next to them the French, and those who are busy people also. It appeals most strongly to us and to the English and their colonists.

The splendid internationalism of golf is a wonderful thing and it is one to be jealously preserved. There has never been anything like it in sport before, and in the nature of things there could never be anything like it again if this failed. Yet the autocrats of the game could never bring themselves to think internationally, to regard the international aspect of golfing matters as a thing of consequence and one to be dealt with by legislation and initiative. They have openly treated it with contempt. They have allowed international affairs to drift, to look after themselves, to develop in their own way. Our American legislators have been woefully guilty in this matter; but, to be fair to them, they have not been so neglectful or so culpably careless as the British.

If the American golfing autocrats have done nothing, they have the right to say in their defense at their trial that at least they have not done worse than nothing which is what the British have done, notably in such golf legislation as was so strongly objectionable to Americans as to make it almost impossible to believe it was not carried out in direct contempt of them. We refer of course to the Schenectady putter, the original of which, as the war gift of its owner, rests now and for always in the clubhouse at Garden City, not only as the momento of a matchless triumph, but as the reminder of some legislative follies and also of the beginning of a new internationalism in golf. It was the more inexcusable, that stupid legislation, in that it struck at one of the main and traditional principles of the game in the freedom of

the player to exercise all natural and proper means that his ingenuity may suggest to him for the achievement of his object, and freedom as to club has always been recognized as right and proper. By this Americans were driven away from complete and absolute unanimity with the golf legislation of St. Andrews and had to make one special law of their own. It was, perhaps, a small matter, but, however necessary, it marked an undesirable departure.

NOW IT IS NOT only that for the good of the game, and the happiness and satisfaction of those who play it, that this kind of thing should be prevented in the future, but that beyond this something should be done internationally in a positive and progressive way. Before the war internationalism in golf was developing at an enormous rate, but the autocrats, the lofty legislators turned their heads away from this most significant movement, they ignored it and they did nothing for it. We saw how the championships of America, Britain and France were being invaded by the players of other countries. See how the British were coming across the Atlantic! See how the Americans, even more than they, were playing in the foreign championships!

Consider that marvellous invasion of the American golfing forces at Sandwich in the summer of 1914. It was the greatest thing of its kind that had ever taken place in golf, and it was a movement of the greatest importance to the game. In its way it was successful; it went through well. It managed itself. It was well that it was able to do so. The autocrats did nothing for it. What was there that they could do? Was there anything? Everybody who knows the real history of those invasions knows that there was. There were difficulties that now and then threatened to be serious. There was not a complete understanding by the golfing authorities in Britain and America. They were both disposed to ignore this wonderful thing, and leave it to its own management. The result was that there were doubts on each side. There were doubts particularly on questions of amateurism, and if it had not been for the desire and the determination of the golfing peoples on both sides to act well with each other these doubts, however foolish they may have been, might have had serious consequences. By a proper international arrangement such difficulties would never have occurred.

But, besides this, the way should have been smoothed for the American voyagers. They should have been assisted by counsel and arrangements made for them. They should have been told what to do and how to do it. The business should have been internationally managed. It should have been an official or a semi-official matter as between the countries. These invasions will begin again; one might even say that they are beginning. There may be British entries for the American championships this year. The whole question ought to be taken up by the legislators and systems of procedure arranged.

It is known that once when a British player had entered for the U. S. National amateur championship, it was determined to ask him questions before he began his play on the first day, and, if he could not answer them in a manner satisfactory to the U. S. G. A. officials, that he would have been

disqualified and not allowed to play—after sailing the ocean to do so. Happily he found out about it, and he did not sail the ocean. But if he had? It is likely—indeed it is certain—that the U. S. G. A. officials were right. It is also almost certain that the authorities in Britain would have approved, and indeed that the U. S. G. A. knew that they would. All would have been well with everybody but the poor man himself. Yet it might not have been. It is the easiest thing conceivable to bring about misunderstandings in such matters as these. They are most delicate. There may be right and justice all the way along, but when one country begins to act against the individuals of another there is the material for trouble, most distressing and far reaching trouble.

THEN FOR YEARS past there has been gossip and discussion about the possibility and desirability of establishing international matches as between Great Britain and the United States. The time is ripe for them. They would be enormously interesting. If representative, they might stir up far greater interest than any championships ever did. They would stand for tests of national strength in the way that individual efforts, however remarkable, might never do.

These international matches, by teams of six or eight or nine or ten players on each side—but perhaps six would be the best number of all—would be the most interesting of all and would make the utmost enthusiasm in both countries. They are wanted. They ought to take place. Why do they not take place? Because the guardians of the game are too indolent, too careless to stir themselves up to any initiative in such matters as these.

This is a matter which can only be taken in hand by official authorities. Private parties cannot be made up in the name of nations and sail the seas to foreign links with full national status. They would not be accepted and recognized. Only the associations could manage such a thing; and they would have to take the initiative. St. Andrews might think the world had gone crazy if it were suggested that such a business should be taken up by them, and the U. S. G. A. might indolently and stupidly acquiesce in the St. Andrews attitude. They might ask why they should worry when it is so easy not to worry. They can meddle when they need not with things that already go well, but when it is a matter of initiative for something good there is nothing doing.

But there is a new time beginning in golf as in politics, and war, and industry and everything else. This must be recognized, as it is recognized in conferences at Paris. There is a new beginning being made. Old ways are being abandoned. New ideas are being adopted. Initiative has to be exerted. If those who ought to exert it do not, then someone else will. We want big international matches, officially arranged, and played by men who have been chosen by their countries. Then we shall see what international golf can really be, and it will be a good thing for the game and for the people in general.

BUT THERE IS that amateur question. It is enormously important. It bristles with difficulties. Some of those difficulties which we knew were in existence before the war may have been aggravated by the passage of almost golfless time rather than otherwise as some people might imagine. We are beginning things again, and the general attitude is that now is the time to begin fair, to make a general removal of what is bad, to have all essentials well and properly regulated.

There ought to be some international understanding about the amateur rule, or there will be bad difficulties in the near future. The U. S. G. A. has meddled with the rule for its application in America, and, no doubt with the very best intentions and with a great ideal, has made a mess of things. That is evident. It brought the matter to such a state of confusion and general dissatisfaction that only the war was enough for a remedy. The war saved the situation. It enabled the Association to reinstate Francis Ouimet, to do it gracefully and properly. That is well. Perhaps on this side, and for our own golf, there may be no more serious difficulties about the amateur question. One hopes not, but it were well not to be too sanguine on this point.

But there is the other side. They do not worry there, either, when they should. They do not like to take trouble. It would have been well for them if they had taken some of the trouble that the U. S. G. A. took and did not need to take, for there are a number of wise people who think that the amateur laws in Europe need more attention than the amateur laws in the United States of America. Are there no players there whose entries for the amateur championship are freely accepted without any question, who are not more than half professional—much more than half? We know that there are.

But it were better not to enter into details about these unpleasant things. Yet when those players come to the United States to play—as they may do—what about the position then? There are players who would not be eligible in one country but would be considered eligible in another. There is the case of Francis Ouimet again. After having once been declared ineligible in this country and then having been reinstated, is it certain that in other countries the same good and kindly view will be taken? Wrong as they may have been—wrong as we believe they were—it is known that the British authorities had some special views about Francis Ouimet when he went to play there in 1914, and that they thought that if he went again there might be difficulties raised. How are we to know that those British authorities would not persist in this view if Francis Ouimet went to Britain in quest of honours again—as he might do?

It is possible, of course—let us believe that it is likely—that the British authorities might take the same kindly view of things that the U. S. G. A. did—the same wise view—but they might not. These golfing autocrats are funny people; you never know what they will do next. They have funny ideas about their dignity, and when they develop them they behave strangely. And these questions ought not be matters of chance or favor; they should be properly regulated by rule and system.

IT COMES TO THIS: we need a proper working understanding in these matters between the two chief golfing countries—and we should now include the French and make it three—and the sooner we have it the better. In the first place the amateur law should be the same in every country, absolutely the same.

Amateurism is in its principles not a thing that changes with latitude and longitude. It does not depend on what you eat, or what clothes you wear, or whether your money is reckoned in dollars, francs or pounds. It is not a matter of climate, or of kings or republics. It is a question of whether a man plays the game for the love of the thing, or whether he plays it only to make his living by it. That is a simple point which must be the same everywhere, and in all ages, and in all conditions of life. It is therefore ridiculous that there should be any variations in the rule in the matter, and it is also highly inconvenient. It may be more so in the future. If we had the same amateur law everywhere much trouble and worry would be avoided.

There is no sort of similarity between the amateur rules in the United States and Britain at the present time. They are both unsatisfactory. But in the United States at all events there has been some honest and enterprising effort made to get at the rights of this difficult business and to establish a principle. In England there has been no such effort made, and in truth they have no amateur law. St. Andrews has never touched the question and has never issued any edict upon it. It would rather not. It would be a great worry, and if it made such a law and then tried to apply it there might be much unpleasantness.

Only the amateur championship authority, which is an irregular and antediluvian body, has some sort of old law in the matter, which makes a great point about the amateur player not having carried clubs as a caddie when he was passing from the stage of childhood to that of a young man. This old law was itself made when golf was young, and those old autocrats have been half afraid to touch it ever since. Once, some years before the war, they did just change a word or two as we are told, but it is still the same, stupid, ineffective old law, whose chief merit is that according to it you may decide that any particular man is either amateur or professional as you please, or, on the other hand, you may make the excuse if a case arrives for judgment, that it is impossible to settle anything according to this law, and it must therefore not be attempted. All of which saves a lot of worry, but does not make much progress.

Now the English ought to have a new law, and probably they are thinking that themselves. They have a rather untidy golfing house of their own to set in order, and when all the golfers are back from the war fields and on the links again somebody may insist on that house being put to rights. We have heard rumors and more rumors, about what may happen. These are times for changes. The old autocrats must stir themselves up and begin to worry about important matters or they will be very much disturbed.

But it is evident that it is to the highest degree desirable that these amateur laws of different countries should be the same. The peace con-

ference in Paris has been making all sorts of laws that will apply equally to all sorts of countries. The same thing must be done here with us in golf. That amateur law must be made universal, so that there may be no more difficulties, and it should be a broad and simple rule which nobody can misunderstand. It will be the more effective and useful if it is liberal in its interpretation of what amateurism is rather than narrow. We do not want a man who is an honest amateur and the keenest enthusiast to be called professional if he does some silly little thing that the old autocrats consider is an act of professionalism. To the devil with those acts of professionalism. We know when a man is an amateur and when he is not, without any laws or rules or explanations. If I were to sell my set of clubs to Rockefeller for a million dollars because the old man took a fancy to them and I felt I should like that million, I declare to the gods that I am an amateur still.

WHAT WE WANT is an International Board. It is one of the first and most important needs of this new time. Golf is such an international game that it is a necessity. There should be a special International Committee of the U. S. G. A. This mention of such a thing for the very first time has set me wondering; it has made me start; it has taken me aback. Why in the name of all the stars, the sun and the moon also, has such a thing never been thought of and done before? The omission seems incredible. That International Committee ought to be composed of the most experienced and broadest minded men, and certainly of men who have a knowledge of golf abroad and know the sentiments that hang on to it. It is no use thinking that other countries can be forced to adopt what we think is right. They have to be handled gently; concessions have to be made—as they have been made in Paris—and compromises established.

Then in England there should be another International Committee. They will have a difficulty as things are there at present, in making any such authority, as they do not seem to have any other authority to start it. St. Andrews would say that it could never do such a thing, as it had never been done before. If they had a Union or Association in England it would be a simple matter, but they have not. That is the trouble. However, that is their affair, and it may be remedied. But somehow, if this movement is started they will need to get their International Committee from somewhere. When they have established it and considered the international questions from their own point of view, and the United States has done the same, it will be time for the International Board to get to work and brush away all the difficulties that exist.

The International Board should consist of an equal number of representatives from the International Committees of each country. It should not be a large number; there is travelling and convenience and opportunity to think about. Two from each country would be enough. France might be given one place at such a Board, but that is another matter.

This Board would solve all the international difficulties of golf like the drying of dew by the morning sun. It would make things easy and so pleasant. It would frame an amateur law for application to all nations. It would regulate the international aspect of championships. It would settle points as to who might play and who should not. And it would set about arranging those international matches of which we have spoken. It would be a splendid thing in every way.

The board ought to meet once a year. It might be done. The Atlantic ocean after all does not measure one million miles from one side to the other. It seemed a simple thing to slip millions of Americans across it in a big military hustle last year. We could get two more across if it were necessary. Besides men might be chosen for this Board work who would find such travelling agreeable and convenient to their other pursuits, and again there are great occasions—championships—when they would like to be there.

There is much work waiting for this International Board to do. Our old friend the stymie has been asleep mostly during the war, but it is waking up again. It will soon be very active. There is an enormous quantity of life in that sad old dog. Now about the beginning of the war the U. S. G. A. thought that something would really have to be done with Stymie, and he was formally mentioned to St. Andrews. This looked like business. But St. Andrews said that most of itself had gone to the war or was concerned with it, and it could not worry with Stymie then. This was reasonable and right. Consequently the U. S. G. A. shut this question down until the end of the war. But it will come along now; it must come along. It will be a difficult thing for the U. S. G. A. to treat with St. Andrews on the question. One knows the difficulties that are ahead; one feels them. This is a matter for an International Board. Questions of this kind should be settled in the Paris way.

THERE ARE HEAPS of things in the international way that need to be done, and in which an International Board might help. Golf is a travelling sort of game. Half the pleasures of the real golfer, and those of the better and more stimulating kind, are derived from the exercise of that wonderful brotherhood of the game which makes the wandering golfer a welcome visitor at many places at which he calls in foreign lands. This old game can do more to assist a traveller at times than many consuls or agents of tourist offices. But it is after all a matter of chance, and the whole thing wants organization.

During the next few months and years there will be more golf travelling being done by Americans than there has ever been before. They will be visiting France and England for reasons that we know; and, like wise and happy men, looking forward to a full measure of the best delights, they will take their clubs with them. They will no doubt do well and happily.

But it would be better in many ways if there was some official recognition and care of this proceeding. There will be such numbers of Americans at these foreign places in the times that are coming on that, especially on the few courses of France, there may be difficulties occasionally in accommodating them all. That may induce the foreign authorities to look a little hesitatingly upon them sometimes, to pick and choose from them, to make excuses upon occasion, and to raise the fees to an extent that would be unfair if it were not designed to exclude. Credentials may be asked for, and the wandering golfer rarely troubles himself much about his credentials. He may find difficulties over there if he does not supply himself with them in the future. An Association, mindful of the interests of its people, might do much for these wandering players.

Again these vagrants often know not whither they should go, or how. They do not know where they should not go, or why. They should be informed. There should be some means of deriving all necessary information from the bureau of some central authority. And it should be the same on the other side, for the British also will be coming to American courses in some numbers, and in the past they have made many mistakes and regretted them. There should be mutual exchanges and concessions. An active Association, with initiative and enterprise might arrange them.

These bodies, as in existence now, arise in horror at such suggestions. Then they laugh. They think it would be absurd to do anything that golfers really want and would be useful to them. They make handicap lists, they elect officers, they choose championships courses, and they start amateurism campaigns and create very much unnecessary unpleasantness. So far as the average golfer is concerned, the man who does not play in championships and makes more bad shots than good ones, the Association is of no utility, and yet these men make up more than ninety per cent. of the game. Is it foolish to expect that the things that they want and which would make their golf even better to them than it is should be provided for them, or that some attempt should be made in this direction? It is not. The time is coming on when these people, the great democracy, will insist on having what they wish for.

But the first thing to decide upon is the nature and possibilities of internationalism in golf as it exists at present and as it will be in the very near future, the problems that will be raised—the amateur definition, the stymie question, and all the rest of them—and how they may be met and turned to the advantage of the community. And for that we need international committees and an International Board in some form. We want men who take the wide view of the game, and know that this is sport for the world and not for one little corner of it, and that legislation in world terms is needed for it.
