

OUR FOREIGN LETTER

By BERNARD DARWIN

THERE is little golf to write of now, for the war has driven the notion of games out of men's minds and there will be less and less as time goes on. August is nominally the holiday month in which there is more golf played throughout the length and breadth of the country than at any other time. During this last fateful August many have given up their holidays altogether and even those who have gone through with it have played but little. Everybody has been trying to find something to do in the country's service; those who have found a task have no time for anything else and those who are still searching—and they are many—have not felt much inclination to amuse themselves. The golf courses, as one catches a fleeting glance at them out of a railway carriage window, seem to wear a forlorn

and derelict look: the flags are still waving, the putting greens are mown, the sun is shining brightly, but there is only a solitary figure or so to be seen toiling round in the distance.

Though the links are deserted the golf clubs have been bestirring themselves in various ways. A note or two as to what some of them are doing may fill in our infinitesimal corner of the picture of a country at war—not that we fully realize yet that we are at war and what it is going to mean to us. All the clubs have of course in their houses subscription lists for the Prince of Wales's National Relief Fund and have headed the list with a donation from the club funds. Many of them too have collecting boxes in which players are besought to "leave your change" when paying for lunches, caddies and so on. Then every

GOLF ILLUSTRATED



THE STOKE POGES CLUB HOUSE NEAR LONDON
Which has been offered as a hospital for either wounded men or convalescents

club is urging all its servants and caddies who are of military age either to join the regular army or the Territorials. At the Royal St. George's Club at Sandwich a notice was posted on the declaration of war that no man who was of an age to serve his country would be allowed to carry clubs unless he could produce evidence to show that the country had refused his services. Many of the caddies have thereupon enlisted, and such small amount of carrying as is still wanted at Sandwich is being done by old men or boys. Those caddies who while over the age for enlisting are yet quite able-bodied are being employed in various useful ways. Many have been helping in the digging of trenches at Dover while others have been guarding bridges both by day and night. There has probably been plenty of this work to do in a region situated so near to places that are of vital importance. It is scarcely necessary to add that the club is looking after the wives and families of any employees of the club who have joined the colors. That remark applies it is to be hoped to all employees throughout the country.

At the very beginning of the war when fears as to scarcity of food were more acute than they are at the moment of writing, it was urged as a public duty to plant any pieces of spare land with vegetables. This advice has been followed with a will at Walton Heath. Some eight or ten acres of land close to the club house were promptly handed over by the owner to the club, caddies were set to work to plough it up and turnips, sea-kale, beetroot and other vegetables are being sown. Many clubs have offered their club

houses if required in the country's service. The authorities at Sandwich have been in communication with the Admiralty and both Stoke Poges and St. George's Hill have tendered their houses for use as hospitals either for wounded men or convalescents. The Stoke Poges club also undertook to provide a medical and nursing staff. It would be hard to imagine more pleasant places for convalescents than the houses of these two golf clubs that have set so good an example. They are pleasant however, in quite different ways and are set in quite different surroundings. Stoke Poges is a big country house converted into a golf club. It is a great white pile with an imposing flight of steps up to its door and an imposing cupola on its roof. It is hardly what one could call a pretty house, but there is an attraction in its solid gorgeousness. It is the kind of palace that one might imagine being built by some old Indian nabob coming home in the days of Warren Hastings with his pockets bulging with rupees. Round it is a park that is as old as Doomsday book, full of beautiful trees and in the midst of the park is a lake where lie buried the golf balls of many an errant driver. In the distance through the trees is a glimpse of Windsor Castle and the two familiar little pinnacles on the roof of Eton Chapel. St. George's Hill has a fascination of quite another kind. It has none of the stateliness and splendour of Stoke, the house is quite a new one, built wholly and solely for the purposes of golf. There is something engaging, however, about its thatched roof and most certainly over its situation, where it hangs on a hillside looking down the green

GOLF ILLUSTRATED

glades through the surrounding mass of fir woods, and so out to a blue dim distance beyond. In both these places men should get well quick and enjoy themselves immensely in doing so.

As far as any kind of competition is concerned things are practically at a standstill. There are one or two brief accounts of summer meetings to be seen tucked away in unconsidered corners of the newspapers, but I hardly think that anyone reads them. Taylor and Braid met the other day in an exhibition game at Stainault Forest, which is a public course near London and public in the sense that anybody may play there if he likes to pay, and very few people do so. The Professional Golfer's Association have postponed all but one of their fixtures, including the *News of the World* Tournament. The single exception is the Professional International match between England and Scotland, which is to be played in October, in order to help the good cause, on the course of the Mid Surrey Club in the Old Deer Park at Richmond. Gate money is to be charged and the ensuing crop of half crowns, which it is to be hoped will be a large one, will be handed over without deduction of any kind to the National Relief Fund. Up till this year this match has been played just before the Open Championship, but it was felt rather needless to prolong an already long drawn out meeting and also to be overshadowed by the big event immediately following it. In future therefore, it is to be a separate event. The proprietors of

Country Life newspaper have presented a challenge cup and medals for the two teams and in happier times, the match will now assume a new interest and importance. The match is one in which England has as a rule the best of it. At the top of the list Vardon, Taylor and Ray on the English side are fairly balanced by Braid, Herd and Duncan on the Scottish, but further down the Englishmen are the more solid and level lot. They have a host of fine young golfers to choose from who are only just below the best. It may be seen that the selection task is not an easy one from the fact that Edgar who, so brilliantly defeated all the big men at Le Touquet, has never yet played for England.

A very great golfer, almost unknown to the present generation of golfers, has lately died in the person of Douglas Rolland. It is one of my most poignant golfing regrets that though I might very well have done so, I never saw him play. When one comes to reckoning up the years one realizes with something of a shock how long ago was Rolland's prime. The last year in which he made a stir in the golfing world was in 1894, the first year that Taylor won the championship. The championship meeting was that year at Sandwich and Rolland, though he did not win, was perhaps the most successful of all the combatants. First of all he crushed Willy Park in a big money match over thirty-six holes; then he was second in the championship and finally he won an invitation tournament in which the best eight amateurs and the



THE ST. GEORGE'S HILL CLUB HOUSE

Which has been offered as a hospital for the wounded. The photo shows Abe Mitchell putting and Sandy Herd looking on

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best eight professionals took part, beating Taylor, the new champion in the final. After that though he was still young and ought to have been well and strong he was crippled with rheumatism and ceased to be a force in the golfing world. Nearly all those who knew his game well unite in saying that Rolland was the most glorious driver that they ever saw, and it hardly seems too much to add that as a purely natural golfer he has never had a superior. He took no care of himself, his clubs or his game, and would play with the gayest indifference with any club that were offered him. There is a well-known story of an exhibition match that was to be played—some twenty-five years ago now—on a well known London course between Rolland and the local professional, a man of considerable repute. The hour for beginning the match approached, a large crowd assembled and there was no Rolland. Astonishment and anxiety prevailed and then at the very last moment Rolland appeared from nobody knew where, in his best Sunday clothes, a stiff white shirt and without a vestige of a club. He borrowed some clubs on the spot, rumbled

up his white shirt to make it a little more yielding, sallied out on to the course and beat both his opponent and the previous record for the course. Rolland hardly ever played in the Open Championship, because for various reasons he did not for several years find it convenient to go to his native Scotland. His name is written on none of those lists on which future generations will look curiously, while they speculate as to what manner of men were the prehistoric champions of the stone-hard gutty age. But as long as there remain any of those who saw him play or even of those who, while they never saw him, yet remember the terror inspired by his name, Douglas Rolland will be accounted one of the greatest of all golfers.

I cannot end this rather gloomy and desultory letter without saying that Mr. Chick Evans's many golfing friends here have time in the midst of their troubles to be delighted over his fine play in the Open Championship. It would have been a wonderful thing if he could have succeeded Mr. Ouimet—as Amateur Open Champion for the second year running. As it was, he did nobly and we all congratulate him.