

THE HUMOR OF THE GAME

By A. W. TILLINGHAST

EXPLOITING humor is dangerous business. The court fool might be rewarded when he made his royal master laugh, but on another occasion he risked a beating because he happened to spring an antiquated jest.

Someone has said that the world knows but seven original jokes and that all others are modifications of these ancient themes. This may be true, then

again it may not, but certain it is that he who attempts to relate a golf story, which he thinks is humorous and original, may be skylarking in a graveyard.

Anyone who has golfed for many years, constantly meets with one who proceeds to relate, between chuckles, an incident which "happened only last week—I give you my word!" But it is more than

G O L F I L L U S T R A T E D

likely that the subject was introduced in the dim past and the story is like youthful clothes on a decrepit old roue.

The actual happenings in real life offer as many laughs as inventions do, and looking back through the years, I remember that golf provided many laughs during the visit to America of the Oxford-Cambridge team in 1903. I first met these merry gentlemen at Garden City previous to the national championship, which was played over the Nassau course at Glen

Low was wending his way to the bathroom when he met one of them, in pyjamas, standing near the bar, which opened at 6 a. m. "Will you take some refreshment?" said he of the pyjamas.

"Surely you can't have a drink at this time in the morning," exclaimed our horrified captain.

"I know I can," was the retort, "I've just had one."

"In one of the States we were invited to play there on the opening day of a new golf club. This affair was not down on the schedule, but our hosts managed



OH!!!

The Professor deliberately. "—————!!!! And—I—don't—apologise"

From *Punch*

Cove, and afterwards it was my good fortune to be selected on one of the teams which opposed them. C. H. Alison was one of the visiting Britons and evidently the tour was a happy one for them, too, for recently he has referred to it in a highly entertaining manner. He relates that before they landed in Boston they had to fill in answers to a number of printed questions, and the proceeding gave H. G. B. Ellis, familiarly known as the "Skipper," a great deal of trouble. He finally completed the list by stating that by trade he was a "Hot-Cross-Bun Maker." The official responsible for making the returns, fearing that the matter was not being taken quite seriously, suggested that this was a rather unusual occupation. "Well, you see," said Mr. Ellis, "my father forced me to adopt some profession, and this is less arduous than most. You only work for one day in the year."

Continuing the reminiscences, Mr. Alison said, "We made the acquaintance of several Americans on the voyage, and on a rather chilly morning Mr.

to produce a swift train for us, and we were whirled down to the course. To play golf in a Temperance State encourages forethought rather than abstinence. Our good friends stocked the train instead of the cellars.

"When we arrived we observed that the first teeing-ground was surrounded by a large crowd, in the forefront of which was a band. Our captain judged this to be a good moment for keeping under cover, but he was not allowed to do so for long. The President of the Club announced: 'The course will be opened by Mr. John L. Low driving the first ball.' The band struck up 'God Save the King,' and Mr. Low hit a half-topped slice in the rough."

"Skipper" Ellis furnished many laughs for us and I remember his gigantic cotton umbrella almost as well as himself, for it seemed to be ever with him. After the match in Philadelphia the two teams journeyed to Atlantic City for a day by the sea, and

GOLF ILLUSTRATED



From *Punch*

MILTON AT THE LAST HOLE

"And, missing thee, I walk unseen on the dry, smooth-shaven green."
Il Penseroso

when Mr. Ellis appeared on the beach in his bathing suit he had his umbrella still with him. Directly opposite the Casino his attention was attracted by the little crab-like creatures who go digging into the sand as the surf recedes, and immediately he began digging them out. From one spot he moved to another, getting further and further away until at last he and his umbrella could be seen far distant in the direction of Chelsea, and no doubt he walked quite a mile, when as a matter of fact he could have found quite as many of the "sand-diggers" within a radius of fifty feet from his starting point.

One of the members of the team told this story of the "Skipper" which, although it does not refer to golf, is interesting because of his connection with the game. It seems that Mr. Ellis had visited America once before, for a short time during the Chicago Exposition; arriving there, without reservations, at a time when sleeping quarters were at a premium. He was accompanied by a man-servant and four trunks. Eventually he secured a tiny room which was only large enough for himself and two pieces of luggage. It is likely that his valet slept on a billiard table. In any event it was necessary for him to place two trunks in the keeping of a storage warehouse. Soon after, he returned to England, quite forgetting the trunks which he had left behind in Chicago, but some months later the warehouse company wrote him, requesting that he advise them how they should send

his property to him. The subject puzzled him and after carrying the letter around in his pocket for fully three weeks, during which time he sought the advice of many friends, he was quite as perplexed as before because of the great variety of proffered suggestions. Then he cabled—"I don't know."

The visit to Atlantic City recalls two other happenings. On the previous night after the match in Philadelphia, the members of both teams were bountifully wined and dined until a very late hour, but before retiring they were informed that a special train would take them to the seaside rather early in the morning. The committee found great difficulty in getting everyone out, but at train-time, after Herculean efforts, all were accounted for; although it must be admitted that it was a very sleepy aggregation that boarded the train. The superintendent of the division had made elaborate preparations for a record run, and the fifty-five miles were covered in forty-five minutes. But as a matter of fact, nearly everyone was sound asleep, and had it taken two hours, it would have been more to their liking.

On the arrival of the train the superintendent very proudly said to the owl-like assemblage: "Gentlemen, I am pleased to announce that we have made this run of fifty-five miles in the remarkable time of forty-five minutes."

Unfortunately no one enthused and it is doubtful if many were sufficiently awake to comprehend. Then one of the committee, addressing the "Skipper," said jokingly, but yet in very serious fashion, "Mr. Ellis, do you know that we have covered fifty-five miles in *twenty-five minutes?*"

The "Skipper" regarded him blankly and then in his blandest tones, replied, "Really!"

Each of the American players took one of the visitors with him for the surf bathing, and it was my privilege to have with me the late J. A. T. Bramston. It will be remembered that he was a very long-legged man, crowned with a head of curly red hair. His previous experience in sea bathing had been confined entirely to bleak coasts where the rocks came down abruptly to meet the water. At Atlantic City the beach runs out in long shallows, and it is possible for one to walk out a long distance with the water not much above the knees. There were very few people bathing at the spot where we issued forth, but there were two women reclining in a little pool with only their heads showing, and Bramston jumping to the conclusion that the water must be quite deep there, leaped high in the air for a dive before anyone could stop him. His legs were spread like a gigantic pair of scissors, but fortunately he was not hurt and he presented a laughable sight as he came sputtering out, bewildered, with the seaweed and sand in his hair.

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Sir Herbert Tree, the celebrated British actor, plays golf, but it cannot be said that his game has improved since he first began. Here is a story which is told.

On one occasion he was in bad form, and after a very poor drive he turned to his caddie and remarked in despair, "I believe I'm the worst golfer in this club!"

The caddie scratched his head thoughtfully, "Well, I've just come 'ere," he said, "an' I dunno as I knows 'em all, but from wot the other chaps tell me, an' from wot I've seen o' you, there's one man ye might beat."

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"Who's that?" asked Sir Herbert with restrained eagerness.

"I've never seen 'im," replied the caddie, *but 'is name's Tree!*"

During the Fall tournament at the Greenwich Country Club, John G. Anderson related this incident. "There was a little town in New England where they were attempting to organize a golf club, and to stimulate interest they prevailed on Mr. Anderson to visit them. It was announced widely that he would give a talk on golf and the word was passed from mouth to mouth. During his discussion he noticed two elderly gentlemen listening in bewilderment, and small wonder for they had walked a long distance, thinking that they were to hear a lecture on *John B. Gough*.

The player was irascible and impatient and he was disturbed greatly because a colored man, driving a cart, was slowly moving along a road which crossed the line of play. To the cart was attached a mule.

He had shouted "Fore! fore!" lustily, but instead of hurrying, the driver, evidently thinking that the gentleman wished to converse with him, stopped his mule and slowly said, "Is yo' a'speakin' to me, Sah?"

All patience was exhausted, but it is doubtful if the irony of the retort ever reached home—"For heaven's sake, get out of the way! *Both you you!*"

On one of the new courses there are employed numbers of Italian laborers under the direction of a padrone, who is known as Dago Dan. The designer gave the head greenkeeper directions concerning the formation of a great area of grass hollows and mounds near one of the greens. On the whole the work was done well, but Dago Dan could not understand why the mounds should be constructed in rough fashion. It offended his artistic sense, and during the absence of the greenkeeper he constructed several mounds to suit himself. When the architect of the course went out a few days later to look over the work, he was startled to see a huge five-pointed star neatly packed down in the very center of the hollow. It seemed to be ready for a planting of geraniums, and Dago Dan wept bitter tears when he was instructed to demolish it.

One of the members was walking over the same course with the chairman of the green committee and he intimated that there was a great deal of trouble to be encountered. Finally they came to an old stone ruin which had been permitted to remain with sloping grass banks on all sides, and it provides an excellent hazard. The chairman observed that to make it appear more picturesque, vines were to be planted around its crumbled walls.

"Why not make it poison ivy, and give us all the trouble you can?" drily retorted the other.