

THE LINKS OF ANCIENT ROME

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FORE!

THE Fragments from the Diary of Maecenas, discovered by Dr. Ludwig von Aberwitz, of the Department of Epigraphy, University of Hofbrau, constitute the earliest (so far as known) references to the ancient and imperial game of golf; and they show that the human nature of the pastime was the same when Horace was penning odes to the ladies as it is to-day. Many, if not most, of the devotees of golf began by sniffing at it; later they became, like Augustus, C 2 K (a contraction which stands for the common and atrocious locution, "curious to know"). Thence it was but a step to obsession.

These Fragments, which now repose in the W. K. Mendax collection of priceless manuscripts, were done into Latin by Mr. Payson S. Wild, and into English by the reader's most obedient servant. Neither version has sought slavishly to pursue the original, nor has the English pressed the Latin too closely; but both are considered, by critical and kindly scholars, to have caught the spirit in which Maecenas

set down his too brief account of the Emperor's conversion to one of the most fascinating of games.

It has been contended by Mr. Arthur V. Taylor, of Newark, N. J., and by Mr. John Cotton Dana, of the Public Library in that city (both scholars and golfers), that the pastime originated among the goatherds of Northern Italy, before the coming of the Christian Era, and photographs of a portion of a parchment have been submitted in evidence; but Dr. Aberwitz is skeptical concerning the genuineness of the discovery, dismissing it, after minute inspection, as bald and unconvincing and lacking in artistic verisimilitude. The Doctor is free from the taint of professional jealousy; to him truth is more important than the bucket which draws it up. His dismissal of the parchment, while emphatic, is reluctant.

Thus, until better evidence is brought forward, the jottings in the journal of Rome's famous patron of literature will stand as the initial historical references to a venerable sport.

B. L. T.

Chicago, October, 1912.

I

AUGUSTUS FIT CUPIDUS SCIENDI

(C II K) (a)

Maecenas vult ut Princeps faciat quod intemperanter promiserit.

"Nuper, Octavi, dixisti iturum
Te mecum olim et campos visurum
Ubi libentes iam ludimus illa
Altivolante, durissima pila.
Dic mihi, vetule, saltem spectare
Nonne nunc vis, si nondum tentare?"

Octavius respondet breviter "Minime pol in tuo daguerreotypo."

Frustra cum Imperatore locutus,
Impedimenta ac fustes indutus,
Abii atque quaesivi amicos
Qui iam profecti ad agros apricos.
Sed vix discesseram fessus orando,
Cum Caesar, fessus et ipse negando,
Talia reddit adstantibus fando:

Princeps affirmat hunc ludum sibi nihil in lusibus esse.

"Bella, Rapinae, Incendia, Caedes,
Carmina, Litterae, Templae et Aedes,
Quae sunt res publicae, graves et durae,
Illis furentibus nihil sunt curae;
Immo pol VINUM, MULIERES, CANTUM, (6)

Non tantum diligunt, antea quantum!
Namque NOVICIUS LUSUS DAMNABILIS
Nescio quis, et, ut dicunt, mirabilis
Fascinavisse videtur sodales
Quondam carissimos contubernales.
Eam rem omnem non facio flocci;
Sum studiosior COMICI SOCCI,
Amo PICTURAS MOVENTES VEL PONTEM, (c)
Cupidus nunquam per vallem aut montem
PILULAM ALBAM sequendi in fontem!

I

AUGUSTUS BECOMES C2K

MAECENAS:

"Octavius, I've often heard you say
That you'd cut out the work some sunny day,
And have a look at our new country club.
Why not this aft, old top? Put on a sub;
Come down and watch us shoot a round of golf,
Whether you stay to play or stay to scoff."

Maecenas reminds the Emperor of a rash promise.

"Nix on that golf stuff," said the Emperor,
And so to prod him further I forebore.
Grabbing my clubs I chucked them in my car,
And made the two miles to the links in par;
While Caesar, peeved at having stood me off,
Let go the following remarks on golf:

Augustus returns a laconic "Nix."

AUGUSTUS:

"War, glory, statecraft, and the Muses Nine
No longer charm these golf-mad friends of mine;
Wine, skirts, and song have also lost their hold
Beside this strange new game that, I am told,
By old and young and wise and foolish played is—
For which I would not give a hoot in Hades.
Me for the play or moving picture show,
A hand at bridge, or any game with go;
But chasing white pills round a vacant lot
Is my idea of entertainment, *not*.

Augustus defines golf as his notion of zero in recreations.

"But here I am, singing the same old tune.
I've really not much on this afternoon,
And can, as old Maecenas said, knock off
And watch him shoot a hole or two at golf.
My motorcycle, boy! I'd like to see
Just wotinel this d. f. game may be."

But he decides to look it over.

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

Sed putat illum sibi investigandum saltem.

"At cantilenam eandem cur cano;
Num decet ipsi mentiri tyranno?
Hue AUTOMOVENS VEHICULUM (*d*) ferte!
Quid-INEL (*e*) agant comperiam certe."

II

AUGUSTUS UTITUR LINGUA VULGARI SED LUDUM DISCIT

Maecenas pilam expellit dum Princeps adridet.

Pilam expuleram aggere primo,
Cum Imperator iam illitus limo,
Clamans "Quid! Istoc est totum?" apparet,
Atque observat dum pila volaret
PEDES per caelum ad terram SESCENTOS. (*f*)
"En," inquit, "sane homunculos lentos,
Qui quot diebus exercent iam dudum
Effeminatum eiusmodi ludum!"

Hic Maecenatem exululat (ut ita dicamus).

"Quam PUTRIS ICTUS hic proximus erat!
Talis ut aegre peritus pol ferat;
Tu imbecillus es, hercle, Maecenas;
Quid fluit tibimet, quaeso, per venas?
'ATAVIS EDITE REGIBUS'—quippe;
Hoc enim luderet ludo XANTIPPE! (*g*)
Si non potuero longitis sphaeram
Quam tu impellere, causam tum quaeram.
Clavam da mihi; ostendam, sceleste,
Ego ut faciam. Omnes adeste!"

Augustus "fusillum exspirat."

Ita locutus, tenaciter prendit
Clavam et statim ad aggerem tendit.
Spuens confestim in mediam manum,
Pectore scelus anhelans profanum,
Agitat baculum sat negligenter;
S-s-s-t! ferit sphaeram (ut putat) valenter.
At tamen haec immobilis iacet, (*h*)
Atque Augustus attonitus tacet.
Puer cachinnat, qui saccum ferebat,
Temporis tamen momento silebat,
Nam ululatum iam Princeps tollebat:
"STULTE DAMNATE, AD USQUE AVERNAM
VOLO TU EAS GEHENNAN INFERNAM!" (*i*)

Maecenas leniter loquitur.

Tum ridens "Oculos," inquam, "attollis;
PILULA illa est, minime FOLLIS."

Princeps lepidopteron acquirit.

"Istud pro DI IMMORTALES excide!
Si placet, eris dum mortuus, ride!
HEUS, VESPERTILIO, (*j*) caeae, auscultata:
Quae tibi faciam ea sunt multa.
Ego et tu exercebimus soli—
Pilam amittere edepol noli!"

Maecenas amicique ludunt, pocillum undevicesimum.

Nos modo CAUDAS GALLORUM MARTINI, (*k*)
Modo lagenas arcessimus, vini.

II

AUGUSTUS INDULGES IN STRONG LANGUAGE, BUT DECIDES TO LEARN THE GAME

I whaled the ball two hundred yards or more—
A screamer—when up wheeled the Emperor,
Exclaiming, as he watched the sphere sail off,
"Ye gods! Is *that* the total sum of golf!
Weaklings and mollycoddles, what a shame
To waste your time on such a baby game!"

Maecenas drives, and the Emperor sniffs.

"And you, Maecenas, 'Son of Ancient Kings'
(As Flaccus boy satirically sings
In his last book, 'A Line-o'-Verse or Two'),
Is that the best, old scout, that you can do?
A stroke most ladylike! Why, on my soul,
I'd back Xantippe for a ball a hole!"

He bawls Maecenas out.

"Say, if I couldn't slam that piffling pill
Over the crest of yonder fir-clad hill
I'd go jump in the Tiber. Here, I say,
Give me that mallet! Caddy, stand away!"

Preluding thus, the Top Card took his stance,
Giving the "pill" a quick, contemptuous glance,
Then swung the driver with terrific force,
And—missed the ball a foot or two, of course.
A caddy snickered, then discreetly blew,
And Caesar after him the driver threw,
With certain objurgations, warm and tinglish,
That look less rude in Latin than in English.

Augustus short-circuits himself.

I laughed and said, "You see, it takes some skill:
You didn't keep your eye upon the pill.
The striking surface, you'll observe, is small;
It's not, Octavius, a soccer ball."

Maecenas speaks in part as follows.

"Aw, cut that out, for love of Mike!" said he.
"Laugh if you will—I grant it's one on me.
Son of a bat!"—he called the nearest caddy—
"We'll learn this game *alone*. Come on, my laddie;
And if you lose this new ball in the rough
What I will do to you will be enough!"

The Emperor gets the bug.

So off they went, while we the club bar bound,
And ordered dry martinis all around.

Maecenas and his friends play the Nineteenth Hole.

