

## FIFTY YEARS OF GOLF

The Fifteenth Installment of the Golfing Reminiscences of  
Great Britain's First Amateur Champion

By HORACE G. HUTCHINSON

WHETHER on account of ill-health, or for what reasons I do not know, I was not a very sedulous attendant at the championships in the later nineties. The consequence was that I missed seeing one or two very notable finishes. I was not at St. Andrew's, for instance, that year when Leslie Balfour Melville won, having carried each of his last three matches to the nineteenth hole, and each of his three opponents being obliging enough to plop his ball into the burn at that very crucial point of the business. What made it the more notable is that the last of these burn-ploppers was no other than Johnny Ball himself. Neither was I at Muirfield when Dr. Allan won, bicycling over each day, from a considerable distance, to the course, and playing without a nail in his boot—surely the most casual and unconcerned of champions. And I missed too that great finish between Johnny Ball and Freddy Tait at Prestwick when they were all even at the end of thirty-six holes, after playing the ball out of water and doing all kinds of conjuring tricks at the thirty-fifth hole: and then Johnny

settled the affair by doing a scarcely human three at the thirty-seventh. But I was at Sandwich a year or two before when Freddy Tait did win the championship, beating Hilton in the final. I was even one of his victims on that occasion. He was playing well, but he gave me a chance or two going out and I was two up at the turn. Then, at the tenth hole I had a bit of bad luck: I lay, off the tee shot, in the middle of the course right in a deep divot cut left by a never identified but never to be sufficiently execrated sinner. So Freddy won that hole, and he out-played me soundly on the long holes coming in. I remember that I had a great fight the day before with that very gallant golfer, who never did himself full justice in the big fights, Arnold Blyth. We halved the round and I only beat him at the twenty-second hole.

I was at St. Andrew's too in 1901 and saw the finish between Harold Hilton and Johnny Low, one of the best that ever has been played. Here too I was the victim of the ultimate winner; and I do not know that I had any need to be beaten by him, for though Hilton won this championship he has said himself

## GOLF ILLUSTRATED

in his memoirs that he was not playing as he should, at the time. I believe the truth to have been, as he himself suggests, that we were all a little frightened of him. I remember we started in pouring rain, and he won the first three holes off me. Then the weather improved and so did I, so that I wore off these three holes and got one up with five to play. At this fatal point I pulled my tee shot into one of those pernicious little bunkers on the Elysian Fields called the Beardies, and the final holes Hilton played more strongly than I did and won by two and one to play. It is a curious thing that the only other time of my meeting him in the Amateur Championship, which was at Hoylake in the year that Johnny Ball won from Aylmer in the final, the match was almost a replica of this former one. Again he won the first three holes, again I wore him down and got one up with five to play, and again I chucked away the advantage and it looked almost sure that he would again win by two and one. But I holed a good putt at the seventeenth to save that hole. He gave me no chance of winning the last and so again he beat me. These are the only two meetings we have had in the championship and neither, from my point of view, is very glorious in the telling.

The year 1900 was a very unhappy one in the history of golf. In that year a Boer bullet ended the life of one of the most gay and gallant hearted fellows that ever took up a club, Freddy Tait, and incidentally took a good deal of the interest out of the golf of our generation. That year and also the next, Johnny Ball was out at the war and did not take part in the championship; and I think that those are actually the only two years since the institution of the Amateur Championship that he had not taken a hand in it. He is very capable of taking a master hand still.

I have said little of the Open Championship during these years, for the reason that it has never had anything like the attraction for me, either to play in or as a spectacle, as the Amateur in which golfers are brought together in matches and there is the clash of temperaments, the man to man contest, the one bringing out (or driving in, as the case may be) all that is best in the other. I cannot see that any scoring competition ever competes, in the human and psychological interest, with such duels as these.

But the story of the Open Championship for very many a year now—that is to say from 1894 right away to 1913—is the story of the repeated triumphs of three men, Taylor, Vardon and Braid, one or other accounting for the championship in no less than fifteen of these years, and for the rest allowing a win each to Harold Hilton, to Herd, to White, to Massy and to Ray—a wonderful record, but one which shows a certain monotony. Of the championships of 1902, both amateur and open, the story has its peculiar interest, because this was the year of the introduction of the india rubber-cored—then called Haskell—balls,

about which many fables are to be narrated. And I am going to cut the story of these championships rather short, at this point, because I seem to have so much to say about both the first Haskell ball championships and also about the Amateur Championships of 1903 and 1904 that either one of them cries aloud for the dignity of a chapter all to itself.

These, or just about these, were the years of the formation of the wandering teams, notably of the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society, formed on the model of the wandering cricket clubs, such as the I. Zingari and the Free Foresters. These admirable institutions had no club-house, no green, only a corporate existence, and they said to the various clubs, "Now you give us the free run of your course and a free luncheon and other entertainment, and if you do this we'll be so good as to come down and play a team match against your members and probably give them a jolly good beating." That was the kind of proposal which they made to the clubs, and the pleasant sign of the times and of good sportmanship and feeling is that the clubs were so very ready to entertain it—both the proposals and the Societies. There were the Bar Golfing Society, the Solicitors', the Army—every self-respecting profession had to have its Golfing Society. The Oxford and Cambridge, of which I had the honor to be first president, being succeeded in that honorable post by Mr. Arthur Balfour, went on pilgrimage actually as far as the United States; and very well they did there, under the leadership of Johnny Low, with Johnny Bramston, the Hunter brothers and other fine golfers assisting. But as for the most part of these golfing enterprises of the wanderers, who generally speaking had their headquarters in the great metropolis, it is evident that they had to find their happy hunting grounds somewhere round about London, within reasonable reach, and that was only possible by virtue of the rise of all these inland greens within a short distance of London which has had the further effect of drawing down into what we call the Southern Section, the very big majority of the best players. This geographical golfing phrase of Southern Section is one that has arisen only out of the conditions created by that great tournament for the professionals promoted by the *News of the World* newspaper; and that competition itself is a witness to the growing recognition of the English world of the importance of golf and its financial meaning. Golf was of use in the way of big advertisement. Also the largest proprietors of the *News of the World* were, and are, very good golfers and sportsmen, and doubtless appreciate all the good sport that this tournament provides. But at the same time we should, I think, wrong their commercial instincts if we did not realize that they see good advertisement in it besides. Their motives are mixed. How well that team of Oxford and Cambridge graduates that went to America performed, we hardly realized at the (Continued on page 62)

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time. We had a tendency to underrate the American ability of golf, and the very fact that these pilgrims did so well inclined us all the more to make light of the American prowess. We are now, in course of story, within sight of the year when Mr. Walter Travis, coming over here, was to give us a very different idea of the American capacity. We then began, perhaps, to go to the other extreme and to overrate what they could do. They seemed to have "established a funk" to put it in homely phrase, which only Harold Hilton, going to America as our Amateur Champion and coming back with all the glory of the American Amateur Championship about him too, could altogether dissipate. But before that happened a lot of water had to run under the bridges.