



THE FARCE OF OLYMPIC GOLF

GOLF is an ancient game, but not so ancient by a thousand years and more as the first Olympiad, and for this reason alone should find no place on the long list of events that comprise the program of the modern Olympic tournament. Even had the ancient Greeks, as far back as 776 B. C. known the pleasure of a full drive or the chagrin of a missed putt, their love of pure athletics would hardly have permitted them to include golf in their national Games. Modern additions to the games have been made only in so far as these additions are the direct development of some ancient sport. Trap shooting is the direct development of hurling the javelin, but golf is a game peculiar to and complete in itself, and has no parallel in the games and contests of the ancients. Most of their games were trials of physical strength and endurance, which afforded none of the mental strain or anguish of a game of golf. They were tests of brawn and not of brain—which makes the decision of the Olympic committee of twenty years ago to include golf in the program a remarkable one.

Whoever were the supporters of golf on this committee, they did not hail from this country, and they can hardly have hailed from Great Britain. Ever since the revival of the Olympic Games, the British have eyed with disfavor the idea of an Olympic golf tournament and have treated it with a silent contempt that has made it impossible for any country to show any enthusiasm in an international match of this nature. The British realized, no doubt, the unsuitability of golf to be classed as pure athletics. Twenty years ago they also realized that any other country would have about as much chance of success against them as they would have in a game of baseball with the winners of the World's Series.

The unsuitability of golf to rank with other Olympic games still remains, but after twenty years, the invincibility of Great Britain is at least open to question, and in all probability the British would welcome the question if put up to them fairly and squarely. Walter Travis raised the question in 1904, Francis

Quimet in 1913, and now Robert Gardner, with his glorious extra hole defeat in the Amateur Championship has issued a challenge which has been answered and will be answered again with true British gallantry. But these are personal triumphs, and the supremacy of a country cannot, in the case of golf, be established by the success of an individual. It can only be established by success of a number of individuals, who, playing as a team, are thoroughly representative of the golfing strength of their country. Great Britain will never take the trouble to send a team to defend its honor against a team of second rate players who happen to be in Europe for a great many other reasons the least of which is probably the playing of their favorite game. The United States can now do what it could not do twenty years ago. It can muster a team of known playing strength, which in the opinion of British critics, would tax the playing strength of Great Britain to the utmost. But unfortunately, though it has the team, it cannot send it over, for the simple reason that many of its members cannot afford the time or the money to make the trip.

And here is an odd thing about the situation. Golf is the only game on the Olympic schedule that does not allow its players to receive their expenses. Large sums of money are spent on the organizing and perfecting of exponents of all other branches of sport, but the golfer is not allowed to receive even his passage across the Atlantic. Nobody wants to see the purity of golf's amateurism impaired by the all too elastic "expense account," and such a thing is quite out of the question in all tournaments except perhaps the Olympic match. An exception was made during the war in favor of those amateurs who were willing to give up their time for exhibition matches, and no harm came of it.

If in the case of the Olympics, a dangerous precedent were to be created, then it were better far to drop Olympic golf entirely. At present personal expense makes a representative team impossible, and in the case of international sport, half a loaf is infinitely worse than none at all.

The slowness of the mails has made it impossible to secure in time for this issue photographs and a detailed account of Robert A. Gardner's magnificent attempt to win the British Amateur Championship. This event will be fully covered in the August issue.—Editor.