

Letters of a Wandering Golfer

Who succumbed to the urge to play abroad

By DOUGLAS B. WESSON

Part 1—"It won't be long now!"

Dear Tom:

I seem to feel the relentless hand of fate driving me on and on. Fight as I will against the insidious demons of temptation I feel myself slipping—and gosh; how I do love it. I'm so darned close to the point where I rise up and in a loud challenging voice declare to the world at large, and my wife and children in particular, "I'm going to Scotland and I'm going to play golf and I'll probably be late for dinner every night, and drink lawful likker and have a" hell of a time!"—give me room according to meh strength!

I told you that I'd given up going to Stockbridge last week, didn't I? Felt pretty punk anyhow, and didn't care much—couldn't have made a good showing and, as I won 2nd division there last year I didn't want to run the risk of being called a mug hunter if I slipped into the fourth or fifth as I did at Pittsfield. So the family went down to Cape Cod for the week end and I played three rounds at Wiano. Nice course to play, and one that ought to be taken all to pieces with a driver, mid-iron, mashie niblick, and a putter—and I was awful! Goshawful!! Couldn't do a damned thing but putt! 93-90-81. And a good thing I got that 81 too! I'd gone on record as putting up my clubs for another week if I didn't do 85 or better.

Got back yesterday afternoon and went right to the office and found a letter from the Steamship Company offering in full detail the trip I had asked about. It read swell, what I mean. But they had arranged a bunch of sight-seeing trips that used up a lot of time, and they hadn't mentioned a few of the courses I've read about, so I was able to say in a firm decisive tone that there was absolutely mittin' doon—and that on ton of the fact that the cost was a lot less than I had any idea of.

This morning the Doc told me I couldn't play New Haven tournament—I've been on the bum for sure, I reckon—and then this afternoon—oh boy, temptation was spread before me in huge chunks—and how? Man to see me from the Steamship Company—same chap that had written the letter. Up he came, and the nicest young chap with a Scotch burr and the keenest kind of interest in my—my—not a, but my, golfing trip. "Too much sight-seeing?"—well he rather agreed, but he hadn't known but what the ladies might get tired of waiting all the time; but if there were no ladies, not only could there be more golf, but the cost would be less. Carnoustie? surely—Hoylake—yes indeed. Passports—send us a couple of photos with your name written on them and fill out blanks we'll send you—oh yes we tend to getting them visaed. Hot damn—I'm sold—I'm going, and, by the brass mounted niblick, young P. Cotton is going with me, and we'll tear up the turf of old Scotland as he never has been tore before!

If I feel halfway decent tomorrow afternoon I'm going to try Longmeadow; I suspect that a new set of irons will be ready for me. I had a hunch the other day that with the lighter steel shafts I could use about one eighth of an ounce lighter heads—and while I've stuck to the wood shafts up to now, anything that will help my iron play I'm for—strong.

I did find down at the Cape that I'd been slugging at the ball—starting the club down fast—in fact so fast that my left thumb was lame, and all because I felt so weak I had to make it up by pressing. Can't be did.

Not a good laugh for a week—for me. On the tenth at Wiano I sliced one out of bounds, then hooked ditto, and then got a screamer 120 yards straight down the course—some one got a laugh out of it, I heard him—but 'twarn't me.

Consumptively,

Lungmeadow, Mass.

DOUG.

Thomas, me good lad:

Bright rays have broken through the drab covering that has overlain my existence, in a couple of spots. The first one is that my new irons with the steel shafts are wows! What I mean, the good old feeling of letting the club do the work is actually superinduced by the lighter shafts—and if that isn't a good word to wake up with some morning, I'd ask to inquire.

Anyhow, last Friday, I took them out for a spin for the first time and doggone if I didn't get rotten tee shots, and made them up with the irons! And that is just opposite to my regular game. Got an 85, and Sunday an 86, and today an 82 that should have been a 78; tried so hard for 4's on the 17th and 18th that I missed coming back. Anyhow the new irons were working and I discovered something important—I'd been letting go with the little finger of my left hand on the back swing of all the full shots—result was, I had no idea where the head of the club was on the start of the down swing. And *that's* no way to play golf.

And the next bright spot is that I have gone and went and did it. Actually! This morning a special delivery came in from the Steamship Company all full of data and schedules and whatnot, and, by golly, I fell—flat, cold—why honest, there was no fun catching me—I didn't even fight. Lis-ten to meh!

We leave here, or rather New York, on the 17th of September and sail ourselves over to Glasgow where a gent meets us and hands us all our tickets, information, and sich like, and sends us to a place where gentlefolk foregather to indulge in a game of chance nicknamed golf—Me and P. Cotten, that is. He also was no fun bringing to net—doggone if I don't believe we both wanted to go all the time. But here's the big kick—we are over there 19 days, from Glasgow to St. Andrews and Cruden Bay, down to London, Deal, Hoylake, and Liverpool, and the whole trip, hotels, travel, meals (except "L's"—Laundry, Ladies, Lunches, Liker,) and what have you, and it can be done under One Grand. I don't see it at all—if I took an automobile trip over there for twenty days it would cost \$900 just for the car. Ho hum—I refuse to worry—but P's gwine. Come September 17th I's left—I ain't here no more.

just to give you an idea of what hardships and privations we will have to undergo I am making a map for you in hopes it will serve to give you a slight conception of the vista that is opening up before the slightly dazzled eyes of we-uns.

Honest, I don't yet realize that I can say, in a loud vulgar tone to a guy in Boston, "I choose to golf in Scotland for three weeks—fix it", and that's just what he does. Life is too easy.

I can't help feeling there's a catch in it somewhere—but if I find it I'll be the sickest white man in New England—here's hoping I keep my health.

Cot was here this evening and he feels the same way I do—he's sold on the trip, but he knows there must be some joker somewhere. But after talking it over till about one o'clock and getting in practice for Scotland with some of our best synthetic, we mutually covenanted and agreed to keep quiet and not let on to the steamship chap that they might be losing money on us.

Come on with us and play with a good golfer.

Deliriously,

Longmeadow, Mass.

DOUG.

Oh boy:

It won't be long now! The final disgusting details of the golfing, louring, and drinking trip have been all settled up to, and including, the passport. I fooled them in one place—where it says "Purpose of trip" I said "pleasure" and didn't even mention golf. My wife wouldn't believe that if I told her. And moreover she

might get in a mean one about the two not necessarily being related.

Did you get the map all right? And could you get an idea of the hardships and privations we undergo?—Oh well, I don't mind roughing it if the hunting's good. In the little trips I expect to use motors, as you can plainly see by the exceedingly well executed and graphic delineations on the map. From certain points we take the train to other points more distantly removed; for instance, Cruden Bay to London. I would have shown the trains but they're messy little things to draw—anyhow you can visualize them better than I can show 'em.

There are a lot of courses around London that we may get to play, but I'm not sure about them—when the aforementioned gent meets us in Glasgow with information, tickets, and so on, I'll know a lot more about that. Anyhow there wasn't much spare room so I just mentioned Walton Heath. I'll draw you another map when I get back and show on it what really happened—within reason, of course, within reason.

My guff game has been shot in the neck with buckshot. Last week there was an air carnival up here and all the planes in the world were flapping around for three days. My wife and the children got the bug so they all went up, and of course I had to go up with them. Then we had a couple of the lads up for dinner and we all got in practice for Scotland—so of course in the latter part of the evening I dated up for some flying lessons of which I've had two—and of which I will say only that I'm not near so clever in the air as I thought I would be. Anyhow, now when I'm playing golf and one of them comes in sight I forget all I ever learned about keeping the old bean in an approximate stationary position, and the ball executes a student turn to the right, as us birdmen put it. It may be all imagination, but I believe it has put me off—but wait, just wait—after three weeks of solid golf I'll either be good, or rotten; and I'll bet—on second thought I don't believe I will, either. I've spent all this season, so far, messing around in the early 80's and it may well be that that will prove to be my natural level. But I would hate to really think so.

This morning the big thrill came—the steamer tickets both fro and to—and a receipt calling for a fist of stuff from the agent over in Glasgow—railroad tickets, coupons for hotels, and all such. Man, I'm just like a kid the night before Christmas—if Lindbergh got half the kick before he started his trip that I'm getting right now, he certainly got the thrill of a lifetime. The only thing that I have to bother about that I can see is getting from the hotels to the golf courses—I really feel that they should supply wheeled chairs, but I won't be nasty about it—I'll assume it was just an oversight.

Awful blow today. I've ordered me a nice new golf suit—not plus fours, more a neat two and seven eighths—and dogged if I wasn't handed a hot tip that knickers are not so well thought of over there, in fact not too good. I'll just keep the old eye open and see what the well dressed golfer is doing his stuff in these days. As a matter of strict truth, I'm not too sure about the sartorial effect presented by the knowing trans-Atlantic tripper. I'm going to keep very low and quiet the first while and then use my judgment—if any. Anyhow, my main equipment will consist of one perfectly elegant set of golf bats, and three dozen golf balls—and I'll defy the most critical to pick flaws in them.

Man, come Saturday noon I'm left—I'm away from here. I know that I've tended to about everything by now, but I feel as if I had to dash madly about tying up loose ends.

Hurriedly,

Longmeadow, Mass.

DOUG.

[Part II. On the way to Scotland, will appear next month.]