

MIDWINTER GOLF GOSSIP

By VAN TASSEL SUTPHEN

AT the annual meeting of the United States Golf Association to be held this month (February), the ticket selected by the nominating committee will doubtless be elected; indeed at no time in the history of the organization has an opposition ticket ever been presented. The selections are: President, Ransom H. Thomas, Morris County Golf Club; Vice President, A. L. Ripley, Oakley Country Club; Vice President, Theodore Sheldon, Chicago Golf Club; Secretary, W. Fellowes Morgan, Baltusrol Golf Club; Treasurer, S. Y. Heebner, Philadelphia Cricket Club. Executive Committee—Daniel Chauncey, Garden City Golf Club; Herbert C. Leeds, Myopia Hunt Club; Eben M. Byers, Oakmont Country Club; H. G. Leavitt, Omaha Country Club.

The nomination of Mr. Byers is noteworthy for two reasons. He is a "class" player, and it is the first time that Pittsburg has been represented on the National Committee. During the eight years of the Association's existence the really crack players have not received overmuch recognition from nominating committees. Mr. C. B. MacDonald served three terms as Vice President, and Mr. H. J. Whigham, an ex-amateur champion, held the same office for one year. Perhaps it would be invidious to go farther, but Mr. Byers' record certainly entitles him to rank with the above named. As for Pittsburg, that golfing center, with the aid of the Fownes family, Dr. Fredericks, George A. Ormiston and Byers himself, has shown a strength for several years past that calls for recognition. It is possible too, that in the near future one of the championships—the Open—will go to the Oakmont Country Club, of Pittsburg.

This is the time of year when golfers throughout the country are anticipating the publication of the handicaps. The Metropolitan Association did a wise thing when it appointed its Handicap Committee in December, so that the first general list for 1905 might be compiled on the form of the players as shown in the fall competitions at the different clubs. Probably few people have any idea of how much labor is involved in the work. Take Massachusetts for instance. During the last season over forty open tournaments were held throughout the State and more than three thousand golfers took part in these events, many of them one-day affairs. All this data has to be thoroughly sifted, classified and considered in assigning the players their handicap rating.

To be thoroughly satisfactory, a handicap list should be revised at frequent intervals. One critic has put forward the theory that the Metropolitan Association should reserve the right to change the rating at any time, even after a morning

round of 18 holes in an all-day medal competition. This critic says that if the morning round shows that a man rated at 18 should really be playing at 8, the committee should have power to make the correction on the spot. According to this same authority it seems that on more than one occasion of this nature a minority of the committee has asked for an immediate reduction of the handicap, but the majority has always voted the proposal down. Quite rightly too was such a proposition tabled. It is impossible to accurately gauge the standard of a man's golf from a single round, even if it be theoretically conceded that the committee reserves the right to interfere in the middle of the play. Such action would create, practically, a new competition.

Last month the suggestion was made in this column that it was time that the United States Golf Association took a hand in the sorely needed revision of the rules. The first step towards a consummation so devoutly to be wished, would be the appointment, by the Association, of a Rules of Golf Committee. This committee as a matter of courtesy, would at once communicate with a like committee of the Royal and Ancient and suggest co-operation. If this were declined then we are certainly able and willing to go it alone. Incidentally, such a committee could find useful employment in deciding the disputed points in actual play which are always arising. Possibly, such a committee might not display more wisdom in the interpretation of abstruse points than the various golf editors do now, but at least their decisions would come with authority.

The season of 1905 will soon be in full swing and golfers will have every chance to decide the vexed question as to whether Mr. Travis is still our leading player. In the various Eastern ratings that position was unanimously awarded him, but Western authorities were not disposed to agree with this dictum, and almost to a man they placed Mr. Egan first and Mr. Travis second. Since the ratings were promulgated one important tournament—that at Lakewood—has been held. The field was a strong one and, with apparent ease, Travis showed his superiority to all opponents. It is unfortunate that the two undoubted champions of the East and West should not have an opportunity to decide the question by an actual meeting. Perhaps they may do so this coming season and on a course—say Myopia—that will try out the best golf they can show. Here is another argument for the plan long advocated by Mr. Travis—sectional championships and a round-robin tournament for the elect. From such a mill the real champion would be ground out unquestionably.