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CONCLUSION

WE CANNOT REFRAIN FOR THE LIFE OF US from closing our remarks on golfing with some expression of our intense attachment to it. Nor is this attachment a passing fancy, or the offspring of national prejudice. In the alembic of experience many youthful pleasures have been tested and found dross;—following back on the trail of our life, we have marked many erring steps; and maturity shakes its head at the wayward fancies of younger days. But thou gentle sprite! whose empire is the dark green links and whose votaries wield the bending club and speed the whizzing ball, art as dear to us now in the sere and yellow leaf as when first we flew to share in thy health-inspiring rites with the flush and ardour of boyhood.

Vividly do we recollect our step initiatory in the game;—the unleaded club, bedaubed with gay red paint,—the patched-up feather ball purchased (*malgre* the seductive influences of the neighbouring pastry cook) with divers copper *relievi* of royalty carefully hoarded for the purpose from week to week; then, the strong inclination to practice the game indoors, strenuously resisted by the powers that happened to be; and the convenient but erroneous idea, when alas! our ball was numbered amongst the things that were, that stones were quite as good and certainly more available.

CONCLUSION

Then, years passing away, we can well remember, the stolen holiday for a quiet match at our beloved pastime; indeed, we shrewdly suspect, if memory be not a treacherous warder, that it was quite 'our custom of an afternoon, (more especially on those fainting days in June which breed dark thoughts of revolt in the breasts of imprisoned school-boys,) to rush frantically from Syntax and Prosody—our goal, the links—our purpose, golf. That a perusal of these our delinquencies may not have a baneful effect on our youthful reader, leading him away from the narrow path of duty and Lindley Murray, we may add by way of moral, that on the mornings following these impromptu holidays, the whole *foursome* were soundly birched, and returned for the time being to those paths of learning which did not wind over the links.

It would warm an old golfer's heart to have seen our enthusiastic efforts to mimic the champion player's style; the reverence with which we would listen for hours together to marvellous incidents of the game; and our passing anxiety to possess a brace of clubs, which in casual talking we alluded to in a general way as 'our set'. A malison on those whins! we never could enjoy a match without an interlude of hide-and-seek for our only, our cherished ball; and alas! to lose it, and our pocket money at low ebb was equivalent, in those days of feathers, to an involuntary exile from the course.

'Hæc olim meminisse juvabit'.

And, still later in years, after sojourning in strange lands, or in brick-built towns wherein is no green thing, but jealousy and Venetian blinds, we can recall the ecstatic pleasure of again tasting the enjoyment of a round over the breezy expanse of our old accustomed Links. But we need not be selfish in those pleasurable reminiscences; for

we can picture the invalid new from the couch of pain revelling in the heart-felt enjoyment of this gentle health-restoring pastime, which brought him again a zest for life and the pleasures of the beautiful earth;—nor him alone—for we have marked the poor mechanic from his sordid home, from the lanes, and the dirt, and malaria of poverty-stricken regions, forgetting for the time his cares, and nerving his arm anew for another day's battle with want over the republican Links! These grand old Links! that over their ample expanse the stricken poor may drink deep of such a kind nepenthe, which, causing them to forget their sorrows, leaves not, like a drunken revel, its sting behind! In many parts of both England and Scotland there are splendid tracts of heath and downs, which would make magnificent golfing links. We hope enterprising proprietors will convert such tracts of country into their legitimate and natural use; viz., golfing-greens. Many country gentlemen pine for the lack of such an amusement as golf; when they have beautiful close cropped parks and lawns available for the game, without any special alteration; and which would not be the least spoiled in consequence.

Were we a knight errant, and inclined to splinter a lance for our lady-love, we should certainly select the nymph who presideth over golf, and do battle against all comers for her superior attractions. Let a cricketer take up the gage. He will tell us that his favourite pastime is of far more absorbing interest than the gentle craft of the Links. Now, cricket has undoubtedly enjoyed a wider popularity numerically speaking. But know, most gentle wielder of bat and ball, that this proceeds not from the superior zest attached to the game of cricket, but from the dearth of Links. It is not every soil that will answer

the purpose of a golfing ground, nor is it always an easy matter to acquire a sufficient extent for public use. In the old feudal times it was very different; some powerful seigneur or commendator, perhaps royalty itself, would say, in return for a good dinner, or a spectacle, or a joust, or a levy of pikemen, 'We give you this tract of land to be used for the public weal for ever;' *now* these munificent gifts live only in the page of the novelist, and are repeated merely in the unsubstantial pageant of a theatrical performance. On the other hand, cricket may be played on any soil, and within comparatively narrow bounds; hence its more general practice.

We ourselves have induced the spotless flannel,—the greaves, gloves, and sandal shoon of the cricketer, and have enjoyed a good innings as well as anybody; but never, in the triumph of a rapid catch, or a middle stump scattered, or a well-stopped hit, have we forgotten our allegiance to golf. No—let those who pin their faith on the skirts of cricket retain their own opinion if they be so infatuated, but let them seek not to evangelise us; let them wait patiently till the number of players collected warrants the possibility of a game; let them then devote their whole day to inert watchfulness (if this contradiction be allowed) or peril of limb: as for us, we, along with many other infidels, seek nothing more exciting than a quiet quotidian *round* with a friend, enlivened with varied conversation, and fraught with no danger of ensanguined nose or maimed fingers; and in this heterodox proclivity we shall stedfastly remain.

Those hale old gentlemen who ornament the golfing green, (long may they continue to do so!) would, we fear, make but sorry cricketers; and yet, in our quiet pastime how keenly they enjoy themselves; how ruddy their cheek

THE GOLFER'S MANUAL.

and bright their eye, when on the close of a bracing day in autumn, they come in from the enjoyment of their daily round. Golf, thou art a gentle spirit; we owe thee much!

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