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apr27,19

Loosening Up.

(By P.O.D., in Saturday Night, Toronto.)

All winter long we prided ourselves that we were not as other golfers are. Others might shut themselves up in barns driving golf-balls off a doormat into a blanket. They might practice putting on the living-room rug till they wore holes in it. They might even carry their mania so far as to go out in the snow and play with red balls. This may sound absurd, Friend Reader—it is absurd, as a matter of fact—but none the less it is done by men favorably known in the social and business world and otherwise of quite sound mind. But not for us. We are the kind of golfer—or so we thought—who can take it or leave it alone.

All winter we did leave it alone—severely. No thought of golf, no longing for wide fairways and smooth greens disturbed the maromreal calm of our soul. Our alabaster brow was unwrinkled by any effort to keep our eyes on the ball. We were cured for the time being, at least. We had lost the horrid craving. Occasionally we would see a furtive and harassed golfing friend hurrying away to an indoor school to spend a dismal hour or so helping to swell the income-tax of some haughty professional and compensate him for giving up his annual trip to Pinehurst or Palm Beach. And when we saw such a victim of golf-just we laughed a loud laugh, vulgar laugh like the war-horse in Holy Writ who smelleth the ball afar off and refuseth to touch the darn thing.

Alas for the pride of man which goeth before a fall!—incidentally, all the Easter services we have attended are making us talk like a curate. There were two or three fine days in succession just about the Vernal Equinox, and we suddenly began to feel vague stirrings of the old thirst. We found ourselves gazing with hatred at the remains of the snow and ice, and wondering when the turf would be dry enough for us to go out and cut it into nice long divots.

Worst of all, we suddenly developed the odious habit of making swings

with the head of our walking-stick at an imaginary ball. When a man starts that, he is certainly lost. We did it one morning at the corner of our street while waiting for the car, and the nice long following through nearly took our landlady's grocer's wife in the eye. We knew that when she went back she told everyone we were inebriated and behaving disgracefully on the public highways. She told our landlady, of course, but without getting much sympathy from that sterling woman.

"I said liquor was bad enough, God knows," she explained to us next day at breakfast, "but it didn't make men act like that. I said it was golf and nothing else, and it's good reason I have to know it, with you breakin' three globes and a mirror in the house and bringin' bad luck on the place for seven years."

We murmured something deprecating about those ancient superstitions—we wanted to forget all about our golfing delinquencies of the previous year.

"Superstition, is it? I never was superstitious in my life," she retorted indignantly. "But I don't believe in tempting fate. Anyway, I told her that if you were goin' to make a fool of yourself, I preferred you to do it somewhere out of doors. And, seein' the price her husband has been chargin' me for eggs all winter, it wouldn't worry me if you knocked her new hat off—God forgive me for sayin' such a thing in the holy season of Lent!"

We decided, however, not to do any more phantoms swinging on the street-corner—we would hate to hit even the family of a profiteer, such is the natural kindness of our heart. But still the longing for golf persisted, and finally we got to the point where we could stand the strain no longer. Talk about the craving for fermented beverages—it is nothing to the spring passion of the golfer. No sense of duty, no family ties, nothing can stand in the way of that.

We didn't want the Managing Editor to suspect the extent of our insanity—his view of our mind is suffi-

ciently cynical, as it is—so we muttered something about going out to talk over the 'spring books with some of the publishers. As a matter of fact, one of them does play at our club, and there was a chance—say, one in a million or so—that we would meet there. He might, for instance, bounce a nice long drive off our brisquet.

The sun was shining brightly, but you know how little that meant in terms of thermal units with a brisk March wind blowing out of the northwest. An Eskimo might have thought it a nice day for golf, but, unfortunately, our sweater is not fur-lined. There was a distinctly Arctic touch in the air, and the nearer we got to the club the more Arctic it became. But we were not to be deterred by trivial matters of temperature. We were going to play golf if we had to chop the sand out of the tee-boxes and shoot the polar bears off the putting greens. That's the sort of determined dog we are, when the rage seizes us.

We confess, however, that the deserted aspect of the club-house was rather depressing. There wasn't a soul in sight around the place as we strode across the lawns which had so often seen us go out on the course with high hopes and come tottering back with despair in our heart and broken words of excuse and profanity on our lips. The grass was still brown and withered, and no little flags fluttered cheerfully to lure us on to our doom.

But, if there was no one to be seen outside, such was not the case with the locker-room. Two large char-ladies had it in possession and were sloshing water about with masterful nonchalance. Naturally one cannot play golf in one's street-clothes—they cost too much nowadays, for one thing—but how is a timid bachelor to change his pants and shirt with two ladies looking on?

Of course, we might have suggested politely that they should leave the room for a few minutes, but you know how touchy the wealthy working-classes are just now. They might be offended and complain to the union. Worse still, they might take a humorous view of our predicament and laugh at us—we blushed hotly at the thought of it, just like one of those lovely heroines in the books of Robert W. Chambers, who she should kick her studs off and pose for his picture of Feyche on the brink.

The char-ladies, with instinctive delicacy, did every thing they could to put us at our ease—everything except leave the room. Possibly they were not aware of the extent of the change of raiment we contemplated. Possibly they had been married too long or too often to worry about a little thing like that. Anyway, they stayed. But they made a tremendous clatter with their pails and mops and carried on an animated conversation about the car which one lady's "old man" was staying home to overhaul that day.

In spite of everything they did to show us that they were not thinking about us at all, we still felt nervous—the shrinking violet has nothing on us. We also found a few minutes later that the violet had nothing on our flannel golf-shirt—for shrinking, that is. However, before we got to that stage we dragged our clothes to every

dark corner of the room, seeking shelter and seclusion, but with no avail. A lot of empty wire-lockers made an awfully poor screen. Finally we shut ourself up in a shower-bath and undressed, and dressed while it dripped with chill and mournful persistence on our head. It is really too bad that such a lovely virtue as modesty should entail so much discomfort at times.

A nice cool breeze straight from Hudson's Bay caressed us as we stood at the first tee and with numbed fingers dug up a little chunk of frozen clay—the tee-boxes were still hibernating somewhere in the shed. But we didn't mind. We were too busy thinking about our stance and our swing, and hope was surging high in our breast.

You see, we had been reading a few books and articles on golf during the winter—we unbent from our austerity to that extent—and we had discovered the real cause and remedy of all the faults we had developed the previous season. We will spare our readers the technical details, but we felt that we had mastered our difficulties. All we needed was to put our newly acquired knowledge into practice, and we were sure that a very few minutes with the clubs would enable us to do that.

Having described a few circles in the air with our driver in a thoroughly vicious and convincing manner—the phantom swing is always convincing—we dug out of the pocket of our bag two or three battered old balls, gashed and discolored, "old Contemptibles" who had been through many a hard battle. We blushed as we saw the horrid evidence of how we had topped and sliced and gouged them, but that, of course, was now all a thing of the past. No more looking up at the critical moment, no more dropping our right shoulder or pulling in our hands or failing to wait for the club to come through—not at all not at all!

Then we addressed the ball, being very careful of our stance and our grip on the club. The articles we read had opened our eyes to the fact that we had been all wrong in our management of our left foot and hand. Our whole left side, in fact, was a mess, in which our left eye and ear were probably also involved. It seemed that the left foot should be turned out at an angle of forty-five degrees, though the right foot should be perpendicular to the line of flight. Really careful students, we presume, will bring along a protractor or a set of surveyor's tools to get the angle right. And while turning the left foot out, the earnest little golfer must remember to turn the left hand in—that is also very essential.

If the reader thinks it is easy to keep his eye at the same time on his left foot and hand and also on the ball, we can only suggest that the reader should go out and try it, as we did. Slowly and painfully we brought our club back, writhing into position which threatened to dislocate our left hip, and then we gave a mighty heave. The first couple of times we missed the blamed ball entirely, but no one was looking, and a man recovers his self-respect very quickly when there are no witnesses to his shame.

Finally we did connect, and—well, we were cured of our chronic slice! There could be no doubt of that. Unfortunately, the cure was a little too complete, and the ball curved away even farther and faster to the left than we had ever slashed it to the right in our most disastrous experiences. In place of our slice we had suddenly acquired a hook which would have made an Australian boomerang-thrower commit suicide in despair.

Naturally we tried to adjust the system. We tried for two awful hours, but every time we made any change we went back to slicing worse than ever. The ball flew every way but straight, and then we looked around with black murder in our heart for a handy stump on which we could break our clubs into little pieces and bury the remains.

But, no, we didn't—not with the price clubs are now. Instead, we crawled back to the club-house with salt tears frozen on our cheek. There was only one consolation—the char-ladies had gone.

As the North Sees It.

(From the Twillingate Sun.)
WHICH WILL IT BE?

Having got down to business, although having wasted much time, it looks as if the Honorable House of Assembly is now going to do something. Some extraordinary speeches have been made, quite naive in the simplicity of their crudeness.

The leader of the opposition seems to be putting up a good strong fight, and as an experienced parliamentarian has been putting many of the new members in their place as far as observance of the rules of the House were concerned not even excepting the Prime Minister himself.

The Opposition Leader and Mr. Coaker seem to hit it off fairly well together and the latter declared:—

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