

THIS IS TIME OF YEAR WHEN GOLFERS FIND LINKS MOST FASCINATING

It Happened in Golfland

By VERDANT GREENE

OVERSHADOWING all else stands the fact that the best man won last Saturday at Merion. Every other consideration, sentimental or technical, is averted before the realization that Chick Evans deserved his victory. Excepting only Quinell's rout of Gordon and Ray, in the open, of international importance, never has the outcome of a national championship let loose such a wad of discussion, largely because it seemed as if fate had destined that Evans should never rise beyond the silver medal of the runner-up. Close to 10,000 persons reached Merion for the final round and the crowd was almost as great several other days, New Yorkers being almost as thick as Philadelphians, yet the rolling army has grown to large as not one player out of every hundred in those districts was on the spot. Accordingly everybody present has since been bombarded with questions as to details and results and in miniature the crucial points of many of the battles have been and will be fought over for a month to come in clubs and offices. It is much like the wrap-up of the last act in Bronson Howard's "Schoonah" where the old soldier in the picnic party recounts the engagement with the cups and saucers so bestowed as to do duty for the opposing forces.

Evans had the easier end of the draw, which spared him between the first round and the semi-final, and he put up plenty of variable play in spots during the middle of the week, yet no one who viewed the field from a thousand angles in six days can believe that had Evans and Gardner exchanged places between the upper and lower half the result would have been substantially different. Chick's stock advanced after the first round, in which he eliminated Nelson Whitney, for Whitney, next to Kirkby, has been the most consistent of all Metropolitan players this season. Between Whitney and Bobby Jones, the former would ordinarily be deemed the harder proposition.

Most folk were glad to see Chick win because he has been in quest of first place as long as Lieutenant Peery was in chasing the North Pole and meantime had annexed practically every other worthwhile trophy in his reach. It was seven years ago that Chick made his bow in the National Amateur, when Chandler Egan bent him one down in the semi-final, while the next year, at Brookline, he fell to William C. Fownes, Jr. by the same showing and at the same stage. In 1911, too, at Apawamis he passed out in the semifinal to Fred Herreshoff by 3 and 2, while in 1913 at Garden City, he succumbed in the penultimate round to J. G. Anderson by 2 and 1. In fact, the only time Chick ever reached the final, until last Saturday, was in 1912 at Wheaton, when Jerome Travers fanned his hole and nailed it to the door of the Chicago Club's hut. To lose by 7 and 6 was nothing short of a rout for the idol of the Windy City, after being only 1 down at luncheon. Chicago had placed its money on Chick in such large bundles that they had to be fastened with wire like baled hay. Before the afternoon turn had been reached, the lake populace was on the run for the railroad station, with blanched faces that recalled the woodland in Peter Barley's history of the dismayed Russians fleeing from the burning of Moscow. Can it be wondered that Evans finally composed a "pome," of which the following are samples and need to ring it in a piping voice whenever his cup of misery appeared to be overflowing? Seldom did it fail to bring tears from the eyes of listeners.

It's a shame that hoodoo, I'm afraid,
I can never do as you do, Jimmy Brad.
I've a remedy for it,
I expect 't almost to fit.
But I never can go through it, I'm afraid,
So I must an' other be, in a rut.
— Milton, can't I do as you do,
Oh, a mascot for my hoodoo,
Travis, me how 'tis you do it, that small
putt.

Oh, a mascot for I'm ever one of four,
Chartered and hoodoo never bring me more.
A new mascot do I need,
Hoodoo-proof did I need?
To the main it will lead—nothing more.

For a couple of seasons, although Evans' putting has steadily improved, paradoxically his slowing in the nation has been worse than ever, for both years he lost in the first round—at Elkton in 1914 by one down to Eben Myers and last year at Detroit to Edward Sawyer, by 6 and 3. Last year the situation was unbearable, for it was to a Westerner at the very threshold and by such a margin. But it is ever darkest just before day.

So much for the sentimental side; now

to the technical. Evans win over such a superlatively trapped course as Merion ends the criticism as to the value of his performance at Minikahda, which has as few hazards as any well known course the country over. "Bill" Fownes is reported as having said that Merion was the most scientifically trapped links he had ever played over in this country. George S. Lyon, after barely failing to qualify, couldn't help noting the difference between the course and Englewood, where in 1906 he was runner-up, and wondered what Eben Myers who beat him there could do amid Hazard's endless troubles. Somehow it did seem to contenders last week, as if Hugh Wilson, Robert Lesley and Howard Perini had set the Merion hazards on rollers and shifted them around several times a day as stage hands would scenery.

There's a message, too, for every golfer in Evans' success, whether you are after the capital prize, a sectional title, the home club leadership, or merely sweating blood to reduce your handicap. It is that patient effort seldom fails to bring reward. The message is important enough to have gone into the first paragraph. If there were space, too, much might be said about the twenty-second annual championship adding to the evidence that golf is already any one's game and getting more so every minute.

If Halley's comet had suddenly suspended itself over the Merion premises the sensation would have been no greater than that caused by heaven-sent Bobby Jones; no wonder such fixed planets as Gardner, Evans and the others were considered only in a relative way, after that chunky luminary from the Southern cross shot into sight. What's the need of paying to see melodrama that chases the goose pimple up and down your spine like the traveling lights in an electric sign, when Bobby provides open-air thrills for nothing. Think how that 14-year-old will eat up courses ten years hence should he stick to his last, for he has nearly a decade's start on about everybody in the business. But two or three years hence there will be youthful Smiths and Browns and others of quite as advanced type in the running, and Bobby will have lost that charm of unaffected boyishness, to catch a glimpse of which those who have seen him would go miles to enjoy again. Jerome Travers never played again with the youthful freedom of that Saturday eleven years ago at Glen Cove, J. I., when he bounded into fame in one day by beating Findlay Douglas in the morning and then retiring Walter J. Travis on the 22d hole at dusk in the Nassau tournament. Bobby can't be canned, or bottled, or photographed, or sketched, or described, or sung, or photographed, or diagrammed without losing 50-4-100 of his original flavor.

Unquestionably he inherited a taste for the game from his parents and began it almost as soon as he did his letters; at six he was familiar with the sport. Imagine the strong points of Phil Carter, Reggie Lewis, Morel Lewis and the other most promising youth of the day, extracted, concentrated and then submitted in a single entity and you have R. F. Jones, Jr., the greatest golfer kid to date on this terrestrial ball. His skill is due mainly to his stamina of nerve and muscle that keeps his courage on ice where it is productive of unprecedented certainty, without machine-like regularity. Until physical fatigue sets in, Bobby is the surest shot of his years and more, in all golfing annals. But after all at 14 and 1½ years he cannot do the day's work of a grown man. If he could, he would conquer the golfing universe before he is twenty and then spend the balance of his life in retrospect, like Alexander the Great. But even that would scarcely be more unnatural than the back-handed career of Francis Quinell who began with the nuts of the golfing repeat and is working back to the soup.

Who can doubt shattering to flaky flinders the tradition that it is a physical impossibility for the same man to hold the two biggest titles, the same season? Will clear the path to still greater accomplishment. It was a line as imaginary as the equator and what's more, it didn't serve, like latitude and longitude for reckoning as to one's whereabouts. So many years have flown since John Ball turned that track on the other side, his performance under rapidly changing conditions, didn't seem possible of repetition. One more overcast obstruction has been buried, like the telephone wires.