

GLASGOW AS A GOLFING CENTRE.

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THE value of golf in preventive and curative medicine might well furnish a text for discussion at the meetings of the B.M.A. There are few subjects upon which so many members of the profession could speak with the authority of experience, and fewer upon which so unanimous a decision would be reached. But it is not on the agenda for the Glasgow meetings; and I, as a layman, do not propose to offer a lead here. My business is rather to present in briefest outline the history of the game in Glasgow and neighbourhood, and to indicate the various courses over which visitors to the annual meeting may have the privilege of playing in the odd hours they can spare (or steal) from the business gatherings. In one matter they are lucky: July is held as holiday in Glasgow with a unanimity unequalled in any city in the United Kingdom, so there will be no crowding on the courses at whatever hour the doctors may wish to disport themselves there.

Let it be premised that golf has been played in Glasgow for centuries—certainly since long before James VI. carried its civilising influence south in 1603. Town and Church records testify to the fact. So far as is known, it was played on the Green, an area lying along

the north bank of the Clyde, the greater part of which, as it originally existed, has now been built over. Latterly the game was played on what is now known as the Green, though authentic information on the exact locality of the course is now exceedingly difficult to come by. The earliest mention of play on our oldest open space is contained in a poem published in 1721, and written by a student at the old University named Arbuckle. This gentleman was evidently a player of some experience, who must have seen many games, and must also have had a shrewd head and an observant mind. After telling how the players "the timber curvè to leathern orbs apply," Mr. Arbuckle proceeds—

Intent his ball the eager gamester eyes,
His muscles strains, and various postures tries,
Th' impelling blow to strike with greater force,
And shape the motivè orb's projectile course.
If with due strength the weighty engine fall,
Discharg'd obliquely, and impinge the ball,
It winding mounts aloft, and sings in air ;
And wond'ring crowds the gamester's skill declare.
But when some luckless wayward stroke descends,
Whose force the ball in running quickly spends,
The foes triumph, the club is cursed in vain ;
Spectators scoff, and ev'n allies complain.
Thus still success is followed with applause :
But ah ! how few espouse a vanquished cause.

Golfing human nature has not changed much in these two centuries.

Curiously enough, no mention of the game in Glasgow is to be found in the Autobiography of "Jupiter" Carlyle, although he was a student at our University in 1743-4-5. This is a remarkable omission, for Jupiter must have played golf while

here. He was proud of his golfing prowess—he calls golf “the game in which I excelled and took much pleasure”—and he records the astonishment created when, years later, at Garrick’s villa at Hampton Court, he made a ball travel at the end of his drive through an archway into the Thames—as he undertook to do once out of three times. Golf was, however, probably played continuously throughout the centuries on the people’s pleasure; and there must early have been a club.

The first Glasgow Directory—that for 1783—gives a list of members of the Silver Golf Club, in all likelihood the same body which is now the Glasgow Golf Club. The silver club from which the body derived its name is now preserved at Killermont, the city course of the Glasgow Club of to-day—for the society is in the unique position in Britain of having two full courses thirty miles apart, the other being at Gailies on the Ayrshire coast. This valuable, but for practical purposes woefully inefficient, implement carries a number of the balls which it was then the duty of the member of the club who played his way to the captaincy to supply. Each ball bears the name of a captain and the year of his achievement. The members of the club in the eighteenth century represented largely the aristocracy of commerce; hence the then extravagance of the silver club. After an interval of dormancy between 1835 and 1870 the Society was reconstituted; and the custodian of the silver club, satisfied of the lineage, handed the trophy over to the existing Glasgow Club. It forms an interesting and artistic link with the local golfers of the eighteenth century. Another object of attrac-

tion in the Killermont clubhouse is the collection of old implements of the game, clubs and balls, from the primitive feather ball—the “leathern orb” of the poet—to the rubber-cored object of controversy of the present day. In the opinion of a golf writer of wide knowledge, the collection has no equal anywhere.

Killermont (the second syllable of the name should be stressed) is about five miles from the Royal Exchange; but, though now denuded of some of its encircling woods, is still a very retired course of the mansion-house policies order. It is laid out so as to utilise the playing area to the fullest advantage, the chief hazard for the wayward golfer being trees, with the river Kelvin to catch tremendous pulls at the first and second holes. The courtesy of the course has been granted for the Ulster Cup competition, and it will also be available for visitors privately, many of the local members of the Association being members of the Glasgow Golf Club. But it is only one of the many greens to which medical members will be able to introduce visiting friends.

The most noteworthy of the other city courses is Pollok, within the policies of Sir John Stirling-Maxwell, which has recently been undergoing changes owing to the withdrawal of one of the fields previously forming part of the course. It has the distinction of having been reconstructed by Dr. Mackenzie, of Leeds, the famous golf architect, whose skill in treating Mother Earth and causing her wounds to heal as if they were Nature’s work is well known. It is situated half an hour’s run southward by tramway car from the centre of the city.

(Perhaps this is not strictly relevant information, as medical men do not nowadays use the tramway cars.) Most convenient of all the courses in mere matter of proximity—it is really within the city—is the Glasgow North-Western Club's ground at Ruchill. But, indeed, there is no direction on the outskirts of the city where one cannot find a private course, though the quality of the different greens may vary considerably.

On the middle heights that ring Glasgow round are also courses picturesque in quality, bracing in atmosphere, and affording wide views of the country. To the north-west lies the rather inaccessible Milngavie (Mulguy in local parlance), a fine stretch of moorland overlooking the city and well worth the trouble of attaining. To the south-west, occupying an elevated position, with splendid vistas closed by distant mountains, is Whitecraigs, a highly sporting course traversed by burns burrowing in ravines. And to the south-east, just beyond one of the city parks of the same name, is the green of the Cathkin Braes Club, from which charming views can be obtained of the Clyde valley with Dumbarton Rock in the middle distance, and the mountains of Argyllshire raising their peaks in the background.

In the more outlying regions are such alluring courses as Erskine (which takes its title from the estate of that name of which the adjacent mansion-house is now the Scottish Hospital for Limbless ex-Service Men), the clubhouse of which overlooks the river Clyde, and the architectural features of which have just been treated by Dr. Mackenzie; Kilmacolm, and the two courses at Bridge of Weir,

which provide excellent training for Alpinists. They all stand high, are covered with fine turf, and possess sporting qualities of a high order.

All the courses that have been mentioned are so accessible as to allow of a round on a spare morning or afternoon. But medical men from a distance attending the conference may wish to devote a day or two, or even a week or two, to the game after business has been finished. For such there is a great wealth of the finest golfing country within easy reach of Glasgow. First, there is the course at Gleneagles, little more than an hour away, which J. H. Taylor so aptly and so admirably characterised as majestic. Once, when on the way there for his first visit, a friend suggested to me that Gleneagles could not possibly be so good as the newspapers alleged; and I could only reply with the cautious Asquithian advice. On the way home the erstwhile doubter confessed that the most enthusiastic description failed to do justice to the great qualities of the place. Gleneagles is a course for the young man rejoicing in his strength and his length, and for him only if he keeps the line. Heather is a formidable hazard. But it is a course that every golfer of every age should see.

It is not, however, only as a centre of inland golf that Glasgow is fortunately situated. Within an hour and a quarter of the city there are on the Glasgow and South-Western Railway a dozen of first-class private courses lying almost end to end along the Ayrshire coast. Beginning with Bogside, about 30 miles away, almost every station on the line to Ayr is the stopping-place for one or more

of these links. At Gailies the golfer detrains for no fewer than three courses. On the left is the coast green of the Glasgow Club, and farther south that of the Dundonald Club. Across the railway opposite to these is the enticing-looking green of the Western Club. At Barassie is the links of the Kilmarnock Club; at Troon, besides the ladies' course, there are two courses (in addition to the three very excellent and testing links belonging to the municipality), and one of them, usually spoken of as Old Troon, seems likely to come into the championship rota in place of Muirfield, the Honourable Company being disinclined to continue the duty of "housing" the championship. At Prestwick is the most famous of all the Western links, where two months ago the great struggle for the amateur championship attracted unprecedented enthusiasm. Here also are the courses of the St. Nicholas and St. Cuthbert Clubs. Then about twenty miles farther on is the Turnberry links, which, in spite of its length, has always had a peculiar attraction for the ladies, and has accommodated more than one of their championships.

This enumeration covers only the better-known links; there are many others along the Ayrshire coast; and he will be an exceedingly exacting golfer, indeed, who cannot find some place to his liking where he may wear off, with club and ball, the exhaustion of the strenuous work of the Association meetings.