

THE GOLF COURSE

A MONTHLY BULLETIN DEVOTED TO THE DISCUSSION OF MODERN METHODS AS APPLIED TO GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION AND UPKEEP

Modern Golf Chats

By A. W. TILLINGHAST

ORIGINALITY IN CONSTRUCTION

NOT long ago I was amazed to hear a well-known golf constructor declare that there was but little that might be considered original in the golf construction of to-day. He asserted that our best holes were copies of time-honored and famous holes of British courses. Certainly I do not agree with him, and in my opinion some of these models which surely were grand holes a dozen years ago have completely lost caste since the introduction of far-flying balls.

Nevertheless, Great Britain provides us with some excellent types, even under present conditions, but attempts to copy them have produced holes of extreme mediocrity, and certainly a bit of originality would have been more effective. American courses fairly teem with Redans and Eden holes. A short time since when inspecting one of the latter type, I was reminded of a story.

A widow, accompanied by six children, visited the studio of a celebrated portrait painter. "We wish you to paint Father's picture," they chorused.

"Delighted," replied the artist, "bring the old gentleman around for a sitting."

"It can't be done," sniffed the widow,

"he has been dead for ten years now. We haven't even got his photograph;—but we thought we might describe him to you."

And so, one after another they described minutely Father's features and general appearance. After some weeks the portrait was completed and the family lined up before the canvass and regarded it in wonder. There was depicted every described feature; nothing was lacking, but finally the good woman exclaimed, "Yes, that's Father all right;—but how changed he seems."

As I regarded that attempted reproduction of the famous old hole at St. Andrews there were features which were similar, but the hole looked about as much like the Eden Hole as the Eden Musee.

Every great golf hole possesses many natural features which collectively make it a great hole, each dovetailing with the others and without all of them there is something lacking which spoils the whole. It is not Nature's ensemble. So why not consider the material which Nature has given us to work with to the exclusion of any attempt to distort it to a sorry imitation.

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On one occasion I was going over a course which I had planned. The green committee accompanied me, and finally we stopped by one of the finest natural greens it ever has been my good fortune to find. Imagine my consternation when one of the gentlemen suggested that here was offered a magnificent opportunity to duplicate a certain green on one of America's best known courses. The green which he mentioned is a remarkably fine one and, as a matter of fact, it could have been reproduced at this spot very easily, but to me it seemed like a sacrilege to think for an instant of ruining a wonderful natural creation in an attempt to copy. In my opinion the natural green was superior to the one which was mentioned, but I doubt if it would have approached its model in excellence had it been altered.

In some of the previous Golf Chats I think it was stated that the successful golf architect must be possessed of a big imagination. It takes imagination to create, but certainly none to copy. Redfern imagines and designs,

and within six months his creations are copied by New York workshops. Do you suppose that one could not discriminate between the products when they passed on the Avenue? Maybe we men could not, but certainly the ladies could. I may be wrong, but I believe that the golfers of to-day want originality. Even those who are not particularly analytical sense the difference between a purely natural hole and one which suggests the artificial, and copied holes are artificial.

Without a doubt the most impressive natural golf hole which I have ever seen exists on a yet to be developed course at Ithaca, N. Y. When I discovered it I am sure the thought that it may have resembled to some extent one of the most famous golf holes in Great Britain never occurred to me. It was magnificent and alluring in itself. Afterward its similarity to the existing hole suggested itself and I am very sorry it did, for it may hamper its development along natural lines. A purely original treatment should develop a great golf hole, but as a copy I know that it would always appear to me as a rank imitation.

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