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A Message to American Golfers

Some Anticipations on the Approaching Visit of J. H. Taylor and Sandy Herd

By J. H. Taylor

A WISH that I have cherished for some years past is, I hope, to be realized in the very near future. All being well my old friend "Sandy" Herd and myself will visit you during the coming season and, speaking for myself, I am eagerly looking forward to the trip. I have nothing but the most pleasant memories of my visit in 1900, which is a long while since. I am most anxious to see what sort of progress has been made toward making the game in America the national game of the country.

Britishers have been hearing for some years past that golf is ousting baseball in the affections of the people, and if we are to judge from the reports of golf courses being made in most unlikely places and clubs established by the score we may be forgiven for believing.

I can liken my visit of twenty-two years ago and the impression I gained regarding the game to a man contesting a mile race; 1900 was the first lap, the runner was full of snap and go and was eager to get on with the job in hand. I wondered then whether the pace and enthusiasm would stand the acid test of time or whether it would fizzle out like a runner running himself to a standstill before the half way was reached.

To carry the simile further there can be no doubt but that you are now well in possession of your second wind and set toward the goal that no one can foresee. I question very much whether the world has ever seen such a rush for a game as America has shown for golf during the last decade, and such enthusiasm speaks as much for the good sense of the people as it implies worth for the object of it.

The astounding popularity that the game has attained the world over is attributed these days to the inventive genius of the American people and it is asserted that, if the

"Haskell" ball had not been invented, the game would have reached stale-mate long since. I really believe that the introduction of the rubber core added a zest to the game that it did not claim previously, but I am conservative enough to contend that the simple principles of the pursuit are so elementary and free from guile that it would still have gone ahead to its present extent had we been still pounding the "Gutty" along. The Haskell added a sauce to the dish; it could not disguise the splendid ingredients of it.

I have desired to visit America again to

that you see fit to do, I only plead as a devout lover of the game, that nothing impulsive may be done that may cause regret afterwards. I was assured by a very eminent golf architect of yours some time ago, in response to a query of mine, that your courses were not being made too difficult.

It has been a growing danger in this country during recent years, and in pointing out the danger I dreaded your following the easy slope that would eventually lead both countries to destroying the pleasures that the game affords. I want to see for myself if my friend the architect is right in his contention.

When once a fashion is set it is deadly easy to follow and misguidedly go one better. Without being dictatorial or too pedantic, I strongly affirm that the inherent pleasure of the game is partly destroyed and certainly stultified if it is sought for on Links that are designedly made difficult. To keep a player on the tenter hooks of disastrous possibility whenever confronted with the playing of a stroke is not conducive to that peace of mind which should possess one when engaged in what should be a pleasant occupation. It tends to irritate and annoy.

Among the courses I played on during my last visit and of

which I have the most distinct recollections, are Deal Beach, Myopia, and Wheaton. I remember them as breezy open spaces with few and diffident looking "Cop" bunkers scattered unostentatiously around, and I want to compare them, as my memory recalls, with the creations of the last ten years. I shall be prepared for great surprises.

I remember the turf on the fairways was not good and the texture of the grass on the putting greens was somewhat pristine in its roughness. I know that great attention has been paid and technical skill applied to this
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This interesting old photograph shows Taylor driving during an exhibition match with Willie Norton and R. Buff Wilson, during his sojourn here in 1900

allay a fear that sometimes creeps into my mind that you are going ahead too fast and that your enthusiasm is intoxicating what otherwise would be sober judgment. It is a fear that I as a lover of its traditions may be pardoned for possessing. As a prospective visitor it ill befits me to meddle in what I may call the domestic side of the politics of the game, but I cannot blind myself to the fact that recent happenings are disturbing.

The abolition of the stymie was a hazardous step and if followed may lead to lamentable consequences. Far be it from me to claim any right to interference in anything

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vitaly important subject in recent years. I want to see the extent of the triumph over adverse weather conditions, full and complete as I am given to understand they are.

On the occasion of my last visit I felt I was a sort of King-pin among golfers although I trust I showed this with due humility. I shall be under no such impression this time. Johnny McDermott proved to us in 1911 when he came across that he was the advance guard of a growing army whose playing strength we should do well to study. Mr. Walter J. Travis had fired the first shot, in what will prove to be an everlasting battle in 1904. Tommy Kerrigan, Emmet French, and the others proved last year that the Rank and File were of equally good material and worthy to carry on the fight.

I am glad to think that I shall be accompanied by "Sandy" Herd, one of my dearest friends and one of the whitest of men. We met for the first time in 1893, at Prestwick, the first occasion I entered for the Championship, and I have had the greatest affection for him ever since. Sandy is a splendid character and is loved by all for his sterling qualities. I know of no one who exhibits greater keenness when playing, but that keenness is never allowed to interfere with those finer feelings that is always apparent when real sportsmen are contesting any trial of skill.

Sandy and myself served our apprenticeship to the game in a rather rough school, a school that was uncultured, perhaps, but one that would stand no nonsense and would readily with caustic tongue appraise one at their real value. A native of St. Andrews Sandy learned his Golf where only the fittest will survive and at a time when to make good was far more difficult than it has been for twenty years past.

When Herd was a boy young Tommy Morris, Tom Kidd, David Strath and others were the players whose names and deeds are the very foundation of professional golf. Sandy can tell many a good story of these worthies who were veritable autocrats and did not hesitate to assert the doctrine of superiority over their fellows. Herd had to fight to gain recognition and many a man, built on less determined lines, fell by the wayside during the battle.

Sandy will bring with him the real breath of these old times and you will find him the embodiment and personification of old Scottish, and particularly St. Andrews golf. My old friend is a positive wonder. Thirty-two years ago he, with Hugh Kirkaldy, was considered the rising hope of Scottish professional golf, but the regretted early death of Hughie, left Sandy as the sole banner bearer. He has worthily upheld the standard of the Rampant Lion ever since, and has been a terror to those who would fain trend on the tail of his coat.

A more stout-hearted golfer never lived, and I am betraying no secret when I say that this courage is beautifully blended with the tenderest feeling toward his fellow men. Sandy has made good through tough trials and many tribulations, and he has a very soft spot in his heart for others who have not been so fortunate. American Golfers will be glad to know Sandy Herd and I shall be glad to accompany him in the role, as he terms it, as his "Sparring Partner".

During the past few years Herd has, and is in fact now playing better golf than ever. At fifty-four years of age this is some tribute to his inherent enthusiasm and splendid courage. Yes! old Sandy will be very popular both in a golfing and social sense I predict. His living in England for more than half his life has not enabled him to lose his Scotch characteristics and accent of the "Auld Toon" in Fife and many a good story can he tell of the game in those days that seem so very long ago.

Sandy and I are looking forward to the Tour with a very great deal of pleasure and this enjoyment is enhanced now we know that a British Amateur Team are to be contemporary visitors. It is the first time in the history of the game that a British Team has been officially sanctioned and we shall feel that we are helping to make golfing history. I hope it may be possible that we are present at Brookline in September when your Amateur Championship is played for. It may be that our presence may tend to hearten our fellows. We should certainly see some great struggles.

The coming season will be a great and notable one for the game in both countries, and Herd and I will be participants in each, a most pleasing thought. We shall come among you as men whose full playing vigor is being rapidly left behind, but who hate the thought. As a recompense and consolation we trust that it will be allowed us that we still retain our love and enthusiasm for the game, with which we each "became acquainted" nearly half a century ago.

Since writing the foregoing it is good news to learn that the Stymie is to be reinstated to its pride of place as an integral part of the game. The U. S. G. A. are to be heartily congratulated on their wisdom and their solicitude for all that makes for the greatness of the game.