

Architectooralooral

Playing the Like
1934

Joe Gargery, it may be remembered, was disappointed when on his visit to London he went to see the blacking warehouse; he thought that in the pictures of it which he had previously seen it had been "drawd too architectooralooral."

There are some who would, I fancy, if they knew it, apply this word of Joe's to the designers of golf courses. They think that these gentlemen have become a little too ingenious and too subtle, and are inclined to yearn for the simpler architecture of old times. On very rare occasions, as regards some particular piece of cleverness that has a little missed its mark, I agree with this view, but on the whole I most decidedly disagree with it. I have a great admiration for our golfing architects, and when we are inclined to criticize them or their works it would be well if we paused to consider what sort of a hand at it we should make ourselves. There was a time when the nearest professional player was deemed fully qualified to

Bernard Darwin on Golf

lay out a new course, and any body of retired colonels, constituting a green committee, thought that they could at the very least make a new hole. This state of pristine innocence is not often to be found today, but I doubt whether the average golfer even now fully realizes that the professional architect is not merely likely, but certain, to do the job infinitely better than the casual amateur just because it is his job, that he is paid to think about it, and has thought about it a great deal.

Those who laid out courses when the first great golf "boom" came did not presumably think much, neither had they very suitable equipment for thinking purposes. They had the material for thought in certain famous holes on famous courses, but they entirely failed, if they ever tried, to analyze the qualities of those holes and to discover wherein their merits lay. They took, as a rule, the way of least resistance; if they saw a hill they drove over it, and a hollow was clearly designed by Providence for a green, although oddly enough that same Providence had put most of the greens at St. Andrews upon plateaus. It seems to me that the great and primary virtue of the modern architect lies in the fact that he did analyze: that he went back to the classic models, and especially to St. Andrews, and insisted on discovering why golfers had for years particularly enjoyed playing particular holes. It is obvious by way of example that nobody ever gets tired of playing the sixteenth hole—the Corner of the Dyke. In what does its peculiar charm lie? Certainly not in the fact that the Principal's Nose punishes a bad shot because as a rule it punishes rather a good one, in the sense of a shot that is more or less cleanly hit. The charm is in the fact that the hole keeps us, unconsciously perhaps, thinking, that we have always got to make up what we are pleased to call our minds; that we have to decide between, on the one hand, a highly dangerous but highly profitable course that may lose us several strokes but may gain us one invaluable stroke, and, on the other, a comparatively safe, easy course that ought not to lose us much but may just lose us something intensely important. Their discoveries came, I think, very

briefly to this, that consists in invest-
tively speculative

Here was som
How those old ho
one can tell. Assu
heaven-sent desig
rather through go
The holes chang
grew or were hac
here or blew it a
game changed sc
and new roads. Y
that, however the
them and loved
some pleasing er
that emotion and
to proclaim the d

It was Mr. J
words, and they
here. He is defe
the bee-line to
too near and be
will go just as ne
close as he dare
tance! For golf
player should o
bunkers, gainin
of his own 'far a
himself either t
being compelle
berth."

Those wor
time, I think,

colonels, constituting at the very least make ce is not often to be : golfer even now fully merely likely, but casual amateur just be- out it, and has thought

briefly to this, that golf at its best is a perpetual adventure, that it consists in investing not in gilt-edged securities but in comparatively speculative stock; that it ought to be a risky business.

Here was something of a new belief founded upon old holes. How those old holes attained the form in which we know them no one can tell. Assuredly it was not owing to the genius of some one heaven-sent designer whose name has unjustly been lost. It was rather through good fortune and a gradual process of evolution. The holes changed their forms many times according as whims grew or were hacked away, according as the wind silted up sand here or blew it away there, according as the instruments of the game changed so that men could hit farther and essay short cuts and new roads. Yet they possessed some indestructible virtue, so that, however they changed superficially, golfers united in praising them and loved to play them, gaining from the playing of them some pleasing emotion that other holes could not afford. To define that emotion and the cause of it was really to make a discovery, and to proclaim the discovery was to proclaim a new faith.

It was Mr. John Low who first put this faith into memorable words, and they are so excellent that I will set them down again here. He is defending the little pot-bunker that is very nearly on the bee-line to the hole and, he says, "The greedy golfer will go too near and be sucked in to his destruction. The straight player will go just as near as he deems safe, just as close as he dare. Just as close as he dare: that's golf, and that's a hazard of immortal importance! For golf at its best should be a contest of risks. The fine player should on his way round the links be just slipping past the bunkers, gaining every yard he can, conquering by the confidence of his own 'far and sure' play. The less skillful player should wreck himself either by attempting risks which are beyond his skill, or by being compelled to lose ground through giving the bunkers a wide berth."

Those words were written in 1903, and it was just about that time, I think, and, generally speaking, in accordance with the

beliefs so proclaimed that the two leaders of the new school of architecture, Mr. H. S. Colt and Mr. Herbert Fowler, were doing their work. Yet if one hole has to be taken as typifying these beliefs, it is not one designed by either of them, but by a distinguished amateur. The hole is the fourth at Woking, which is familiar to all who look out of the railway carriage window as they go from Waterloo towards Southampton, and its designer was Mr. Stuart Paton, who is well known to all who ever played on the Woking course, and has even been designated by an irreverent writer its Mussolini. This was, when I first knew it, a comparatively commonplace hole. The tee shot had to be played between the railway on the right and the heather on the left, and there was a sufficiently wide stretch of fairway between them. The green was guarded by a cross bunker which covered its entire width. A tolerably straight drive and a tolerably adroit pitch were wanted, and nothing more.

Mr. Paton, presumably reminded by the railway line of the sixteenth hole at St. Andrews, saw his opportunity and proceeded to plant a Principal's Nose in the shape of a double bunker in the middle of the fairway. He reduced the cross bunker, I rather think by stages, until nothing was left of it but one small pot in the middle of the edge of the green. Thus the man who courageously lays down his balls between the first bunker and the railway line gets a clear run up to the hole on the most favorable possible terms. The more cautious one who drives to the left can still get his four, but, owing to the contour of the green, he has a much more difficult approach to play. He will find himself hampered by that second central bunker. If he pitches over it, he will have hard work to stop his ball from running away into trouble; if he dare not pitch but plays a running shot, he will often leave himself a long, nasty sloping putt.

From being a cut-and-dried affair, the hole became an uncommonly interesting and provocative one, and one which a man is always glad to leave safely behind him in a medal round. Moreover, since it was certainly one of the first, if not the first, of its kind in

southern architecture, it roundly won its argument. Its enemies said that there should be no bunker in the middle of the fairway, and that therefore the bunker was there, that the architect had done his business to avoid it. They said that if there had been no bunker, there would have been enough one. The argument was that the hole, and if any further argument were to be found in that persistence of great bunkers of the world.

I have mentioned this hole before its time and so should not be surprised at being abused. It had in a measure on modern golf of a distinguished architect played in the story of King Lear, then a good golfer but over to Woking for a golf course, and golf was out of the question. Those stormbound in the hole or whether Mr. S. was certain. At any rate, he was out of the hole. So out he went, rain pouring off him, considering the purpose of the course. When at last he had found a new hole, now knows, a golfer most diabolically intelligent, a thoughtless golfer ready to receive it. And we must remember with the first hole and the fourth hole

he new school of ar-
Fowler, were doing
pifying these beliefs,
a distinguished am-
is familiar to all who
ey go from Waterloo
r. Stuart Paton, who
oking course, and has
r its Mussolini. This
monplace hole. The
on the right and the
y wide stretch of fair-
d by a cross bunker
aight drive and a tol-
more.

ilway line of the six-
ity and proceeded to
ouble bunker in the
unker, I rather think
small pot in the mid-
ho courageously lays
he railway line gets a
possible terms. The
still get his four, but,
ich more difficult ap-
d by that second cen-
hard work to stop his
not pitch but plays a
g, nasty sloping putt.
e became an uncom-
ne which a man is al-
dal round. Moreover,
ne first, of its kind in

southern architecture, it roused plenty of hostility and plenty of argument. Its enemies said that the drive that was caught by the bunker in the middle of the course was invariably a very good drive, and that therefore the bunker was unfair. Its friends replied that the bunker was there, that the player knew it was there, and that it was his business to avoid it. The drive might have been a very good one if there had been no bunker there; as things were it was not a good enough one. The argument goes on to this day; people still abuse the hole, and if any further evidence be required of its merits it is to be found in that persistence of calumny. All the great holes and great bunkers of the world have their puny enemies.

I have mentioned this hole not only because it came something before its time and so shared the fate of zealots and reformers in being abused. It had in another way an effect impossible exactly to measure on modern golf. It plays something of the part in the story of a distinguished architect which the cakes are supposed to have played in the story of King Alfred. One day Mr. Simpson, who was then a good golfer but had never designed a hole in his life, went over to Woking for a game of golf. The day turned pitilessly wet and golf was out of the question. Whether the conversation among those stormbound in the clubhouse actually turned on the fourth hole or whether Mr. Simpson had heard such talk before I am not certain. At any rate, he determined to go and look critically at that hole. So out he went in solitude and a mackintosh, and, with the rain pouring off him, devoted his "immense and brooding spirit" to considering the purpose of that little bunker in the middle of the course. When at last he came in again, wet but presumably happy, he had found a new interest in life. He became, as all the world now knows, a golfing architect, one of the straitest sect, of an almost diabolically ingenious mind, who loves to see what the thoughtless golfer calls a good shot go bang into a bunker which is ready to receive it. As we ply our niblicks in one of his creations let us remember with gratitude what we owe indirectly to Mr. Paton and the fourth hole at Woking!

Bernard Darwin on Golf

No man can be a good architect unless he has a wide experience of many courses, a most observant eye for the weaknesses of his brother golfers, and red-hot zeal for his art, so that he is more interested in seeing other people play holes than in playing them himself. And beyond this he must possess that indefinable, instinctive something that may be called an eye for country. There are some courses which may be said to lay themselves out in so far as this, that the rough outline at once suggests itself to any experienced golfer. Even so that is not very far on the road to success, and the experienced golfer would generally fail to get the best, or anything like the best, out of his ground. As a rule, however, the circumstances are not nearly so favorable; the architect finds himself plumped down in the middle of a wood and can go north, south, east or west as it pleases him. The ordinary person would feel himself lost, throwing up his hands in despair, and it is then, I suppose, that the natural instinct of the born architect comes to the rescue.

I have at different times spent very interesting days with eminent architects upon the sites of their labors when those labors had scarcely begun—with Mr. Colt at Stoke Poges and St. George's Hill, with the late Mr. Abercromby at Coombe Hill and Addington. I have called those days interesting; I should have said awe-inspiring, so bewildered was my own state of mind, so lucid and determined was that of my companion. I would be shown a thicket so dense that we had to struggle through it with a motion of men swimming, and be told that this was the line to the first hole. The line might, for all I knew, have just as well been in a precisely opposite direction. Yet I fancy that if two architects had been set to work, their instinct would have guided them to start through that particular thicket and no other; indeed I am told, though I cannot give chapter and verse for it, that the experiment has been tried, and the two consultants arrived independently, not merely at the same beginning, but at much the same entire round.

The piece of architectural vision which most of all impressed me is today represented by that admirable short hole, the seventh,

at Stoke Poges. When all that met my vacancied with wood runni cealed in that apparer plateau green with a drop into the perditic an effort of genius.

In such cases the after all, it is the arc should do it better founded architects c do think that we ar tered, I was one of : We thought hard at Mr. Simpson to cor well pleased with o to say it is, but the Mr. Simpson had c place we had desi better. We had poi discovered that p pointed out? I de own account I he The fact remains for the architects.

I imagine tha a more delicate a The architect ha vacy; everybody Moreover, he is the shape of hol garded with lov blind one-shot ! they were, at an

Bernard Darwin on Golf

No man can be a good architect unless he has a wide experience of many courses, a most observant eye for the weaknesses of his brother golfers, and red-hot zeal for his art, so that he is more interested in seeing other people play holes than in playing them himself. And beyond this he must possess that indefinable, instinctive something that may be called an eye for country. There are some courses which may be said to lay themselves out in so far as this, that the rough outline at once suggests itself to any experienced golfer. Even so that is not very far on the road to success, and the experienced golfer would generally fail to get the best, or anything like the best, out of his ground. As a rule, however, the circumstances are not nearly so favorable; the architect finds himself plumped down in the middle of a wood and can go north, south, east or west as it pleases him. The ordinary person would feel himself lost, throwing up his hands in despair, and it is then, I suppose, that the natural instinct of the born architect comes to the rescue.

I have at different times spent very interesting days with eminent architects upon the sites of their labors when those labors had scarcely begun—with Mr. Colt at Stoke Poges and St. George's Hill, with the late Mr. Abercromby at Coombe Hill and Addington. I have called those days interesting; I should have said awe-inspiring, so bewildered was my own state of mind, so lucid and determined was that of my companion. I would be shown a thicket so dense that we had to struggle through it with a motion of men swimming, and be told that this was the line to the first hole. The line might, for all I knew, have just as well been in a precisely opposite direction. Yet I fancy that if two architects had been set to work, their instinct would have guided them to start through that particular thicket and no other; indeed I am told, though I cannot give chapter and verse for it, that the experiment has been tried, and the two consultants arrived independently, not merely at the same beginning, but at much the same entire round.

The piece of architectural vision which most of all impressed me is today represented by that admirable short hole, the seventh,

at Stoke Poges. When I all that met my vacant eyes were covered with wood running ceaseless in that apparently plateau green with a bound drop into the perdition an effort of genius.

In such cases there after all, it is the architect should do it better than founded architects can do think that we are entered, I was one of a team. We thought hard and Mr. Simpson to come well pleased with our to say it is, but the architect Mr. Simpson had on place we had designed better. We had pore discovered that place pointed out? I do not own account I hesitated. The fact remains true for the architects."

I imagine that a more delicate architect. The architect has vacancy; everybody can. Moreover, he is sensible the shape of hole guarded with love blind one-shot holes they were, at any

at Stoke Poges. When I first went there with its creator, Mr. Colt, all that met my vacant gaze was a steep uniform slope thickly covered with wood running down to a small stream. To have seen concealed in that apparently most unpromising material a long, narrow, plateau green with a bunkered slope on the one side, and a deep drop into the perdition of the stream on the other still strikes me as an effort of genius.

In such cases there is nothing for it but to reflect humbly that, after all, it is the architect's job, and that it is only natural that he should do it better than a mere casual student. Yet these confounded architects can sometimes put us to shame when we really do think that we are as good as they are. When Rye had to be altered, I was one of a Sub-Committee to consider possible changes. We thought hard and long: we devised a scheme and then we got Mr. Simpson to come and polish it up for us. We were particularly well pleased with our new first hole, and a very good hole I venture to say it is, but the humiliating part of the business was this, that Mr. Simpson had only to move a half-a-dozen yards or so from the place we had designed for the green to find one obviously much better. We had pored over the site and he had not. Why had we not discovered that place that was plain for all to see, when it was pointed out? I do not know, and whatever I might admit on my own account I hesitate to say that all my companions were stupid. The fact remains that we had not. So I must needs say, "Hooroar for the architects."

I imagine that this altering and remodeling of courses is in fact a more delicate and difficult task than that of laying out a new one. The architect has neither so free a hand nor such agreeable privacy; everybody can see what he is at and can criticize accordingly. Moreover, he is sure to find himself opposed to vested interests in the shape of holes that have long and often undeservedly been regarded with love and veneration. This is particularly the case with blind one-shot holes which belong perhaps to the gutty era, when they were, at any rate, much more formidable than at present. I can

still remember my feelings when a good many years ago I accompanied Mr. Colt on his advisory visit to Aberdovey. The third hole—it was then the fourth—is Cader, and the fact that it is the only hole habitually called by a name and not a number is eloquent. It calls for some sort of iron shot over a sandhill crowned with sleepers on to a hidden green with not unkindly sides. What would my companion say? He maintained a tactful silence that meant more than any words until he reached the far end of the green, when he said, "Take that back wall away." Then we passed on towards the next tee and, incidentally, that back wall is still there.

I have myself, I confess, a certain affection for Cader. I do not want it altered, and it is at least a far better hole than is the Maiden of Sandwich, possessing much more alarming trouble and a much smaller green. As compared with the Sandy Parlour at Deal, it is a perfect pearl among short holes. Will those more famous holes ever be altered? I gravely doubt it. Some little while ago there was a proposal to alter the Maiden by playing across the present green to a plateau perched high on the hilltop. There was, I believe, some prospect of the proposal being approved until an old friend of mine made a speech full of the most moving "sob stuff" about the dear old Maiden. The proposal was thereupon instantly and indignantly rejected, I do not say that either my friend or my fellow-members of the club were necessarily wrong, since I have in my own composition a good deal both of sentimentality and conservatism. I am only giving an illustration of the fact that reforming architects have to go warily.

They do go very warily, being as a rule monuments of tact. They can see deep into the frailties and vanities of the human heart, and can bamboozle green committees into doing their will. In short, they are great men, and they will have need to show themselves greater than ever in the years to come. It is their task to make golf courses no harder for the ordinary mortal, and yet a good deal more exacting and less monotonous for the man who can regu-

larly drive untold yards and pitching shot with some lo tackled it with courage and say that they have wholly the modern golfer's power times too much for them. ing the Open Champions Here there has been ma little distance in front of the fairway. Its object is t left. In doing this he has bunker, but, if he succe his second shot. If, on must either carry that li skillfully round it. Ever mortals, especially if th then a good "two-sho length. In the Open C bunker entirely waste existed. With a light v three hundred yards c Lawson Little hit a dr yards. The second sho whether or not it hac tance whatever. The dered nugatory a ve present impression t combination will ger

The architects r and again with un nearer to the kind c when I am writing, Mr. Simpson and I write about it as I

any years ago I accom-
Aberdovey. The third
d the fact that it is the
l not a number is elo-
ver a sandhill crowned
t unkindly sides. What
l a tactful silence that
ned the far end of the
way." Then we passed
that back wall is still

tion for Cader. I do not
role than is the Maiden
ng trouble and a much
Parlour at Deal, it is a
more famous holes ever
while ago there was a
oss the present green to
re was, I believe, some
til an old friend of mine
b stuff" about the dear
stantly and indignantly
or my fellow-members
have in my own compo-
and conservatism. I am
forming architects have

le monuments of tact.
vanities of the human
es into doing their will.
will have need to show
come. It is their task to
y mortal, and yet a good
r the man who can regu-

larly drive untold yards and as regularly follow his drive with a high
pitching shot with some lofted variety of graded iron. They have
tackled it with courage and ingenuity, but it would be flattery to
say that they have wholly succeeded, since the modern ball and
the modern golfer's power of hitting it are in combination some-
times too much for them. A good illustration was to be found dur-
ing the Open Championship of 1935 in the first hole at Muirfield.
Here there has been made a highly ingenious little bunker some
little distance in front of the green rather on the right-hand side of
the fairway. Its object is to make the player place his tee shot to the
left. In doing this he has to run an appreciable risk of going into a
bunker, but, if he succeeds, he gets a clear run in to the hole with
his second shot. If, on the other hand, he drives to the right, he
must either carry that little bunker with his second or slice the ball
skillfully round it. Everything goes according to plan for ordinary
mortals, especially if the turf be not too keen and fast. The hole is
then a good "two-shot hole," demanding accuracy as well as
length. In the Open Championship, on the other hand, that little
bunker entirely wasted its sweetness and might as well not have
existed. With a light wind behind them player after player drove
three hundred yards or more, and I saw, with my own eyes, Mr.
Lawson Little hit a drive computed to be three hundred and sixty
yards. The second shot became a pitch with a mashie-niblick, and
whether or not it had to carry the little bunker was of no impor-
tance whatever. The ball and the hitter between them had ren-
dered nugatory a very clever piece of architecture, and it is my
present impression that, unless something be done to the ball, this
combination will generally prove one too many for the architect.

The architects never say die; they return to the charge again
and again with unimpaired bravery, they approach nearer and
nearer to the kind of difficulty that is called "unfair." At the time
when I am writing, the new course at Sunningdale, as altered by
Mr. Simpson and Mr. Paton, is only just in play, and I can only
write about it as I saw it in the rough. They seem to me to have

Bernard Darwin on Golf

gone further than anyone has gone yet in insisting on the "laying down" of the tee shot in a particular place; they have certainly made some admirable and interesting holes, but it remains to be seen how far they have succeeded, and whether or not the ball will beat them after all.

As far as I can see, the architect's strongest and most faithful ally in this perpetual battle is the plateau green. It cannot prevent the length of a hole being spoiled and its character impaired, but it can prevent its becoming child's play. The best example I can think of is the long hole in, the fourteenth, at St. Andrew's, universally recognized as one of the few great long holes. If we are to see it at its best, the player must skirt the Beardies with his tee shot down the Elysian Fields; play his second to the left of Hell bunker and as near as he dare to it, and so attain the ideal position for his third, a run-up shot. If the ground is hard and there is a following wind, the long driver upsets all these well-laid plans; he drives miles and miles down the Elysian Fields without bothering his head about Beardies, and goes straight for the green with his second, carrying far over Hell, probably with an iron. The old game of going from point to point has gone; "geography has been destroyed," as I have heard Mr. Robert Harris exclaim in a passionate tirade; but there does remain that narrow plateau green with a steep bank in front of it, a run-away at the back, and hills, that will make a fool of almost any shot and any player, on its right-hand side. Even if the long driver plays his second with a mashie, he will have hard work to stay on the green; he is at least as likely to take five as four. That is small compensation perhaps for the destruction of the true beauty of the hole, but it is at least some amends. The hole's character may be changed, but the hole is not conquered; it still defies the player.

I am conscious that I seem to be writing as if I had a hatred of long drivers and was suffering from a disease to be briefly described as "sour grapes." This is not really so. I am the last person to want golf to become a less athletic game. Long driving is not

Archi

merely a matter of youth and skill and deserves every fair doing more than that; it is a game. In consequence the architects should conceive an ulterior end and should be driven by their efforts to curb the slaughter to defeat its own end. I do not could name one or two. We of accuracy and forethought as well as of mere straight game, as described in "The Taming of a Ball gently on to a green would land them in grief

The architects have fought, but it ought not to come so is the fault of the architects brought back to its proper the architects will be fo

insisting on the "laying
lace; they have certainly
ples, but it remains to be
hether or not the ball will

strongest and most faithful
green. It cannot prevent
character impaired, but it
The best example I can
h, at St. Andrew's, univer-
ong holes. If we are to see
beardies with his tee shot
to the left of Hell bunker
the ideal position for his
d and there is a following
well-laid plans; he drives
ds without bothering his
or the green with his sec-
an iron. The old game of
'geography has been de-
ris exclaim in a passionate
ow plateau green with a
e back, and hills, that will
r player, on its right-hand
ond with a mashie, he will
is at least as likely to take
perhaps for the destruction
t least some amends. The
e hole is not conquered; it

ting as if I had a hatred of
disease to be briefly de-
lly so. I am the last person
game. Long driving is not

merely a matter of youth and strength; it is essentially a matter of
skill and deserves every fair advantage it can gain. At present it is
doing more than that; it is spoiling the beauty and interest of the
game. In consequence there seems to me a real danger lest archi-
tects should conceive an unjustifiable enmity against the long hit-
ters and should be driven to be too subtle and too malignant in
their efforts to curb the slasher. A hole can be too clever and so can
defeat its own end. I do not know many examples, but I think I
could name one or two. We decidedly want golf courses to be tests
of accuracy and forethought, and even perhaps a little low cunning
as well as of mere straightforward hitting, but we do not want the
game, as described in "The Golfers' Manual," of "oldsters spoon-
ing a ball gently on to a table of smooth turf when a longer shot
would land them in grief."

The architects have done nobly; they have fought the good
fight, but it ought not to be a fight. The fact that it threatens to be-
come so is the fault of the ball. Whether or not the ball can ever be
brought back to its proper limits is another story, but unless it can,
the architects will be forever fighting an uphill battle.