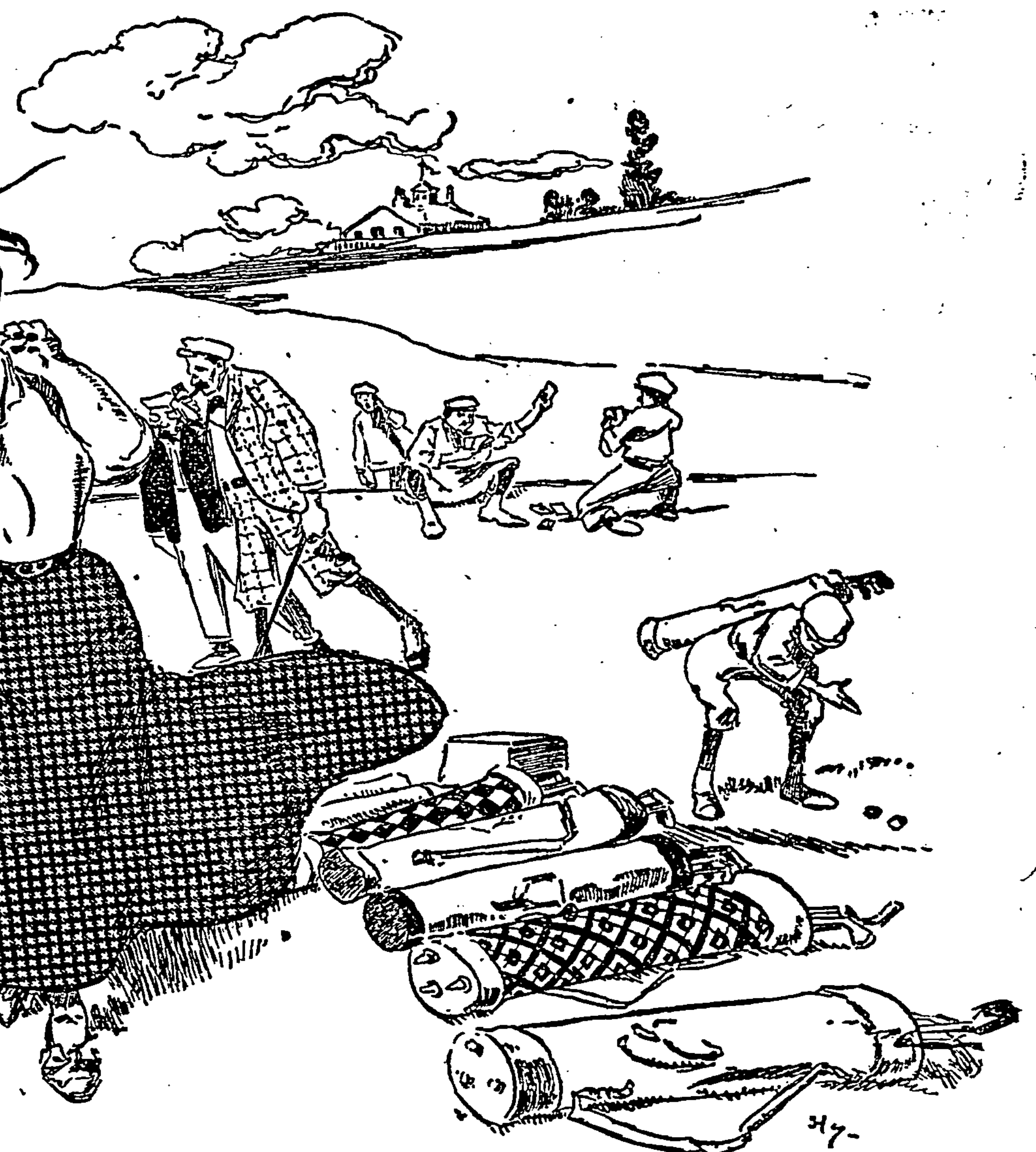


HUMORS OF GOLF AS PLAYED AT VAN CORTLANDT PARK

There Public Links Offer Excellent Opportunities to Study Human Nature--Growing Interest in the Game Shown by Big Increase in Army of Players.



Occasionally a fair player commands admiration.

YOU don't need to know how to play golf; you don't even need to play it to get a lot of fun out of the ancient and honorable game.

Just go up to Van Cortlandt Park, where the public links are open almost the year round. Go during the week if you want a chance to do some playing yourself; go on Saturday or Sunday if you want to see how the fast-growing golf-loving hordes of New York indulge in the game that has been an aristocratic sport for generations and which President Taft has recently made more popular.

On Saturdays and Sundays there are so many players you will have to stand in line for hours to get a chance at the first tee, and when the starter calls out your number—the same being printed on a card handed you at the entrance to the links by a park attendant—and you finally start across the field for the first green you will be able to get very little pleasure out of mere playing, for ten to one there will be several "foursomes," a "threesome or two," a "twosome," and a number of individual players just ahead of you, and the

holes comprise "the meadows," or the stretch of low flat land lying to the right of the Harlem Railway tracks.

The hills are popular with the fat devotees. Most of them have apparently been ordered by their physicians to take hill climbing exercise to reduce flesh, and they toil over the steep ground, streaming with perspiration and groaning in agony, with a persistence which only a growing girth can inspire.

One of the strangest psychological problems of this peculiar game is the belligerent attitude one stout woman assumes toward another. The fact that all stout women labor over the course for the palpable purpose of "reducing" exerts a strange effect upon all the stout women's tempers. No matter how stout a woman may be, she has not the slightest difficulty, apparently, in convincing herself that she is not as stout as the other stout woman she meets. Moreover she takes keen delight in making invidious remarks in the presence of the other stout woman.

One woman who could not have weighed less than 210 pounds toiled up the steepest hill on the links one par-

clubs exactly like a broom and pushes the ball before her.

Women seem to be constitutionally incapable of appreciating the rules of the game. One of the first rules is that a foursome, or four players playing a match, shall have the right of way over a single player. But the average woman player considers it a violation of her rights to stand aside and let others pass. A woman will nonchalantly hold up a whole line of players at a tee and be perfectly oblivious of the blockade she is causing.

It is the stout woman that takes the game seriously. Even the prospect of a ruined complexion will not retard her fervor to reduce her figure. Her determination is exemplified in her dress. One can feel definitely sure that she wears rubber corsets beneath her sweater. Her shoes are large and heavy, and she affects bloomers under her golf skirt. She does not leave shreds of lace all over the links like her slimmer sister, but from the energy which she puts in the work one can almost see the lean earth being larded.

There are other kinds of women on the links. The woman who doesn't play, but who walks by hubby's side and carries his coat or occasionally caddies for him, and the girl who makes

but one club, a midiron. He wears a very tall collar, a gaudy pair of sleeves, holders given him probably by his best girl on his birthday, and he looks thoroughly uncomfortable. He mimes up to the tee and knocks off with an "I'll smack you on the wrist" stroke, and is off carrying his coat and hat in his hand.

Then there is the fat man with the asthmatic breath. He puffs and grunts as he stoops to tee his ball, and his apoplectic face grows purple with the energy he puts in his drive. The grass, the sky, the open air, do not appeal to this individual. He climbs the steepest parts of the hills and always covers the entire course, for he is out to "reduce," and he makes a physical torture of his pleasure.

An indulgent papa has brought little Willie along for a pleasant outing. Willie stops by the way to pick wild flowers or play in the sand traps, and little Willie's papa is cursed from every direction of the compass.

"Take that kid away; this ain't no daynursery," is a mild obfuscation that is handed to papa. But somehow Willie never gets hit, though balls rain about him like canister shot. It is the players who worry about hitting that

He approaches each tee with a cold, hard glint in his eye. Grasping his club until his fingers seem to imbed into the handle, he makes a savage swing at the ball. If he misses the crowd gathers closer, so as not to let a word escape.

Despite his savage temper, mild-mannered, soft-spoken players frequently seek his society and consider it a privilege to play along with him. An observer has reached the conclusion that the reason for this is because these individuals can vent their feelings second hand, as it were. Lacking force of character to express their emotions in appropriate language themselves, they take pleasure in the opportunity afforded by a more vigorous and virile personality.

It has been said that golf has bred a

hole in a lucky three, and you are only one behind him. It is much more self-respecting to halve the hole.

This peculiar feature of the game has developed what the golfers call the "explanatory player." That is, the man who is constantly explaining his shots or his score. It is a common fault of the amateur everywhere, but this species flourishes abundantly at Van Cortlandt.

"I topped it," or "That's funny; I never sliced that way before," or "If I hadn't got into that last bunker I'd have made a three," are a few of his phrases.

He is also the individual who delights in telling you what your playing faults are, shows you where your "stance" or your swing is wrong or why you ought to change your manner of putting. When he misses a stroke or gets a bad shot he blames it on his clubs. He is also the boastful individual. He performs the most remarkable feats—in his imagination. Travis and Travers are mere amateurs compared to him.

He takes you aside and confides with all the delectation of a fisherman describing the size of a trout that got away when you didn't happen to be looking, going into elaborate particulars with the most convincing earnestness. Or it may be that he made a thirty foot putt which won him the hole. He is like the man who took all the credit for making an excellent put when in aiming at the flag which had been removed from the cup and stuck in the green several yards away he accidentally went into the cup. When he "dubs" all his shots, "slices" or "pulls" outrageously and makes a general botch of the game he will tell you it is because he is not feeling well.

You will find it hard, too, to keep from laughing outright at the self-conscious man who tries the game for the

spin through the air. There is a suppressed giggle, and as the horrible truth bursts upon him he grows crimson in the face. The ball is still where he teed it, but a deep gouge in the earth beside it is eloquently indicative of the strength of his forearm. His chagrin quickly changes to anger, and with a muttered curse he tries again, this time with even a more desperate swing. The ball rolls a few yards.

"You topped it, old man," suggests his partner, consolingly.

The big man picks up his kit of tools in a shamed way and he slinks after the ball with a feeling that he has committed a mean crime written all over him. But that one experience has made him a golfer. Deep in his soul he has vowed that he will learn the game and show the scoffers what's what. And you will see him every moment of his spare time thereafter on the links.

A middle-aged man who is reputed to be worth vast sums of money and who plays on a private links in Florida during the winter when the Van Cortlandt grounds are closed is a daily visitor at the free links. Dressed in natty golf attire, with a huge bag of clubs of the latest design, he trudges over and over the course with two caddies. Under no circumstances is he satisfied with one. His golf balls must also always be brand new and of the latest make.

He always plays alone, and one of his favorite diversions is to seek a sequestered part of the links and drive several dozen balls at a mark about 200 yards away. He can frequently be seen with a long row of bright new balls on the grass nearby, leisurely driving one after the other without even feeling them on. On these occasions he has a half dozen caddies working for him, chasing the balls and bringing them back like well-trained retrievers.

The Van Cortlandt caddie is the terror of the golfer. Unlike the rules in force at some private clubs, it is not compulsory for players to hire caddies, but they find plenty of work. Until this year no effort was made to curb the caddies, but since Park Commissioner Higgins has been in power the grounds are more strictly policed.

Even now Italian boys lie in wait at convenient places and picking up balls skurry away before the player appears in sight. Those who are not familiar with their methods spend much useless time looking for balls they will never see again, unless they happen to buy them from an innocent-faced caddie at some later period.

Several caddies do a regular business in the sale of balls, but the cleverest of them could not compete with a sharp-eyed Italian who established a padrone system of ball-hunters. He hired a number of boys to lie in wait at particularly difficult stretches of the links, where the grass was tall or where players addicted to "slicing" would send their balls over the fence along the railroad. He paid the boys from 10 to 25 cents a ball. Then he would enamel them with golf paint and sell them to players for three times what he paid for them. During the first two years the links were open he did a rushing business, but in time the boys learned that they could sell the balls with better profit direct to the players and his business fell off.

Many of the boys who hang around the links are not caddies in any sense of the word. Most of them are Italian boys who play truant from school and spend their time on the links waiting every opportunity to steal a ball when a player is not looking. As a new ball costs anywhere from 50 to 80 cents and can readily be sold for from 10 to 50 cents, a really indefatigable picker up of the articles can make a comfortable income.

The men players have almost as much trouble with the women in this respect as they have with the caddies and the small boys. Not that the women actually steal the balls. Not at all.

They simply cannot recognize their own property. If they find a ball anywhere within a dozen yards of where they saw their disappear no amount of argument will convince them that it is not the one they seek.



"Henry, am I as fat as that person?"

air will be so full of flying golf balls that all your time will be needed in ducking and dodging.

But if you only want to study human nature as manifested in new and peculiar forms—for the game is an entirely new quantity to the majority of Van Cortlandt players—it will be worth while to take a club—an "iron" will do, merely to show that you have a right on the course—and just saunter along from one end of the links to the other.

The amount of amusement you will get by merely watching the various cranks, freaks, and ordinary human beings will well repay you.

The popularity of the Scottish game has increased by leaps and bounds in this city since the free golf courses have been established, and many new links will have to be laid out in order to take care of the rapidly increasing army.

There are already three public golf courses in the city, the one at Van Cortlandt Park in Manhattan, one at Forest Park, Queens, just outside of Brooklyn, and one at Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx. This latter one is so inaccessible, however, that few go there. Van Cortlandt Park is the Mecca for most players.

A golf links requires so many acres of ground that it is much more difficult to establish one than a baseball field or a tennis court. It is like laying out a new park. In fact, all the parks in New York below Central Park, if grouped together, would be just about large enough to make one "hole" of an ordinary links. To "do" the eighteen holes at Van Cortlandt means a good five-mile walk.

President Taft is undoubtedly responsible for much of the popularity of the game. There were only a handful of players on the public links before he was elected President and his favorite exercise blazoned all over the world. The impetus he gave to the game seems to be confined in great measure also to men and women of his own size. He has helped to make the game recognized as a great flesh reducer.

But not all fat people go in for the game. There is the dyspeptic, the man who cannot sleep, the man with the sluggish liver, the moribund individual who needs a new outlook on life, the old man who wants to get young again.

There are many of these latter. After being at the game a year or so they walk around as spry and chipper as John D. Rockefeller or Andrew Carnegie. Come to think of it, these two individuals are probably as much responsible for the spread of golf as is Mr. Taft. Plenty of men as old as they play daily at Van Cortlandt.

You can readily tell these imitators of the great by the way they talk of them and the pride with which they inform you that they use the same kind of clubs. One man has even invented a Taft putter, while another, if you give him the chance, will dither at length on the Carnegie swing, which he avers he learned by watching the steel king play.

The Van Cortlandt links are not a particularly "sporty" course in the vernacular of golf enthusiasts, but they serve well enough for amateurs. They are divided into two sections. The first six holes are known as "the hills," because they are located in the hilly part of the park. The other twelve



"I topped it, that's funny."

do the suffering.

Some players go to the park so frequently—every day, rain or shine, in fact—that they have become fixtures as permanent as the course itself, the lake, the clubhouse, the wheezy horses that draw the clanking lawn mowers or the dawdling drivers lingering in the shade.

There is, for instance, the man with the picturesque flow of language. Whenever he appears, bareheaded, coatless, his sleeves rolled up and having all the appearance of a man hurrying through his Spring ploughing, a "gallery" as mere spectators at a golf tournament are called, is sure to accompany him. It is a rare privilege to hear his expetives, and he seems never to be at a loss for new ones.

Golf presents a peculiar provocative to profanity. It is said to be a rarer privilege to hear this particular individual release his pent-up emotions than to be able to listen to the rapid-fire fusillade of a Mississippi River pilot or a West Street truckman.

do the suffering.

Some players go to the park so frequently—every day, rain or shine, in fact—that they have become fixtures as permanent as the course itself, the lake, the clubhouse, the wheezy horses that draw the clanking lawn mowers or the dawdling drivers lingering in the shade.

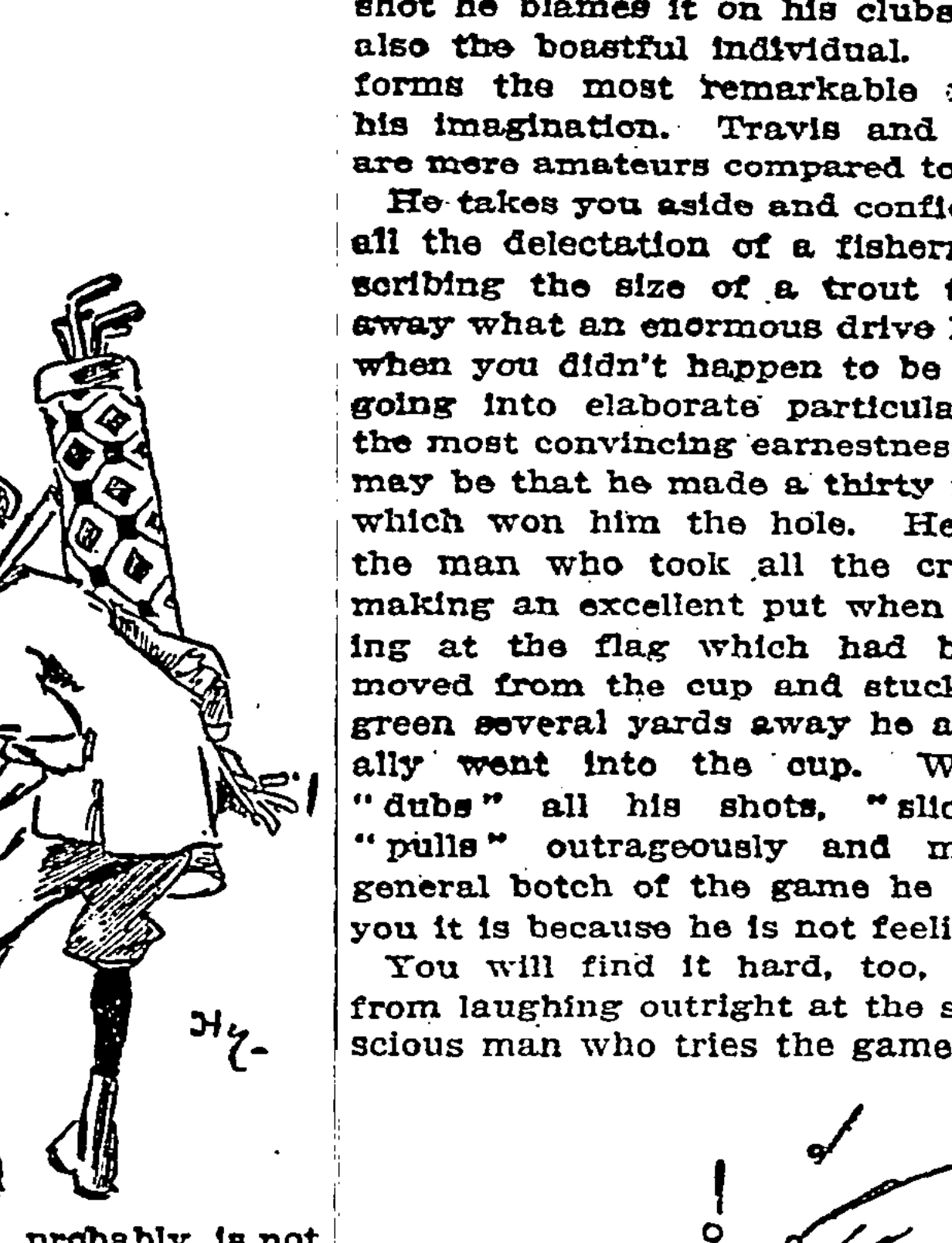
There is, for instance, the man with the picturesque flow of language. Whenever he appears, bareheaded, coatless, his sleeves rolled up and having all the appearance of a man hurrying through his Spring ploughing, a "gallery" as mere spectators at a golf tournament are called, is sure to accompany him. It is a rare privilege to hear his expetives, and he seems never to be at a loss for new ones.

Golf presents a peculiar provocative to profanity. It is said to be a rarer privilege to hear this particular individual release his pent-up emotions than to be able to listen to the rapid-fire fusillade of a Mississippi River pilot or a West Street truckman.



new type of liar. This, probably, is not as true as it is that the game can further improve the ability of a good prevaricator. There is no doubt but that it brings out the elemental nature of a man. If a man is a born truth-teller, golf will further strengthen his moral fibre, for he will have more opportunities to resist temptation than any other sport or avocation could possibly furnish.

It is the insidiousness of the game that furnishes the greatest temptation. A healthy man with red blood hates to admit that he cannot drive an insignificant golf ball with a \$2.50 club as fast as a dirty-faced urchin can with a twisted piece of gas pipe. Moreover, it is so easy to make a mistake in mental arithmetic and count yourself one less stroke, particularly when your opponent who hasn't been playing nearly as long as you have makes an irritating

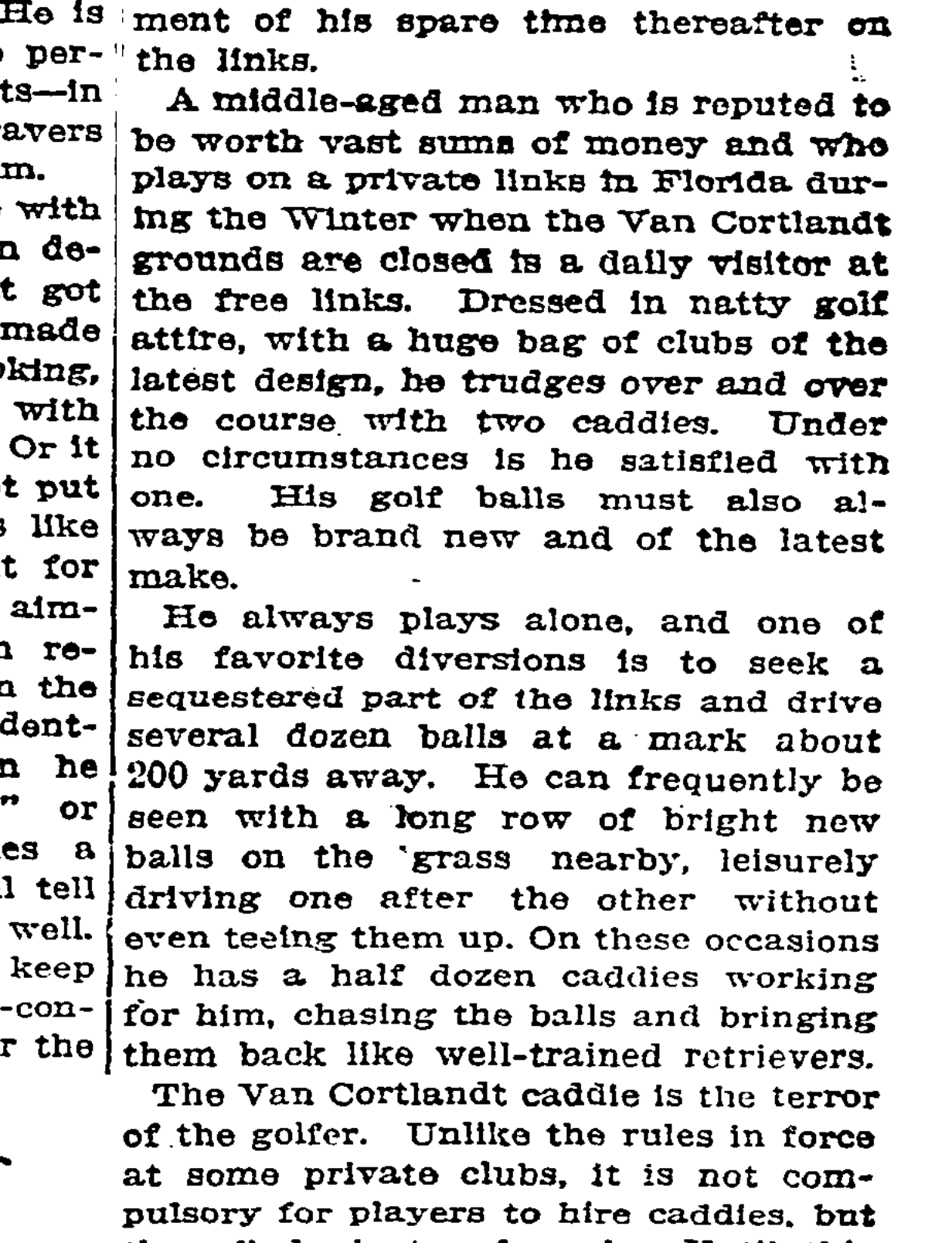


first time. If he is a large man dressed in the up-to-date golfing attire which only the veriest novice affects, it is all the more pitiful. He has watched from his place in line after adding his well-filled golf bag to the long row of others neatly laid out by side like dead victims of a wreck, and he has seen many insignificant youths step jauntily up, scrape a bit of sand together with the toe of their shoe, drop a grimy ball on it and without any preparation or hesitancy make a gentle swing and, crack, the ball sails through the air as far as the eye can see, full 250 yards, and lands close to the little red flag that marks the cup on the distant green. He has seen others not so fortunate, but it looks so easy that the fear of failure has not gripped him—as yet.

His number is called—in a vague way it reminds him of a convict being summoned to his place on the scaffold. He walks with a firm tread to the tee, with all eyes fixed upon him. He builds up an elaborate inch or two of wet sand and on the top of it he places a spotless 75-cent ball.

The fatal moment has come. He gives his club a few preliminary "waggles," having read somewhere that that is the proper thing to do, and then, drawing back his driver, he makes a vicious swing.

He is conscious of having hit something, and plainly sees a dark object



Dodging the Balls.



Watching the various cranks, freaks, and ordinary human beings is worth while.

