I

Something seemed to snap when Willie Park left the landing stage and in a somewhat saddened mood walked along the gangway to the deck of the steamship that was to bear him across the Atlantic, there to remain. Willie is a man of the best human emotions, which are also the simplest, and he loved the land of his birth, felt all manner of ties holding him to it, but fortune for long years past had been unkind, and at last he realized that for the second time a member of his distinguished golfing family must go across the seas to seek the fortune his native land would not yield to him. I think I can imagine many of his thoughts as he saw the shores of Britain receding beyond the wake of the great liner. He thought of the glories that were gone, of "old Willie," the splendid "old Willie" who was his father and one of the greatest golfers of all time, he thought of their beloved Musselburgh, once such a veritable shrine of the game than which not even St. Andrews was more exalted, and perhaps he thought of later days, of London and Huntercombe; but the first memories were the best. That which seemed to snap was almost the only solid link remaining between the golf of today and the really great golf of the past, the time when the history of the game as we know it was being built up, that link being comprised in the human person of our Willie. For, you see, Willie Park was really one of "the boys of the old brigade." In this respect there was none like him, and, therefore, while understanding and somewhat envying the United States of America for the greatest of their gains from us in human golfing material, we gave him very fervently and sincerely our blessing and wished him all manner of good fortune and happiness. Above all, we hoped that some day he would return. Willie is a great golfer with a splendid history, and he is a fine fellow, nice in thought and manner, gentle, true, and ever kind.

II

Let me remind you of the kind of link it was that snapped. The most modern players, the great multitude who have come in to the game since the rubber-cored ball helped to enhance its popularity, almost need to be told that Willie Park is one of the greatest champions of golf, for they know and think only of such as Vardon, Taylor, and Braid, with a few of the younger men who seek to follow those giants and begin to be weary of the waiting. Willie Park himself was
twice Open Champion of the game. He was that for the first time in 1887 when he gained the honour at Prestwick, and he was Open Champion again only two years later, when he gained the title at his native Musselburgh after making a tie for it with Andrew Kirkaldy. If there were only three dozen competitors on the first of these occasions and four dozen on the second, still the championships in those days were difficult things to win, for there were some great players on the links. But the race of professional champions that we know had not arisen. When Willie won his second Open Championship and was at the height of his power, Harry Vardon was still in his native Jersey and not a golfer in England had ever heard of him, James Braid was working as a joiner at St. Andrews and still playing golf as an amateur, and J. H. Taylor was still at Westward Ho! Jack Burns had preceded Willie in the championship list, while Mr. John Ball followed him. Then there were Hugh Kirkaldy and Mr. Hilton and Willie Auchterlonie, who still has his headquarters at St. Andrews and makes such beautiful clubs that even such a hardened old veteran as John Ball himself cannot bear to pass his shop without looking in and wagging something, and, sure enough, parting with a little siller in exchange for wood—good wood. Willie Auchterlonie, champion of 1893, and Willie Fernie, professional of Troon, champion of 1883, and as much celebrated now for being the father of splendid young Tom who was wounded early in the war—seem to be the best representatives left of the old days, but they and their family did not play the part in golf as did the Parks. After Willie Auchter-
there arose from round the ring of people that peculiar long wailing "O-o-o-h" which tells of the sudden disappointment of a multitude, so different from the exulting shout. Prestwick, you see, is in Scotland, and so much in Scotland that it is but a few shots to the Ayr of Bobby Burns. Southern amateurs had twice before advanced beyond the Tweed and won the Open Championship, but the Scots put it to themselves on those occasions that after all the Open Championship was chiefly a professional event, and therefore these amateur triflings might not count. But here now was the southern professional doing his devil's work on one of the most historic of Scottish greens, that on which the Championship had first been played for, and then for many years in succession, and, for the sake of full tragedy, doing it against the son of the great man who first won that championship. Yes, this was awful work, and sadly was it accepted.

There is no better sportsman than Willie Park, and it was nothing against his sportsmanship that he was chagrined by this failure, and none the less because the whole affair was really so much of a success for him. Standing forth for that old brigade (there is no other appropriate term to use), the dying generation, nine years after he had won the championship, and with the insinuation in the air that those old championships were softer things than the newer ones, easier to win, and productive of inferior champions, Park now came out and played as good golf as the very best of the new men. At that time he was very brilliant; Harry Vardon has told me that just then he, Harry, was playing the game as well as ever he did in his life, and that if he had not been doing so Park would assuredly have beaten him . . .

Park, unhappy about it all, challenged Vardon afterwards to a home-and-home match for a hundred pounds a side, thirty-six holes at North Berwick and thirty-six at Ganton, to which course, near Scarborough, the new champion was then attached. That match when it was played, and the famous "£400 foursome" some years later, have certainly been the greatest money matches of modern times. There have been other professional games for more than a hundred pounds, but none that created the stir that this did. It was made a national event. People wrote to the papers giving their views on the way it ought to be managed, dissenting from some of the conditions, and generally did their best to exhibit some feeling. When the first half of the game was played at North Berwick the disposition of Scotland was to make a national festival of it, and the dangers of attempting to crowd so much of the population of the kingdom on to a narrow strip of coast facing the Bass Rock was so real that it was arranged the Prince of Wales should visit Edinburgh that day (as some would put it facetiously) and so draw off a part of the people. This strategy succeeded to some extent, the lukewarm golfers being tempted to the capital to take a view of royalty, but seven thousand stalwarts of the links went to North Berwick and did their duty there. This was the first time that ever a golf match was really organized and arranged. There were stewards, flag wagger—w—"P's" and "V's" on their banners—rope-holders and all the other paraphernalia to which we have become well
accustomed since. They were all new then, and were very impressive. That was the beginning of golfing crowds. Freddy Tait himself was umpire on behalf of Park, and Norman Hunter was a forecaddie. The wars have had them both. The game was worthy of

per figures, and thus it happened that the first ten holes were halved. When the tension was relaxed it was Park who won a hole, and Scotland then took a flask from its pocket and made an enthusiastic pull. Yet the southron was two up on the day’s play....It

WILLIE PARK

(Photographed especially for THE AMERICAN GOLFER.)

the interest in it, and never in a great match has there appeared to be such meticulous care on the part of the contestants, fearing to let anything slip, anxious not to overlook any possibility of advantage. In solemnity and silence they drove and putted on in very correct manner and strictly pro-

was good for Scotland that it was spared the sight of what happened at Ganton three weeks later. Cheered by the fact of having made himself two up on the greatest match player of his time on his own course, Vardon in the second half of the match did the fullest justice to his genius, and
he won by eleven up and ten to play.

Willie Park played in the championship for many years after that. He was still a great golfer, and still obviously capable of playing a hard game with the very best of the new school. But it must be remembered that, having been born in February, 1864, he was becoming no younger, and other and greater interests than the mere playing of the game were arising in his life. There was the business in Cannon Street, London, and presently he became largely and closely interested in the great Huntercombe estate in Oxfordshire and the magnificent course that was laid out on it. His services as golf architect, in which capacity he had taken a place of supremacy, were greatly in demand at this time when, with the "golf boom" really beginning, there was a call for courses everywhere. So we began to notice him less and less in public golf, but still for many years he made it a point to appear in the Open Championship, just like any other professional, for to the end Willie showed the very best esprit de corps. One of my last recollections of him on a golf course was of watching him approaching the famous Road hole at St. Andrews during the championship, the famous caddie, "Fiery," carrying his clubs for him as he always did and conferring with his chief, not for the first time or the fiftieth, upon the peculiar problems presented in the effort to place the ball upon this elusive strip of green. Such a memory gratefully lingers. Willie is in America and "Fiery" is with his fathers. Time goes on... Perhaps you will begin to realise a little better now why we do so specially regard Willie as being the last of the old brigade, and the sense of loss that was created when he went away.

But yet that is only half the story, for it was his name and lineage and the achievement of his father that gave so much to the dignity and importance of Willie Park, the younger, when backed up so well as it was by his own prowess and performance. The Parks of Musselburgh! There were only the Morrices of St. Andrews that could ever be compared to them. Father and son here made the immediate succession as no other pair but the Morrices did. No other men who were relatives gained the honours of the Open Championship, and in some respects the record of the Parks is better than that of the Morrices. "Auld Wullie" was something like a pioneer, and he was the very first winner of the Open Championship, when it was played for at Prestwick in 1860, Tom Morris, senior, gaining the Belt in the two following years, after which Willie, senior, came again. In 1866 he was champion for the third time, as old Tom had become before him; Tom gained his fourth in 1867, and Willie responded in 1874. But the family business was now becoming a curious and complicated thing, for while old Tom brought in his son, young Tom, and saw him whip off four championships in succession, beginning with the year after Tom won his last, Park, who as yet had no son big enough for championships had the felicity of seeing brother Mungo come in for victory in 1874. Park winning again in the following year that was the end of the reign of the seniors. The period followed when Jamie Anderson and Bob Ferguson dazzled the mid-Victorian golfers, and at last in Jubilee year, young Willie was ready for victory and obtained it. He was the only descendant of those great pioneers; the mantle
of the earliest champions was upon
him; he was a living reminder of the
great days of old, the link between
quite primitive golf when Allan Rob-
ertson achieved such wonders on St.
Andrews links and these new days
when people everywhere seemed to
become strangely attracted towards
this game, and hardly any more was it
being regarded as purely and exclu-
sively Scottish. His manners at the
game, his feeling towards it, and all
else supported his exceptional posi-
tion and made of him a respected and
a most particular personality. Now,
you understand why Willie Park, the
younger, was not like the rest.

III

It is worth while for good enter-
tainment's sake to make some ex-
cursion now, when there is such good
opportunity and excuse, to those dis-
tant days when golf history was in
the making, and the game in its sport-
ing atmosphere and men was not less
rich than it is now, though its num-
bers were so many fewer. "Auld Wullie"
was indeed a tremendous
man; in all the records of golf there
is not a more glowing character. And
on the links he was never afraid of
anybody or anything; he was the most
venturesome, daring, full-blooded
golfer that the history of the past can
yield to our contemplation. All who
saw him play agreed upon it that he
had a beautiful swing, round, easy
and graceful. Allan Robertson, after
watching him once, remarked "He
frichtens us a' wi' his lang driving!"
The veteran authority, Mr. Doleman,
once wrote an interesting note upon
him, which I shall quote—"In address-
ing his ball when driving, Willie's po-
sition differed from most golfers, his
right foot being a little in front in-
stead of his left. He had as pretty
a swing as one could wish to see. It
was not what you would call a long
swing, but a beautiful round swing.
The club did not descend away down
the back almost to the ground, as is
the case with many possessing a very
long swing, but described, as it were,
a circle round the head. So clean did
he strike the ball, and with such force,
that on many occasions when I have
stood close behind him the meeting of
the club and the ball sounded more
like the report of a pistol than any-
thing else. He played splendid long
approaches with his cleek, but was
never what might be called great with
his iron. For want of a better name
Willie was what you might call a
wooden club player. For many years
he had in his possession two clubs
which he used to tell me ought to be
framed on account of the many im-
portant matches he had won by their
help. One was a little old cleek, and
the other his famous old wooden put-
ter...The long spoon was also a
powerful weapon in his hands. With
it a bad-lying ball went away as if it
had been shot from some rocket ap-
paratus."

That putter here referred to is
probably the most historic putter in
the world and it is still in the pos-
session of Willie Park, the living. It
passed out of the family at one time,
but came back to young Willie in due
course, and he is very proud of it as
he has a right to be. It is a fine old
wooden putter. I have already sug-
gested what most people know, that
Willie Park, the younger, was and
still is one of the very greatest of
putters. That marvellous ability was
partly cultivated but also partly in-
herited, for "auld Wullie" was one of
the most marvellous of men upon the
putting green. When his ball was as much as six or seven feet from the hole it was as good as in, for he rarely missed at that distance. The knowledge of his power with putts of this kind gave him a peculiar confidence when dealing with the long ones. He seemed to know that however much he overshot the hole he would be sure with the next one, and so he played the ball up boldly from the edge of the green, and as he had a marvellous eye and hand for the line, the number of long putts that he holed was extraordinary. If his opponents could not beat him in the long game their chance of doing so in the short one was extremely small.

Auld Wullie was out for honours. He feared nobody, and he wished to contest with all. In those very early days when he was just rising to his best, that being in the few years preceding the institution of the Open Championship, Allan Robertson, the professional prince of St. Andrews, was regarded as the greatest golfer of the time and not without reason, and thus Allan had a great reputation to preserve. It was not for nothing that old Tom Morris, for a long time associated with Allan in his club and ball making business, described him as "the cunningest bit body o' a player, I dae think, that iver haun'led cleek an' putter. An' a kindly body, tae, as it-weel does fit me to say, an' wi' a' wealth o' slee pawky tun aboot him." Allan was so cunning that, having seen Wullie play, he made up his mind that he was not going to play him if he could help it. His reputation would be in jeopardy. On the other hand, Wullie was truculent, and soon gave Allan to understand he wanted to match himself against him and was not afraid of him. Allan put him off by saying it was no the richt thing for a wee body like Wullie to be wantin a mauch wi sic an ane as him, Allan, and it would be weel enoo' if he would come to ask him agin when he had beaten the likes o' Willie Dunn and Tom Morris. Yet Park did want that match with Allan, and went from home to St. Andrews and prowled about the place hoping to lure the master on. That was the first time he ever went to St. Andrews. It was about 1864. Dr. Argyll Robertson found him once making his first round on the old course, practising in the hope of the match that he thought might come. He did 86 in that round, which was splendid for those days. However Allan would not bite, and so Wullie turned his attention to the Morris family. First he beat George, the brother of Tom, and then old Tom took him on himself. This was in 1864, Park then being twenty-one. The pair agreed to play thirty-six holes for fifty pounds, and at the end of the match Park was five up. This game was played at St. Andrews, and the natives, who have never been famous for impartiality, did not like it. They had watched the match in large numbers, and at the end of it they swarmed round the victor and shouted "Where's the man that beat Morris?" and someone shouted jeeringly back, "He's no man; he's only a laddie without whiskers." After that Tom challenged his conqueror to play him at North Berwick, where Park was then located, and the result was the same. These two matches led to a tremendous rivalry between the pair, and they played in many other matches for a hundred pounds a side, usually over four courses, St. Andrews, Prestwick, Musselburgh and North Berwick, and Tom did much
better towards the end. The last game of all between them was played in 1882 and Tom was the winner, having had the good fortune to lay his opponent five or six stymies in the course of the match. They were photographed together afterwards, and when the photographer was arranging them, Willie playfully pushed Tom in front and said "Mak' a stymie, mak' a stymie!" Although Wullie beat Willie Dunn as well Allan Robertson was quite determined not to play him, and would not fulfil his promise. He was fixed on nothing so much as that. It used to be said and still is that in an important match Allan was never beaten. This is not strictly correct, for surely Willie Dunn beat him. In the most famous match between these two, however, Allan was victor, and it settled the question of their relative supremacy. As a recognised match that was surely the longest on record, for it consisted of twenty rounds and lasted ten days! I believe it was decided by rounds and not by holes; at all events the official result is that "honest Allan," as some called him, won on the last day by two rounds and one to play. "A pawky auld buddie!" Willie always called him. He himself was so different, so adventurous. He would have won the championship in the second year of its existence as well as the first, but for his madness, as everybody regarded it, in trying to cross the Alps at Prestwick with his second, for which daring he was terribly punished. One day he went to North Berwick to play David Strath for £50, but his backers did not turn up as they should have done, and he was short of the necessary money. When he had scraped together all he could he found that he was still £15 short, but then he espied the eminent Mr. Edward Blyth who made up the deficiency. He played the match, won it, gave Mr. Blyth his fifteen and the other fifteen with it, and went home contented with the balance. Those of old were brave days....

IV.

See now how young Willie with such a golfing parent, was blooded to the game. Clearly it was golf for him from the start. Willie was born at Musselburgh, and his first recollection of the game is not so much of striking a ball as having been struck by one. He was only some four years of age when a friend of his father's gave a club to Willie and another to his brother Frank, and they went out to try their childish skill with them. Frank warned Willie that he was about to drive in his direction, but the latter heeded not, with the result that he received the ball full in his mouth and fell on his back from the shock of the impact. In those days in Musselburgh it was all golf. The famous nine holes course was as the heart of the ancient burgh, and the clubmakers' shops that were adjacent to it were the hives of industry and good gossip. The young Willie even before his schooldays began, was fascinated by his father's shop, and would beg the loan of tools and try to make clubs of a kind with them. And, as driving was then beyond his power, he played at putting, and the baby practice which he had must surely have been a strong influence upon his after game. We find that in the case of many of the best putters of the time they had childish practice of this kind. He made little holes in the cracks in the pavement outside the shop, and there he played
putting matches against himself, putting with marbles. He was glad if anyone would ever play with him, as they seldom did. He made holes to putt at everywhere; he seemed always looking for holes, and regarded every depression in the ground as a potential hole. His father's shop had a brick floor, and hollows were worn in the bricks. The boys found it made quite good and certainly difficult putting to play these hollows. By this time they had ascended to the use of the regular gutty balls, and the difficulty in the putting was that the strength had to be so marvellously regulated or the ball would slip out at the other side of the hollow. Anything that has golf in it seems to have its fascination for mankind, and Willie and his friends become overpowered by this game upon the bricks, so much so that, the daylight not being sufficient to cool their enthusiasm, they would secure possession of the key to the shop at night and go there to do more putting by candle light. Willie took this putting very seriously, and he said to me in latter days—"Putting has always, as you know, been a strong part of my game since the beginning, and I often think that perhaps the training of my eye and the extreme delicacy of touch that came to me through this continual putting on the bricks, which I did for years, was of great assistance to me when I came to do the comparatively easy putts on real greens."

His great chum as a small boy was the son of his father's old rival, Willie Dunn. The boy also was named Willie; he went to America long ago and was the very first winner of the American Open Championship, that being in 1894. These boys were great friends and rivals, they played together continually, and, the sporting instinct being strong in them, they played each other all the time for the full extent of their private possessions, including clubs, balls, and the very few pennies that they could occasionally muster. And so they had their ups and downs and became alternately rich and poor at each other's expense. That continued until they were eleven or twelve years of age, and then Willie Dunn had to go away. There were only two or three golf clubs in the south in those days, and the chief of them was the old one at Blackheath where Tom Dunn, brother of this young Willie, was professional. It seemed that he needed some assistance in his shop, and so he undertook to take Willie in hand and train him. So little Willie went away, but before he went they twain had one parting match that was greater than all the rest, and full eighteen pense, the most they could collect was staked upon it. It was over two rounds of the nine-hole course of Musselburgh. I should not waste time in stating any of the facts and circumstances of this boy's match did not Willie Park assure me not long ago, and will assure anyone else at the present time, that this was the greatest and most important match in which he ever played, for it is the one that lives in his memory most, that of which he has the most vivid remembrances, that upon which his contemplations most happily linger. These certainly are strong considerations and the match itself was good enough for anything, for by the time the contestants came to the last green of all they were at full grips with each other, and it came about that while Willie Park was dormy one,
Willie Dunn had only to hole a putt of eighteen inches to win the last hole and halve the match with him. He studied that putt, the line of it and all the conditions and circumstances with the most special care, but he missed it after all. It was a tragic moment when he did so. His countenance took on a look of blank horror and dismay, for a moment he was speechless and then in broken tones exclaimed, "Man, I could let a wee bairn strike me in the mouth!"

Such was the parting game between the boy who was to be first Open Champion of America and his friend who was destined for the championship twice.

Willie was an earnest boy. He came by some very fair skill in club-making before his schooldays were over, and his imaginative and practical mind was turned to the question as to whether a ball better than the gutty could not be made—better in the sense that it could be driven further. There is some reason for thinking that this boy made the first rubber ball that was ever used for golf, failure as it was. He prepared a mixture of ground rubber, ground cork and gutta percha, and forced it down a funnel into an iron mould. It looked well enough when it has been set and released from the mould, but after a few shots had been played with the ball it swelled and fell to pieces, so the idea was given up. But young Willie was a very expert hammerer of the gutty balls which in those days were hammered and roughened after manufacture so as to assist their flight—the beginning of the marking of the ball. They came plain from the moulds, and were then hammered at a cost of sixpence a dozen, each ball receiving from 240 to 280 blows, according to size. Willie Park told me that it used to take him about two and a half minutes to hammer a ball well, and that he was considered a very good hammerer, having invented a system by which he kept his right elbow fast to his side while his forearm worked like a lever, so that he could always depend on the hammer coming down exactly to the same spot each time while his left hand worked the ball round.

If the training of Willie Park to the game of golf was a little casual, as it was with all the players of the olden time, still there was a thoroughness about it. Like others he watched and copied, and, to his benefit, he watched his father most and copied him considerably. Often did he carry Old Willie's clubs for him in his big matches, and young Willie always said that he owed as much to the parental precept and example as to anything else. Wise was the advice that old Willie gave: none could give it better. "Listen Wullie!" he would say to the boy. "Remember that a mauthch weel made is a mauthch half won," and the boy never forgot that wise expression. The old Scots knew better how to make matches than any other men, and they realised that in the making of the match, with the evidence and the arguments that were advanced and pressed, there was the joy of effort and the exercise of capacity in friendly conflict. It was the best day's work to win a match, or a part of it, before taking to the teeing ground, and to win it in play afterwards. Then it could all be done over again in the clubhouse after dark, and that made all complete. Because of the competitions and the medal rounds and all the modern
fanglements, the art of match play has somewhat declined in recent times, and with it the art of making the match. Willie's elder brother, Frank, also taught him very much of his game. They two played Willie Fernie and Willie Campbell at Alnmouth when Willie was only seventeen years of age, and they won the match by Willie holing out with an iron shot at the last hole. His uncle, with Willie Fernie, and tying again when they played the four rounds a second time. They played two more rounds and were still level with one hole to play, but Fernie won at the last. A few years later, in 1883, he went back to Musselburgh to help his father in his clubmaking business. Three or four seasons afterwards the great boom in golf began in Britain, and the Parks became a very busy clubmaking firm, sometimes working day and night. The business claimed all the time of Willie, and his play was neglected. But for this he might have been an even greater player than he was and is.

V.

Still it was at this time of the great discovery of golf by the multitude that Willie, in 1887, won his first Open Championship. It was a gallant victory. He had no thought of playing in the great event until the
time for it was nigh. He had not
even struck a ball for full seven
months until the thought of the
championship came into his mind,
and then, when he decided to play at
Prestwick, he gave himself a month
to the game. At the end of the
period he was playing excellent
golf, and felt he had a chance of
winning. Feeling so, he wished to
make the most of the possibility and
tried to back himself, but the business
was bad. No better odds than five
to one could he obtain, and even at
that the utmost amount that he could
get taken about his chance was ten
shillings. The financial outlook was,
therefore, not stimulating. He was
partnered with Willie Fernie, and in
the starting list they were placed just
in front of Willie Campbell, who was
then professional at Prestwick, play-
ing a good game and regarded hope-
fully for the championship, which, by
the way, consisted in those times of
two rounds and was settled in a
single day. In the first round Camp-
bell took a good lead with a fine
round of 77 to Park's 82, but the
latter made up for it in the second
round, and when they had only four
holes to play it seemed that Campbell
was only leading by a single stroke.
But he gained another at the
fifteenth, and it looked then that he
must be victor. The sixteenth is the
hole where the corner of the great
Cardinal bunker comes into con-
sideration on the right of the line, and
the problem of that hole on this par-
ticular day was complicated by the
fact that there was a very strong
wind blowing from the sea. Park
played the hole to perfection, making
a good wind allowance and getting a
fine three as the result, but Campbell
got into the Cardinal, took shot after
shot, made his position worse with
every one of them, and finally was 9
to the hole. Of course he had lost
the championship then and Willie
Park had won it, and never was there
a more tragic conclusion to an Open
Championship. Certainly Willie Park
had won, but he had some odd shots
to pay before he had finished. He
had one at the Alps, the seventeenth
hole, where his ball lay hard against
a bank, and he had to send it high
towards the heavens in order to bring
it down on to the green which was
only thirty yards away; and again at
at the last hole his ball from the tee
shot was poised high on the top of
some whins. However, all ended
well, and, champion Willie hurried
home to the clubmaker's shop at
Musselburgh. Next morning betimes,
he was working away at his bench,
and an old Scottish gentleman, a keen
amateur at the game, looked in at the
open door on his way to the links and
saw him there. It seemed to the
spectator that the fitness of things
was not properly suited. He opened
his eyes very wide in astonishment,
and half in wonder and something in
reproach he gasped, "Man alive!
ye're working there as if nothing had
happened!"

Two years went by, and then
Willie was champion for the second
time. That happened at Mussel-
burgh, and it was fitting that the last
time the event was played on the
historic old course it was won by one
of the most famous players that had
ever been bred upon it—though not
won without a struggle for Andrew
Kirkaldy made a tie of it with Willie
then. Musselburgh in golf becomes
less and less of anything but a name,
but what a history it has had, and
what a nursery of golfers it has been!
Here was the first home of that great society, the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, and here so many of the great matches of the old days were played. Although there were but nine holes at Musselburgh then, the golfing reputation of the place, so near to Edinburgh, and the chief course of the Scottish capital, stood scarcely less than that of St. Andrews. In the days of the gutty ball, too, they were good holes, and made a hard test of the game, while some of them, like "Pandy"—which is short for "Pandemonium", the name for a dreaded bunker at the hole which winds up with a finely placed plateau green—were famous everywhere. In those days some of the bunkers of Musselburgh had their fame as much as those of St. Andrews. "Lord Shand's" was one of the best of them. And some of the landmarks of the course were very celebrated, like "Mrs. Forman's", the inn by the third putting green which is one of the most famous of golfing inns at which players and caddies ever refreshed themselves and gathered force for the further combat. In this second and last winning championship of Willie Park, Andrew Kirkaldy, who was playing immediately in front of him, was two strokes to the good when they had only four holes to play, and there was much excitement. Musselburgh wanted Willie for the victor, but it seemed to be going hard with him. At the fifteenth he consulted his caddie as to whether it would be well for him to take his brassey for the second shot, but the man was in such a state of mind that he could not answer. Andrew was still two to the good when there were three holes to play and then on the sixteenth green Willie had to hole a seven-yards' putt for a 3 which he knew he dared not miss, and just as he was bringing his putter on to the ball he heard a great shout go up from around the green in front and said to himself that Andrew was doing well, but holed his own putt just the same. It was well that he kept his nerve so well, for it turned out afterwards that the cheer was not for Andrew at all but for his partner who there in the championship had done that hole in one stroke. Andrew indeed had taken 4 at the hole where Willie got his 3, and so the latter gained a point. Playing the last hole Willie's ball hit a man on the head. Championships seemed to be full of strange adventures in those days. With his second our man laid his ball close to the side of the hole and put it in with his next, and thereby tied. It was almost dark then, and Willie, as we know, won when playing off. According to all the rules and regulations, two championships should have meant two gold medals for the winner, but Willie has only one, and that is not of gold but silver gilt. The management of championships then was not what it is now. They advertised that there would be gold medals, but put Willie off with a silver gilt one the first time; and, when he won again, he suggested to the committee that unless they could give him the real thing this time he would rather be without it altogether. And they took him at his word, and he went without. One of the big events of his best period was his great match with J. H. Taylor, which he won.

Talking to me once about those old times, and the old and never to be settled question as to whether golf
was played as well then as now, Willie Park said he could not bring himself to believe that in real skill the present generation is any better than the old one. "Clubs are better," he said, "and the balls fly further, but I do not think that the golf that is played is one whit better than it was in the good old days, for good they really were. Who among amateurs now plays the game better than it used to be played by Mr. Leslie Balfour-Melville? I hope it will not seem like conceit in me if I make a comparison between my own play in the early period and a much later one, which I only do because it is that which is most convincing to me personally of the truth of what I say. As far back as 1885, I played in an open tournament that was held at Troon, and won the first prize. All the finest players of the time competed, including the great Bob Ferguson, who was really a very great golfer and became Open Champion three years in succession, Willie Fernie, Willie Campbell and others. Thirteen years later Harry Vardon only beat me in the championship at Prestwick by a putt that I never ought to have missed. I can play the game quite as well now as I did then. If that is the case does it not then suggest that, making proper allowance for difference of materials, courses and conditions, the champions of the olden time were as good as the champions of today. All may not think so, but I hold strongly to this view, though I have no desire to detract from the great skill and wonderful achievements of the golfers of the present time, whose play I admire enormously."

It is some eight or nine years since Willie said that to me, and much has happened since then, though I doubt if his opinion has to any extent changed. Willie belonged to the old time himself, the latter days of it, and he is intensely loyal to his period. Musselburgh is in his blood and bones, the old history and traditions of the game, its romance and its heroes are to him as things that are sacred, and their value and consequence shall never be minimised in his mind. Fine in his loyalty always is Willie Park.

Many and interesting are the trophies and souvenirs of the game that he possesses. There is the famous old family putter of which we have already spoken, and a club that once belonged to Allan Robertson. And among other things he has a photograph signed and dated by Her Royal Highness, the Princess Victoria, about which there is an odd story to be told. King Edward and Queen Alexandra, with the Princess, were staying once at Godsall, Leicestershire, as the guests of Lord Howe. The latter was at that time President of the Huntercombe Golf Club, with which Willie was so intimately associated, and he asked Willie to go along there, to Gopsall, one day to take part in some golf that was to be played. He was set to be the partner of the Princess in a foursome. The Princess knew more than a little of golf, and when the game was ended she gave praises to a brassey that Willie had lent her for the game, and with which she had done some excellent shots. He thereupon said that it would be a great honour to him if the Princess would accept the club. She took it, but when he happened to remark that he thought highly of that particular brassey and had used it in many of his biggest matches, she rejoined, "No, No, Mr. Park, I will not
take from you a club that you value so much!" but Willie's humble gallantry and command of speech were ready for the occasion, and he answered that if it had not been a good club and one that he much prized, he should not have presumed to ask her acceptance of it. So she took it, and the next day her mother, the Queen, went to Willie when he was out on the course and said, "Victoria has told me all about the club. It was very good of you to present it to her," and then a few days afterwards he received the photograph of which mention has been made.

VI

In the course of time Willie's interests fixed him exclusively in the south. Much as they deserved to do, and great as was the work he did for golf in many ways, they did not all prosper. He was one of the first—I think we might almost agree that he was the first—to perceive the possibilities of inland golf course construction on the finer, grander system that we know now. He saw the immense golf boom that was coming, the demand that there must inevitably be for many, new inland courses of a better and more interesting type than were generally in existence then. Up to then the manner of designing and making a hole was to put a plain straight bank across the course in front to be driven over, this arrangement, with a little sand in front of it, being known as a bunker, and, if the hole were long enough, there was a similar contrivance set up immediately in front of the putting green. Generally nothing more was considered necessary, though if some elaboration was desired similar banks were stuck up somewhere on the left or on the right. None of these things were beautiful to look upon, they gave no character to the holes, this being supplied only by such local natural features as trees, watercourses and ponds; they were not in the least interesting, and they made most holes look very much like each other. Nor did they tend to the smallest improvement in the game of any player. This was Victorian golf architecture, the standard for which was set by that indefatigable master of it, Willie Dunn, who made his professional mark on multitudinous patches of land in many parts of the country. Willie Park perceived that there would soon be a demand for something very much better, and he set himself to devise it, to give to inland courses some of the attributes of those at the seaside where the holes were fashioned by Nature and abounded in features and strong character. With imagination and money it could be done. This scheme marked the beginning of the new principles in course architecture that have since revolutionized the whole of inland golf, not merely in England, but in parts of the continent of Europe, all over the United States, Canada, and everywhere. Huntercombe and Sunningdale were Willie Park's first productions. He was responsible for the primary designs of the architecture of the latter, a beautiful course cut out of a wilderness of heather on some high, rolling land in Berkshire. Mr. Colt soon set himself to work on the first designs when they had been applied, and he has carried out vast improvements on the original model, so that Sunningdale, as we know it now, the inland course that I still consider as the best and most delightful to play upon in the whole of Britain, is not
at all what it was at first. Still Wil- 
lie was in at the beginning with Sun- 
ingdale; that is a lasting distinction. 
But he was much more closely con-

cerned with Huntercombe, a fine 

piece of land in Oxfordshire, very 

high up on a spur of the Chiltern 

Hills. In many respects the situation 
of Huntercombe was ideal, and it at-

tracted great fame to itself, but it suf-

fered from lack of accessibility, a dif-
ficult uphill motor-car journey having 
to be made from the Henley station 
six miles away. Also it was a long 
time before a proper clubhouse could 

be built, and the only accommodation 

was in a local farmhouse which was 
taken over for the purpose, and there 

was trouble with the water supply. 

These difficulties have been overcome 
since then, but, unfortunately for 

Willie who invested his money in the 
undertaking, he had to bear the brunt 
of them. However he laid out on 

these hills at Huntercombe a glorious 
course with greens that were wonder-

fully spacious and splendid. The 

bunkering was done with imagination 

and ingenuity, and the holes had fine 

character. Willie set himself, as a 

particular labour of love, to copy old 

"Pandy" at Musselburgh, with its 

plateau green, and produced a really 

fine copy—with improvements—mak-

ing many special journeys between 

Huntercombe and Musselburgh for 

the purpose. It was then, and it still 
is, one of the best pleasures in golf to 
play the game at this place, but finan-
cially the venture did not then thrive. 

Willie had £11,500 of his own money 
in it, and it was mostly lost. But for 

that, America would probably not 

have had him now.

VII

ALWAYS is it a pleasure to watch 

Willie Park playing the game of golf. 

It is evidently such a pleasure to him, 

and is such a simple, easy business. 

No anxiety in his demeanour or his 
actions is betrayed when he takes his 
club in hand and strides up to the 
ball. He is just going to play a 
game and play it well, and en-

joy himself. It was always said of 
him that he made the game look so 
very easy. The same thing has been 
said of others of the greatest profes-

sionals of modern times, but it was 

Willie Park who first called forth 
such a remark, and it is he who has 
deserved it better than any other. All 

his strokes seem to be played not 
merely with ease and gentleness but 

with an absence of force—though the 
force is there just the same—and his 

swings in every case are comparative-

ly slow. No effort is apparent. Very 
different as he is in his golfing ways 
from Harry Vardon, these two have 

that grand feature in common in 

their game. Park is a tall, loose-

limbed man, and his is a very free 
swing, perhaps more so than that of 

any other champion of modern times. 

He is so constituted, physically and 

temperamentally, that he keeps his 
movements, loose as they seem to be, 

well under control. He does not swing 
as far as he might, although he does 
swing very far, and in other ways it 
is clear that he exercises some re-

straint. But his swings are loose all 
the same, and the chief criticism that 

has been cherished against his style 
in the making of the longer shots in 
that they are too loose, and, if em-

ployed by any other man, this style 
would probably cause much trouble, 
especially if the game were going 
against him and he were inclined to 
press. That is when the worst of a 
looseness of style is found out. But
it is yet a pleasure to watch the smoothness of his movements, and there never was a player with a finer smoothness in his putting. Indeed he strokes the ball, lovingly, coaxingly, and, being treated so kindly it takes to the hole far oftener than is the case when most great golfers endeavour to force it there.

One thing very noticeable in all his strokes is the beautiful delicacy of his grip. He does not believe himself either in the palm grip, or in any form of grip in which the thumbs are held on the shaft. He likes a plain grip, with the club grasped in the fingers and hardly anywhere else than in the fingers. He says the club should lie across the roots of the fingers and that it should not be held too tightly with them either, for he holds that a tight grip wearies the hands and wrists without giving any benefit to the stroke. If the club is held sufficiently firmly to prevent its slipping or turning that is all that is necessary, and to hold it any more tightly is a mistake and a useless expenditure of force. He has made some interesting observations on the part of the handle of the club which is gripped, allowing that it is not a matter for strict rule, that idiosyncracy must have its fling and that gripping low down is justifiable when a heavy club is used, just as gripping near to the end comes naturally to a man who plays with a light club. Still he thinks that, when it can be done, it is best to grip as near to the end of the shaft as possible, and he himself carries out this principle to a farther extreme than any other player I can call to mind, for he grips with his left hand really beyond the end of the shaft, that is to say the end of the shaft is in the palm of that hand. He says that experience has proved to him that this grip gives the left hand sufficient power to prevent the club slipping and lessens the tendency that exists of trying to guide the club with it, this tendency being a common cause of pulling and slicing.

He favours the open stance in driving, with the ball slightly to the right of imaginary line that might be drawn from the left heel, believing that in every way this position encourages easy and accurate swinging, and a fair follow through. In the case of the square stance, when the toes are virtually in line with each other, or even as in the olden times when Willie was champion and the man of the time, the left foot of some golfers was even placed a little in front of the right, such a position being positively recommended by some of the old authorities, he thinks a rather wild and uncertain style of driving is encouraged. The follow-through is not then such a comfortable thing, pulling is given its chance, the body finds a difficulty in getting itself faced to the direction in which the ball is flying or ought to be flying, and said body seems to pivot on the left foot and entices the club to swing round the body. All these things do not necessarily happen; it is stating the case at its worst and as that of a man to whom the square stance does not seem to come naturally. Others, as we all know, get the best conceivable results from it.

Some of the points he makes about the swinging of the club are lucid and instructive. He gives a warning against excessive body movement, saying that the turning of the shoulders, the slackening at the hips and knees, and the lifting of the left heel, that movement which beginners are
so often taught wrongfully at the beginning as if the extensive lifting of the heel and pivoting on the fore part of the foot were a sacred rite without which there could be no golfing salvation, thereby contracting such an exaggeration as often hurts their game for the rest of their lives, are all movements that should be undertaken in moderation and should be made only to such an extent as would enable the club to be swung in comfort. Like all good teachers and great players, he impresses upon us the necessity of keeping the right elbow well into the side until the rising club insists upon its release. The arm in this matter should always follow the club and should never be in advance of it. If the arm goes first, all the proper movements fail.

In his recommendations upon the follow through he gives us the curious information that his father, old Willie, who, like all the old golfers, believed to the uttermost and practised completely this most salutary doctrine, used to follow through so enthusiastically that he would often run a yard or two after his drive! Splendid Wullie! How also he counselled against pressing! I remember reading some time ago in a most interesting life of Almond, the famous headmaster of Loretto, by Mr. R. J. Mackenzie, a little sketch of old Wullie in which it was said that the boys of the school would sometimes meet him of a morning when he was out practising at Musselburgh, and they would hear him say, "Dinna press, Meister Paterson! Ye'll mak' a graun gowffer if ye can ware pressin'. Noo see my ba' lyin' here, a maitter of a hunder and fifty yairds frae the hole, and a' they naisty whuns atween; but takin' an easy swing and no pressin' (click!), ye see I hae drappit her just ahint the pin." The modern Willie mentions that in his time there were quite a number of golfers who in order to make the club-head travel as long as possible in the direction of the ball, instead of holding their bodies steady, and twisting on their backbones as it were, would sway to the right as the club went up, and resume their normal position when it came down again, and while Willie says, or said some years ago, that theoretically this might improve the swing (surely any such theory must be wrong!) experience indicated that any gain that came through it was nullified by slowness of the movement of the body and a considerable inaccuracy that was engendered, making true hitting difficult and unlikely. One had forgotten that there was any recognised set of people in the old days who did this sort of thing, and there is only one player in the front class today who does so, that, of course, being Ray. An old maxim that he thinks should be absorbed in more restricted doses than is commonly the case in our old friend, the Slow Back. He does not, of course, like a fast back in the driving swing, but thinks that in this matter as in so many others the best thing is the happy medium, and he cannot remember any of the best players having had a slow back style although many of them have developed very quick swings. What is most frequently desired by the professors who urge the virtues of the slow back, if they only knew it, is a backward swing so smooth as to be without a jerk. It is the jerk that does the harm and not the speed, if the speed is sufficiently moderate.

In the matter of putting, Willie Park has naturally much that is wise
and good to say. He likes to examine
the line of his putt from the back of
the hole, preferring this to the front
view as giving a quicker and more
accurate idea of the path along which
the ball must travel if it is to find its
way to the right place. Then also he
is a believer in the old system, so
much less practised nowadays, of se-
lecting a particular spot on the green,
in the case of anything more than
short putts, and aiming at that, so that
if the ball passes over it, it should
run on to the hole. Willie believes in
the spot, though nowadays most play-
ers look at the hole and fancy the line
from their ball to it all the way. Select
the right spot, says Willie, be sure
that your ball passes over it, and then,
if the strength is right, it must go
into the hole, which evidently is true
enough. He naturally insists on con-
fidence in putting, and believes that the
hesitater is generally lost. Therefore,
while he does not counsel haste on the
green, he warns you that the longer
you hang over the ball in doubt and
wonderment the more difficult does
the putt appear and the less likely is
it to be dealt with in a successful
manner. A point that he urges, and
which is, no doubt, right though all
the world is not in agreement with
him, is that one of the secrets of good
putting is to hit the ball and the ball
only and not to let the putter graze
the grass. He prefers, instead of the
latter, to strike the ball so that the
putter is just a little above the turf.
The stroke should be made from the
wrists only and the line of the swing,
backwards and forwards, should be
the line to the hole always, and the
head of the club should not depart
from it. And he believes in bold,
firm putting... But Willie Park is
full of golfing wisdom, and, if there
seems to be no limit to its extent and
its value, there must be to our quota-
tion.