

# GREEN FIELDS.

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“Straight down the path till you come to a green gate; you can't miss it,” says my hostess; and, in obedience to her directions, I stride away by the bank of the lake, where the fat carp, basking on the shallows, scurry to cover at my approach, and a lordly heron, in mute protest against the disturbance of his breakfast, spreads his wings and soars majestically skywards. On through cool glades, where giant oaks and beeches—I wonder how many years those old trees confess to?—throw their grateful shadows; where the rabbits scuttle, the butterflies flit, and the bees hum, and where—had there not been important work afoot, to say nothing of finding that aforesaid green gate—I could have sat me down and contentedly lolled the day out. I found the gate, and after a ten minutes' search for the key, which, as my earthly happiness depended on its secure keeping, I had naturally stowed away in a hitherto unusual and wholly inaccessible pocket—'twas ever thus!—unlocked it and passed through on to a wide expanse of breezy, woodgirt “maidan,” with big sand dunes rising in the distance, where the sight of the familiar red and white flags dotting the green, the equally familiar procession of players, and the advent of The Champion thirsting for my blood, and fussily inquiring, “Where on earth I had got to?” proclaimed the satisfying fact that I had arrived at that delightful playground of the Hague, the golf-course at Clingendaal.

And what a round we had! The Champion, in his nervous anxiety to show me the right line and the beauties of the course, and to warn me of its many pitfalls, got a bit "off," and topped, on a fair average, five shots out of six; and I, averse to taking a mean advantage, and following the time-worn adage about imitation being the sincerest flattery, topped away in sympathy. We really went on anyhow; it was dreadful! The Champion attributed it to late hours; I put it down to a golfer's "bad vein"; and what the pair of delightful little maids who carried our clubs—a girl caddie in Holland, by the way, is worth a dozen boys in any other country—and who spent a wildly active afternoon retrieving balls from woods, or hooking them out of ditches, thought of our performances, will ever remain a dark and dreadful secret. They said nothing, bless their hearts! But they looked—my word!

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Then I managed to hang myself up in some remarkably tenacious barbed wire—a necessary precaution against the encroachments of "lowing herds"—and whilst my opponent, assisted by the little maids, was extricating me, he consolingly explained that minor incidents of that sort continually happened, and that members were frequently regaled with the spectacle of an enthusiast draped, as to his legs, in a multi-coloured tablecloth, seated patiently in the club smoking-room, the while a nimble-fingered housekeeper, armed with needle and thread, was repairing damages in the back premises. But all's well that ends well. The Champion, by dint of holing a forty-yard mashie shot on the last green, halved the match—the fluking caitiff!—and we adjourned to the clubhouse for "whiskisodas"—you say it quick, like that, in Holland—over which we arrived at the satisfactory conclusion that a halved match was just what it ought to have been; for, most assuredly, neither of us deserved to win it!

Of the two courses in the immediate neighbourhood of the Hague, namely, Scheveningen and Clingendaal, the latter is far and away the better. It is inland golf, certainly, but the turf is sound and firm, and bad lies are few and far between. The distances are good, and, were the course left at nine holes instead of, as at present, eighteen, could be made still better. Under existing conditions there occur not only a desperate amount of crossing, but also, in many instances, two holes on the same green—in my humble opinion a serious drawback, as witness North Berwick with its Pointgarry, where, if you are lucky enough to arrive on the green without having killed a nursemaid or got a crack on the head, you come upon two or three family parties engaged in "holing out." The greens at Clingendaal have suffered many vicissitudes and mishaps, but care and attention will put all that right in no time; and I foresee the no very distant day when it will be as nice and sporting a course as one would wish to play over. It will certainly lose nothing on the score of attention, for Baroness de Brienen—to whose enthusiasm for the game and untiring efforts on its behalf the course owes its existence—takes an immense amount of interest in its upkeep; and she, in conjunction with the hon. sec., Mr. Crémers, and a keen local following, if I mistake not, is bent on making golf hum in Holland or knowing the reason why! I am one of those who like to see all forms of athletics supported imperially, and pursued, if need be, to the four corners of the world. The Hague, being practically at our doors, does not fall under this category doubtless; but, whether it be cricket amongst Red Indians, tennis in Tartary, or golf in Iceland, "let 'em all come," and the further the spread, and the broader the expansion, the better.

It was more than enterprising of the combined executives of the Hague and Scheveningen Golf Clubs, with a view of giving a local fillip to the game, to arrange a meeting on, more or less, international lines; and it was a thousand pities that none of the French players were able to put in an appearance, and that the English teams eventually dwindled down to two. The hotel companies provided two very handsome prizes, of which the first, a scratch trophy, went to Mr. Tennyson, an ex-Parliamentary handicap winner, who played capital golf all through the meeting; and the second, a challenge bowl, to a quartette of golfing enthusiasts personally conducted and despotically controlled ("Twelve o'clock! Man alive, you ought to have been in bed an hour ago!") by Mr. Ryder Richardson. And some capital tight matches did our neighbours in Holland put up for us; and right royally did they dispense hospitality and look after all our creature comforts. Come again? Well, I should smile! If that nice, bright, clean, delightful Hague offered no inducements in itself for a return visit, what's the matter with that lordly bowl? That's got to be defended, hasn't it? M'yes, all being well, I rather fancy somehow we shall "come again"!

THE TRAMP.